ALEXANDER THE GREAT: CREATED IN WHOSE IMAGE?
A STUDY IN THE BYZANTINIZATION OF ΜΕΓΑΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ
IN
VENICE HELLENIC INSTITUTE CODEX GRAECUS 5

A THESIS
SUBMITTED ON THE SIXTH DAY OF APRIL 2015
TO THE ART HISTORY DEPARTMENT
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS
OF TULANE UNIVERSITY
FOR THE DEGREE
OF
MASTER OF ART HISTORY
BY

Sarah Elaine Mathiesen

SARAH ELAINE MATHIESEN

APPROVED BY:
Holly Flora, Ph.D., Director
Susann Lusnia, Ph.D.
Stephanie Porras, Ph.D.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all involved in the entire process this thesis has required, from its conception to its final form. Without your support and commentary, this thesis would not have been possible.

I would especially like to thank my parents, Mark and Sandy Mathiesen, for giving me the opportunity to indulge in academic pursuits and who have endured endless phone calls and freak-outs along the way. You both have always encouraged me to be curious about the world and to listen to, engage with, and learn from its vast collection of stories, while always urging me to be mindful of my own inner voice.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Stephanie Porras and Dr. Susann Lusnia, for their insightful and helpful commentary. Finally, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Holly Flora, for her help and guidance throughout the past few years, and her willingness to work with all my quirks and help me to succeed.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................................... iv

CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 1

Purpose of Thesis
The Evolution of the *Alexander Romance*
Previous Scholarship
Thesis elements

1. THE BOOK AND ITS AUDIENCE .............................................................................................. 8

Narrative and Pictorial Devices Employed in the Trebizond *Romance*

2. REFLECTION OF A TRAPEZUNTINE EMPEROR ............................................................... 24

The Grand Komnenoi and the Trebizond *Romance’s* Imperial Audience

3. CHRISTIAN SIGNIFIERS IN THE *ALEXANDER ROMANCE* ............................................ 38

The Presence of Christian Elements within the Text-Image Relationship
Softening the Paganism of Alexander
Association of Alexander with Christ

4. THE WOMEN OF ALEXANDER’S LIFE .............................................................................. 94

Olympias
Roxane
Kandake
Amazons
The Good Empress and the Women of Alexios III’s Life

CONCLUSION ................................................................................................................................... 187

ENDNOTES ....................................................................................................................................... 192

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................................. 215
LIST OF FIGURES

Unless otherwise noted, all illustrations are taken from Codex Graecus 5, also known as the “Trebizond Alexander Romance.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Folio 57v</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Folio 58r</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Folio 61r</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Folio 61v</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Folio 76r</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Folio 84v</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Folio 89v</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Folio 141v</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Folio 142r</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Folio 176v</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Folio 1r</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Folio 26r</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Folio 29r</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Folio 30r</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Folio 62r</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Folio 138r</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Folio 153v</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Folio 190v</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Three</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Folio 1r</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Imperial <em>chrysobull</em> of Alexios III of Trebizond, granted to Dionysiou Monastery, Mt. Athos, late 14\textsuperscript{th} century</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Folio 8r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Folio 8v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Folio 10r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>The Evangelist Mark, Walters Ms. W.531, Trebizond Gospels, mid-12th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Folio 14v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Folio 16v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Folio 19r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Folio 28r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Folio 30r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>The Lamentation (detail), Monastery of St Panteleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia, 12th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>The Assumption of Our Lady, an icon from Desyatinny Monastery in Novgorod, c 12th century, Tretyakov Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>Folio 44r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Folio 47r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>Folio 48r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>Folio 48v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>Folio 50v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>Folio 52v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Folio 53r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>Folio 56v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>Folio 63v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>Folio 65v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>Baptism of Christ, mosaic in the dome of the Arian Baptistery, Ravenna, Italy, 5th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Baptism of Christ, fresco painting, Church of the Peribleptos, Mistra, Greece, late 14th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>Folio 66r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>Folio 66v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>Folio 82v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>Folio 84v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Crucifixion icon, St. Catherine’s Monastery, Mt. Sinai, late 13th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>Folio 92r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>Folio 92v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>Folio 94r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>Folio 98r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>Icon with Christ &quot;Overseer of All&quot; and the Chorus of Saints, steatite, Metropolitan Museum of Art, c. 1300-1500 CE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Altarpiece: Virgin, Prophets, Apostles and Saints icon, Venice Hellenic Institute, early 14th century

Christ's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem, detail of the Pala d'Oro, Basilica San Marco, Venice, c. 12th century

Chapter Four
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Folio</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>Folio 91r</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>Folio 134v</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>Folio 135r</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>Folio 140v</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>Folio 141r</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>Folio 141v</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>Folio 142r</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>Folio 142v</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>Folio 143r</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>Folio 143v</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>Folio 157v</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>Folio 160v</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>Folio 161r</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Folio 161v</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>Folio 162r</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>Folio 162v</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>Folio 163v</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>Folio 164r</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>Folio 164v</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>Folio 165v</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>Folio 166r</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>Folio 166v</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>Folio 167r</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>Folio 168r</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>Folio 168v</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>Folio 169v</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>Folio 170r</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>Folio 171r</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>Folio 171v</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>Folio 172r</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>Folio 172v</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>Folio 180r</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>Folio 182r</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>Folio 182v</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>Folio 186r</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>Folio 187v</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>Folio 189v</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>Folio 190r</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>Folio 191v</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>Folio 193r</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>Folio 193v</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

One of the most famous figures in all of history, Alexander the Great, belongs at once to everyone and to no one. His name is known throughout time and space – to the Greeks he is Μεγας Αλεξανδρος; to the Persians, Iskandar; Alexander Magnus in Latin; and Alexandre in French. The deeds and life of this man became the stuff of legend, and that legend has survived to the present day. The most popular collection of stories from the life of Alexander the Great is known as the Alexander Romance. The Romance has been translated into every major language and shared in every major culture. Within these versions of the Alexander Romance, each culture attempts to claim the memory of this monumental figure. Elements of the story are changed, omitted, added; aspects of his personality emphasized or forgotten. In attempting to claim Alexander’s story, each culture attempts to familiarize both Alexander himself and the setting of the story within the current cultural context – in essence, how would a 21st century American version of Alexander dress, speak, or act? An 18th century German Alexander? What would the buildings and armor within the story look like to the Japanese or Indian cultures? This thesis seeks to explore just one example of Alexander’s image and legacy – through the lens of the imperial Byzantine world.

The Venice Hellenic Institute’s Codex Graecus 5 is an extensively illustrated 14th century Byzantine manuscript from the imperial court of the Empire of Trebizond. The
Empire of Trebizond was one of three Byzantine successor states that formed in the
wake of the Sack of Constantinople in 1204 CE.

This Byzantine manuscript reflects that specifically imperial Trapezuntine context
and this thesis will discover which Alexander is reflected through that Trapezuntine lens
on its pages. Just as other cultures have attempted to change Alexander to fit their own
image and traditions, so too the Venice Hellenic Institute manuscript shifts and molds
Alexander’s image to its own purposes.

**Purpose of Thesis:**

This thesis will prove that a version of Alexander and his story is created and
presented within this manuscript to an imperial and court audience with the purpose of
constructing and maintaining a personality proper for a Byzantine Emperor. The
Trebizond *Romance* should then be understood as essentially a “guidebook” that serves
the needs and ego of a specific imperial context. This guidebook is created in part
through a process termed here as “byzantinization,” otherwise understood as how
elements of the *Romance* are changed or imagined in order to be most familiar to a
Byzantine imperial reader. This thesis also seeks to contribute another voice to the
conversation of imperial ideological expression in the Byzantine world, to the role and
portrayal of imperial Byzantine women, and, as well, to the larger conversation of
Alexander’s legacy.
The Evolution of the Alexander Romance:

To better understand the specific examples of the byzantinization of the Trebizond Alexander Romance and its function within 14th century Trebizond, a brief treatment of the evolution of the Romance as a literary work is useful.

Even during his lifetime, the news of Alexander’s achievements began to take on a legendary quality – often encouraged by the man himself. Likely within a generation of his passing, a work of popular literature emerged that treated the legendary aspects of Alexander’s travels as fact. This work was the Alexander Romance.

The formation of the Alexander Romance is complex. Expanded and modified throughout antiquity, the dating of the original α (alpha) version of the Romance is placed sometime between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE. Erroneously attributed during the medieval period to Alexander’s court historian, Kallisthenes, who died before Alexander and therefore could not have recorded many of the events, the authorship of the Romance nevertheless retains this mistaken attribution. Regardless of authorship, the α version appeared at least by 338 CE. This original Greek version formed the basis of a vast collection of literature on Alexander that was produced in the Greek east and that quickly spread to other traditions.

The α manuscript also produced the overall narrative structure from which all later versions were based. According to the scholar Richard Stoneman, the original Romance is comprised of several different literary works:
A novella about the birth of Alexander in which his father is the exiled Pharaoh Nectanebus II; a military narrative, in which the topography and chronology are highly garbled; a series of letters between Alexander and Darius...  

The closest surviving version of the original α comes from the Armenian tradition, translated in 550 CE. A β (beta) recension also appeared by 550 CE, while λ (lambda) and ε (epsilon) recensions were written in the 8th century. γ (gamma) and ζ (zeta) appeared in the 9th and 11th centuries, respectively. Circa 1200 CE, the narrative was translated into a Middle Greek Alexander book, based on the earlier γ recension. In 1388, the Byzantine culture produced a poetic version of the narrative; and in 1669, modern Greek folklore fashioned the Phyllada tou Megalexandrou.

The eighteen surviving Byzantine manuscripts of the Romance represent five recensions. The longest of the Greek recensions, γ, survives in three of the manuscripts, of which the Venice Hellenic Institute’s 14th century Byzantine codex is one. The γ recension retains the basic structure of α and β, while incorporating the new material introduced in the ε recension. Of importance to the argument of this thesis, that the Venice manuscript presents a byzantinized Alexander story, is the fact that, in γ’s combination of the earlier α, β, and ε, it retains the most Byzantine elements and characterizes Alexander as a Byzantine emperor whenever possible. Additionally, γ emphasizes Alexander’s world dominion and utilizes language and imagery that maximizes his glorification. What this signals is a conscious effort to rework the narrative into a thoroughly Byzantine story and context. The Byzantine aspects of the γ recension will be further discussed in the following chapters.
**Previous Scholarship:**

The Trebizond *Alexander Romance* has received scholarly attention largely in the context of exploring Alexandrian topics from other sources, be it focused on imagery or text. The scholars who have studied and discussed the manuscript itself, as its own entity, are relatively few, but they have contributed game-changing information. The earliest mention of the Trebizond *Romance* comes from N. Kondakoff, in which he dated the manuscript to the 14th century. This allowed the first major treatment of the work by Andreas Xyngopoulos in 1966, which supported the 14th century dating on the basis of palaeography and which proposed a Cretan provenance. In 1979, Liam Gallagher shifted the provenance of the manuscript away from Crete to the Empire of Trebizond through the study of the initial portrait miniature and the identification of the title as one specific to Trapezuntine rulers. Gallagher also presented a codicological study of the manuscript.

Finally, the doctoral dissertation of Nicolette S. Trahoulia presented her first contributions to the study of *Codex Graecus* 5 in the form of a study on Alexander as an imperial paradigm in Byzantine art and literature, weaving in discussions of its Trapezuntine provenance, narrative structure of the text and style of its illustrations, a text-image relationship, and finally a discussion of audience and the manuscript’s reception. ¹² Trahoulia’s work on *Codex Graecus* 5 will inform a large portion of this thesis.
This thesis will use the work of Xyngopoulos, Gallagher, and Trahoulia to support a new discussion on the Christian elements of the Trebizond *Romance* and the role that its female characters play in relation to its imperial Byzantine context.

**Thesis Elements:**

Chapter 1 will discuss the physical attributes of the Trebizond book, as well as devices employed within the images in an effort to bring them to most vivid life. The audience and its reception of the manuscript, *i.e.* how the text and images were performed, are also addressed in this first chapter. Chapter 2 will expand on the idea of audience to explore the Trapezuntine provenance of the manuscript and the imperial recipient and primary reader, Emperor of Trebizond Alexios III. Chapters 3 and 4 will propose elements of the Trebizond manuscript that reflect its byzantinization. The first of these, in Chapter 3, is the presence of Christian signifiers in the captions and images, as well as a discussion of compositional elements that would allow for an additional Christian association on top of the pagan aspects of the *Romance*. Chapter 4 proposes a gendered reading of the manuscript, in which the four female characters of the *Romance* are shown to reflect a Byzantine conception of an ideal Empress figure, and in which it will also be proposed that this manuscript could have constructed or maintained such a concept for the wife of Alexios III, Theodora Kantakouzene.

In conclusion, by exploring the physical appearance and composition of the Trebizond *Alexander Romance*, its specific cultural context within the Empire of Trebizond, and the portrayal of Christian elements and female characters, this thesis will
demonstrate how this manuscript is an expression of Alexander the Great specific to a 14th century Trapezuntine imperial court.
CHAPTER ONE: THE BOOK AND ITS AUDIENCE

This first chapter will present the manuscript itself, its codicology and physical makeup, the number of scribes and artists employed in its creation, as well as a discussion of the narrative devices used to bring its images to life in a highly performative and connective manner. Without an understanding of these facets of the Trebizond codex, including how it was performed for its readers, a deeper appreciation of the elements described later in this thesis - the Christian aspects and a gendered reading – is impossible.

The illuminated manuscript played a large role in preserving and transmitting texts and images from the period of Greek antiquity. The codex form first appeared in the 2nd century CE and was the principal form of book-making from the 4th century onward. The process of creating a codex was pain-staking, time-consuming, and expensive, leading to a more elite and royal clientele. During the Byzantine period, ancient Greek education was never abandoned. Instead, the Homeric epics, lessons in medicine and botany, cosmographies, and more were copied and embellished on the pages of manuscripts. The *Alexander Romance* occupies a preeminent position amongst these books, for it was both history and entertainment. Of the three remaining Byzantine gamma (γ) recension manuscripts mentioned in the Introduction, the Trebizond codex is by far the most complete and extensively decorated.1
Codex Graecus 5 stands out as unique among the group of Byzantine Alexander Romances. It is, in fact, only one of two of the entire group of eighteen that is illustrated. The other, Bodleianus Barocci 17, dated to the early 13th century, has only 31 crude illustrations, with emplacements for 89 more that were never filled. Of the illustrations that do exist, they pale in comparison to those from Codex Graecus 5. All are ¼ page images, are unevenly distributed throughout the text, and lack the clarity, vibrancy, and ability to effectively communicate the amount of information that the images from the Trebizond Romance possess. The layered and extensive text-image relationship woven throughout the images, text, and captions that will be discussed shortly is also absent from Barocci 17. Truly, the Trebizond Romance is special.2

In the 14th century, the century of the Trebizond Romance, paper began to replace parchment in the book-making process. As the East was more accessible to Byzantium, Oriental paper, or bombykinon, was often used.3 Codex Graecus 5 is composed of 193 leaves of bombykinon paper measuring 32 x 24 centimeters.4 In the course of its personal history, the Trebizond codex made its way to Venice lacking its original binding, as well as having lost and damaged pages, while others were misordered. Nevertheless, the majority of the narrative and the physical manuscript itself seem to have survived.

Of these remaining 193 folios, 163 carry images on one or both sides, yielding a total of 250 pages worth of illustration within a single manuscript.5 Most of these illustrations are full page. Many of the illustrations depict multiple scenes on one page, very few are dedicated to a single image. Most pages are divided horizontally with two
scenes stacked one on top of the other; usually, the lower image is a continuation of the upper. When a page does contain only one image it is accompanied by text – even then though, the emphasis on the page remains on the image. Very rarely does the image occupy less than two-thirds of the space. Every miniature is surrounded by a thin red frame, while the division of two frames is accomplished by a differentiation in background color or by the tops of the buildings within the lower image. Nearly every single episode described in the text is given a visual counterpart, and often in explicit detail. Each scene is accompanied by a rubric, or caption, in red ink that sits above the scene to which it refers and may continue along the bottom edge as well. The writing of the text was completed first, dictating the amount of space remaining for illustration on a given page.

The hands of two scribes have been identified within the main text. The first scribe contributed to folios 1r through 152r and can be identified by the elegant letters with opulent ornamentation. The rubric text can all be attributed to Scribe 1. The second scribe wrote the second half of the manuscript, from folios 152v to the end and can be identified by a simpler, more rounded writing style.

In addition to the two scribes, scholars have also identified three separate artists who contributed to the miniature paintings. The artists’ names, like the scribes’, are not preserved. What is discernable, however, is their potential heritage. In only a few instances, text is utilized within the image. The few times this occurs supplies information on the artists themselves.
When Greek text appears, it is directly copied from the main text of the
Romance or from the rubric, usually with no nuance or with a mistake. For example, on
folio 176v (fig. 1.10), the artist takes the word βουλην, written in the accusative in the
Romance text, and changes it to the nominative case in the image (Η ΒΟΥΛΙ), yet
nevertheless misspells the word. Normally, though, the inscriptions within the images
are done in the Georgian language, as on folio 89 verso (fig. 1.7), or in a Georgian-like
script.6

What these examples show is that the artists were clearly looking to the text
itself to create their illustrations and that they were well-versed in Greek, yet their
knowledge of the language is imperfect. These artists were then at least of Georgian
descent and may have been part of the Laz, or the Georgian population that lived within
the state of Trebizond.7

Each artist has a particular style. They are each spread out over the course of the
manuscript, evidently working together to complete the extensive decoration. The
general style of the three artists is similar, helping to maintain a coherency to visual
scheme, and it is likely they were all trained within the same workshop. As such, it is the
peculiarities that help identify the three - Artist A contributed 69 illustrations, while
Artists B and C painted 84 and 97, respectively. An attempt is made to adjust to each
other’s styles. For instance, Artist A is always distinct from the other two, while B never
changes; and C adjusts to the others, heavily utilizing B’s stylistic choices. An in-depth
discussion of the styles of the artists is given by Nicolette Trahoulia in her introduction
to the manuscript facsimile.8
A final point to be made about the physical production of the manuscript, and in conjunction with the potential Georgian origin of its artists, is the paint itself.

According to Trahoulia, the vibrant colors used in the Trebizond codex are more related to the Georgian and Armenian manuscript painting traditions than to the Byzantine one, which generally utilized more muted and pastel coloring. She identifies the difference in color tonality as a difference in material paint – the Byzantines favored organic pigments, while the brighter colors of the Armenian/Georgian images are due to mineral pigments. The use of mineral pigments in the Trebizond Romance is obvious when one examines the damage done to many pages by the oxidation of the metals in the paint. The most serious damage is caused by the green pigments, such as on folio 84v (fig. 1.6), where large holes in the page are evident. However, it is the use of the mineral pigments which gives the manuscript its unique appearance.9

**Narrative and Pictorial Devices Employed in the Trebizond Romance:**

Together with the great number of illustrations, the images of the Trebizond codex employ a number of devices designed to evoke a sense of time and space. Relevant to the argument of this thesis, these devices work to bring the narrative to life, enabling the reader to engage with a deeper experience of the story.¹⁰ Furthermore, and as will be discussed later in the thesis, the details of the illustrations reflect the 14th century Byzantine context in which the codex was created. As Trahoulia notes, this anachronism may merely be a convention of Byzantine depictions of past events; nevertheless it pulls the narrative into the present and increases its immediacy.
Additionally, the usage of contemporary terms to describe past events allows for a comparison, and identification, between the past and present. This thesis will argue for a very specific present context – that of the imperial court in the 14th century Trapezuntine Byzantine state under Emperor Alexios III Megas Komnenos.

Trahoulia begins her discussion of narrative devices by stating that temporality is a key element of narrative; that conveying a sequence of events in a coherent manner is essential to understanding a narrative. Ignoring the obvious geographic and temporal oversights present within the narrative of the *Romance* itself (Alexander hops all over the map, etc.), the illustrations of the Trebizond codex communicate the story in a coherent, and ultimately brilliant, manner.

The first pictorial device concerns the direction of movement. The manner in which we read is from left to right on the page. This movement of the reader is reflected in the very movement of the illustration’s figures – always from left to right (most vividly demonstrated in the consistent composition of Alexander’s army on the march). As Alexander moves along on his journeys, so too does the reader physically follow Alexander’s forward progression through time and space. This clever device also functions to form a solidarity and identification between the reader, Alexander, and Alexander’s goals. Foreign armies and unfamiliar characters enter from the right side of the image, visually cuing the reader to and emphasizing their opposition to Alexander. Significantly, in only two instances does the pictorial movement reverse to right to left – when Alexander is in retreat. Furthermore, the direction of Alexander’s campaigns, to the East (Persia, India, etc.), is reflected in this left to right pictorial program.
To express temporality within its illustrations, the Trebizond codex employs a number of methods. Many of the images show what, at first glance, seems to be a single moment, such as the oft-depicted letter writing scenes. On closer inspection, though, these scenes have combined multiple actions that occur in a relatively narrow span of time into a single image. Using the example of a letter writing scene on folio 89v (fig. 1.7), the audience is presented with an image that repeats and applies motion to certain characters, while others remain static. On the upper portion of folio 89v, King Darius of Persia is depicted enthroned, dictating a letter and dispatching a messenger. This messenger is then shown again leaving the frame of this image, emerging again within that of the lower section delivering the message to Alexander. These types of scenes only repeat the figures in motion, reflecting their travel from one space to another, while the other royal figures (Darius and Alexander) appear only once, yet are performing a series of actions (receiving, dictating, dispatching a letter). In short, these artists are able to use a simple composition for a complex scene that maximizes the amount of narrative displayed while maintaining a coherent economy of figures.

A second method the Trebizond Romance uses to depict temporality involves the use of repeated, overlapping figures in order to suggest physical movement (example on 76r, fig. 1.5). This particular method of depicting narrative action is seen most often for the figure of Alexander. Along with the left to right movement of the images that communicate a forward progression, this method also consistently highlights Alexander’s movement throughout the codex. According to Trahoulia, the repetition of a single figure within a single frame to depict and accommodate a series of actions is
seen in other Byzantine-produced manuscripts. What makes the Trebizond Romance unique is the “consistent and organized manner in which this device is used” throughout the entire manuscript.¹⁴

The extensive illustrations (in number and in detail) in this codex communicate a desire to illustrate every moment, and even the nuances, of the textual narrative. At times, this effort to translate every moment of the text into images creates a “cinematic effect,” as if the events of the text were being staged before the viewer’s eyes.¹⁵

There are two additional pictorial devices that serve to bring the visual narrative to vivid life, as well as maintain continuity and coherence between different images in a sequence. A visual cue that is employed often to communicate a relationship between two scenes is the facing of characters across images. In some sequences, the characters of one image will face forward (left to right) to the next image, while the characters of that second image will turn and gesture back (right to left) towards the first (57v and 58r, fig. 1.1 and fig. 1.2). In other places, the characters will be oriented towards each other and also be framed by the same architectural device, creating a visual relationship between the two images and conveying the idea of a similar, shared space (141v and 142r, fig. 1.8 and 1.9).¹⁶ Finally, at times, figures literally break the frame of the image and emerge onto the page, as is the case with many of the messenger figures (89v, etc.) and parts of battle scenes (61r and 61v, fig. 1.3 and fig. 1.4). Other scenes use the frame to cut off parts of figures and the scene, suggesting that the image frame is functioning as a window onto the world of the narrative. Both examples, whether the figure breaks
out of the frame or is cut off by it, challenge the pictorial boundary between the viewer and the realm of the narrative.17

As has become apparent, the visual narrative of the Trebizond *Alexander Romance* is extensive, detailed, and could communicate the general story of Alexander’s life without the help of the text. This thesis will largely ignore the question of the main narrative text, but will address the rubrics that accompany each image. However, a brief understanding of the general text-image relationship within this codex is necessary.

The space that the images occupy on the page, always at least 1/3 of the page, creates a stimulating dynamic between the physical proximity of the text and its corresponding visual episode. Importantly, the rule within the Trebizond codex is that the text always precedes its illustration. This means that the text-image pair may appear on the same folio or may be separated by several. The latter relationship often results when a sequence of images occur with no intervening text. Interestingly enough, it is uncommon for Byzantine manuscripts to accommodate such unbroken image sequences, unless they are at the beginning of the manuscript. The Trebizond *Alexander Romance* possesses eleven instances of uninterrupted illustration – yet again signaling the importance and primacy of imagery within this particular manuscript.18

The captions that accompany each image are often summaries or even word for word excerpts from the main text, creating an abbreviated version of the text directly in contact with the images. As Trahoulia notes, the assumption that the reader would follow the images and their captions in a continuous manner is suggested by the fact
that the captions of two facing images (verso and recto) often stop midway through with the first image and complete the thought with the second. As asserted earlier, the multitude of images make the text seem secondary. The many instances of unbroken image sequences together with the presence of the rubrics make this theory even more plausible. If the rubric offers a summary of the text or at the least a coherent narrative on its own, then the need for the main text itself is eliminated. The use of the word ενθα (“here”) to begin many of the captions further indicates the locus of the caption’s narrative is in the image, and, further, that even this text is secondary to the image itself.

This codex accommodates three different types of audiences: those who can view the images alone, those who can read the text, and those that can combine the two skills. At the same time, the codex presents several means of access to comprehending the story (text, image, and caption). While the main text may offer additional information, it is clear that this codex is designed to eliminate the need to read all three modes at once. Instead, either the text is accessed or the image-caption pair is used.19

The codex has been shown to consciously and willfully bring the Alexander Romance to life for its audience, utilizing pictorial devices that create a performance of the narrative that even relies on the performance of the audience in its participation of turning the codex’s pages.20 The overall performance of the presentation of this manuscript could have happened primarily in two ways. A reader could read the text aloud while an actual physical performance of the narrative was being performed or the
images were being viewed; or a viewer could look at the images, electing to read the captions along with the images. If placed onto a bookstand, the size of the codex would allow for multiple people to view the images simultaneously. According to Trahoulia, the images and performance of the manuscript would be most effective if viewed while listening to an oral recitation of the narrative. Accompanied by the oral component of the performance, Trahoulia believes the illustrations would animate the events and bring them into the present moment, creating a living, breathing story. The next consideration for this thesis will be who experienced and utilized this manuscript to connect to the *Alexander Romance*, and why the narrative devices - meant to bring the story to life for its audience - are especially intriguing.
fig. 1.5
Folio 76r

fig. 1.6
Folio 84v
CHAPTER TWO: REFLECTION OF A TRAPEZINE EMPEROR

It is immediately apparent, given its large size and the breadth of its illustrations, that this Alexander Romance is more than just a pretty book for a courtly audience. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Codex Graecus 5 utilizes a number of pictorial and narrative devices to bring the legendary story of Alexander the Great to vivid life for its audience. This “overtly performative character” of the manuscript, according to Nicolette Trahoulia, suggests a certain experience is expected while viewing its pages, and a certain audience was expected too.¹ Who then was likely viewing this handsome manuscript? This chapter will briefly explore the purposefully selected byzantinizing qualities of the γ recension, the specific environment in which this work was produced and for whom it was produced, as well as other qualities of this Alexander Romance that speak to its distinctly 14th century imperial Trapezuntine Byzantine personality.

This chapter will also introduce the idea that this manuscript functioned not only as a comparison but also as a guidebook for the Trapezuntine Emperor, who would look to Alexander as his imperial role model. The idea of this codex functioning as a guide for the emperor will inform the discussion in Chapters 3 and 4, which will introduce the Christian elements within the illustrations and the role of the female characters as nuanced elements in the guidebook concept.

The previous chapter remarked on the history of the Alexander Romance as a narrative. This particular codex is a manifestation of the gamma (γ) recension. The longest of the Byzantine recensions, γ combines the earlier β and ε recensions, giving it
a more expanded narrative cycle. Significantly, γ chooses the elements of the preceding recensions that most closely reflect Byzantine values and titles. For instance, if ε possesses a more Byzantine or laudatory description, γ will choose that version over β’s.

According to Trahoulia, these choices place a special emphasis on Alexander as a world conqueror and ruler and maximize its glorification of him. Then, the γ text works to present Alexander as a Byzantine ruler whenever possible. The images of Codex Graecus 5 also work to put forth a glorified Byzantine Alexander. Along with the repetitive and formulaic nature of the text, there is a consistent visual vocabulary of imperial triumph within the images, such as the regular depictions of tribute and submission by Alexander’s opponents (ex. 138r, fig. 2.6). This oral and visual repetition functions as a forceful expression of the glorification theme. Thus the text and narrative program of this particular Alexander Romance comprise an exercise in how a culture attempted to claim and mold Alexander and his legacy to its own needs.

The imperial portrait image on folio 1r (fig. 2.1) carries with it a title, inscribed at the top of the page. Though the end of the title is missing, what remains is, “Εν Χρίστο τω θεω πιστός βασιλεύς και αυτοκράτωρ πασης ανατολής και περ...” (“Faithful to Christ and God, King and Emperor of all the East and per…”). Using other documents, the complete title can be reconstructed as, “Εν Χρίστο τω θεω πιστός βασιλεύς και αυτοκράτωρ πασης ανατολής, Ιβήρων και Περατειας ο Μέγας Κομνηνος” (“In Christ God, Faithful Emperor and Autocrat of all the East, the Iberians and the Transmarine Provinces, the Grand Komnenos”). This title will be revisited, but what it first tells us is
the location of the ruler depicted in this manuscript – the Byzantine Empire of Trebizond. “Περατειας” references the geographic area this state encompassed – a narrow strip along the southern coast of the Black Sea in the Pontus region.⁹

In the wake of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 that left Constantinople devastated and under the control of Western powers, the Byzantine state sought to survive outside its first city.¹⁰ Three Byzantine successor states formed, the Despotate of Epirus and the Empires of Nicaea and Trebizond. Founded by members of the Komnenian dynasty separating from Constantinople, the Trapezuntine state outlasted all other Byzantine territories, surviving until 1461 when it finally fell to Ottoman armies.¹¹ In short, this pocket empire can be explained as the Byzantine Empire in exile, isolated geographically from its historic home in Constantinople and attempting to create its own imperial identity.

For example, each of the rulers of the three successor states attempted to claim the title of “Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans,” the traditional title for the ruler of the Eastern Roman Empire. After the Empire of Nicaea successfully retook Constantinople in 1261, this title became an even more highly charged political statement. The Emperors of Trebizond thus adopted a form of this title that more accurately represented their imperial claim, while still retaining much of the historical title and not offending the dominant Palaeologian/Nicaean power in Constantinople (“Faithful to Christ and God, King and Emperor of all the East…”).¹²
This isolation from the heart of Byzantium, as well as the physical location of the state, led to some exciting influences within Trebizond. The early history of Trebizond is tied closely to the Kingdom of Georgia, the most powerful Christian state in eastern Anatolia at the time (13th century). Additionally, the Pontic location of the new state encompassed many ethnic Turkish groups, leading to a mix of Greek, Georgian, and Turkish populations. Anthony Eastmond has noted that the Greek population, and the sense of “Greek-ness” or Hellenism, was confined to a core of the urban elite, such as the imperial ruler for whom this manuscript was created. Trebizond’s access to the Black Sea afforded it an important position as a trading city, giving it a source of wealth and allowing in part for its long survival. The Black Sea location of Trebizond, its diverse mix of peoples, and imperial pretensions are summed up by George Finlay, Trebizond “preserved the ancient character of a Greek colony and the future destiny of a Christian empire.”

The Grand Komnenoi and the Trebizond Romance’s Imperial Audience:

The founding dynasty of Trebizond was a continuation of the powerful Constantinopolitan ruling family, the Komnenoi. Alexios I, the first ruler of Trebizond, renamed the family Μεγαλοκομνηνοι (“Grand Komnenoi”). The Grand Komnenos name is carried by the emperor to which this manuscript is attributed, Alexios III (b. 1338- d. 1390 CE). Interestingly, raised at the revived Constantinopolitan court, Alexios came to Trebizond in 1349 at the young age of 11 and was crowned ruler on January 21, 1350. Born Ιωαννης (“John”), he adopted the name Αλεξιος (“Alexios”) upon
his coronation. Many believe this name change was in honor of his prematurely
deceased older brother or his paternal grandfather, Emperor Alexios II of Trebizond.
More significantly, however, “Alexios” is a form of “Alexander” and perhaps reflects the
choice of Alexander the Great as Alexios III’s role model.

Alexander the Great as an imperial paradigm is a large topic, covered extensively
by Nicolette Trahoulia. For emperors claiming to rule “all the East” as is alluded to in the
title given on folio 1r, Alexander must have provided the perfect imperial paradigm, as
the Greek presence in the East is directly attributable to him. By the 14th century
especially, Trebizond was completely surrounded by Turkish emirates. Although
Trapezuntine rulers established diplomatic relations with the Turks (giving their
princesses to Turkoman princes in diplomatic marriages, for example), military
confrontation was not always unavoidable. Trapezuntine texts often refer to Turkish
peoples as “Persians,” a standard Byzantine equation that compares the current enemy
to the ancient enemy of the Greeks, but also invoking the memory of the man who had
conquered them.19

Alexander was not always used as a positive imperial paradigm, however. In fact,
largely until the ninth-tenth centuries Alexander was used as a negative foil for the
current ruler – he is often juxtaposed with the likes of Constantine the Great.20
Alexander really came into being as a positive role model in the tenth and eleventh
centuries with the patronage of the Komnenoi. The Grand Komnenoi then continued the
use of this traditional Komnenian paradigm, potentially as a link to the heyday of
Komnenian power in Constantinople or as a timely comparison in the face of the growing Turkish threat in the East.\textsuperscript{21}

Considering that Alexander was a favorite imperial paradigm of the Komnenian and Grand Komnenian families, it is no surprise then that Alexios III, to whom this manuscript is connected, chose Alexander as his role model. A special relationship between Alexander and Alexios clearly exists, as is demonstrated by the scale and detail of this manuscript. This \textit{Alexander Romance} serves as one giant comparison and nearly iconic diagram of Alexios’ imperial power. Referring back to the idea that the performance of this codex would have consisted of an oral recitation of the text while the audience followed its illustrations, the oral presentation and highly detailed images could have served to symbolically unite and encapsulate Alexios III and his imperial model in the symbolic literary space of the entire performance.\textsuperscript{22} The choice of a role model not only implicitly carries with it a desire to be compared, but also to emulate and follow in the footsteps of that model, just as with this manuscript Alexios III is both compared to Alexander and seeks to follow him (hence the idea of the manuscript as a guidebook).

The final few pages of the codex are missing, and the absence of a colophon hinders any explicit identification of the codex, its commissioning, and/or its intended audience.\textsuperscript{23} Regardless, many factors exist which make it highly probable that Alexios III Megas Komnenos is depicted in the imperial portrait on folio 1r and was the intended recipient and audience for this codex.\textsuperscript{24}
Alexios III ascended the Trapezuntine throne at a very young age and was immediately thrown into ruling a state almost constantly at war, just like Alexander.\textsuperscript{25} Considering the world Alexios III lived in (in constant struggle versus the Turks/the “Persians”), the amount of documented comparisons of the emperor to Alexander are not surprising. Alexios is specifically named as an “emulator of Alexander in all aspects” by the court protonotarios, Stephanos Sgouropoulos, as well as a “second Alexander.”\textsuperscript{26} Further, Sgouropoulos does not include in his poems any other figure after which the emperor styled himself – it is only Alexander.\textsuperscript{27} Alexios was also a well-known patron of the arts and several other manuscripts that contain Alexander-centric texts can possibly be attributed to his private library.\textsuperscript{28}

The image of Alexander being proclaimed king of the Macedonians at such a young age, on folio 29r, must have resonated deeply with the Trapezuntine leader.\textsuperscript{29} Many other events and details of this Alexander Romance must also have resonated for Alexios III, creating the effect of Alexios viewing himself and his own life through the guise of the great Alexander.

Images of Alexander receiving tribute, greeting foreign emissaries, dictating communications, and treating conquered people and women favorably, would have reflected the duties and qualities of leadership that Alexios was expected to fulfill (folio 62r, \textit{fig. 2.5}). Images of triumph, such as the \textit{adventus} on 26r (\textit{fig. 2.2}), would have reflected Alexios’ desire for victory over his enemies. Later in Alexios’ reign, Alexander’s marriage to a Persian princess would remind Alexios of the diplomatic marriages of his
own daughters to Turkish princes. In the story, Alexander is even shown victorious over monsters and legendary creatures – why couldn’t Alexios also be victorious over all creatures in his world?

Alexander even dresses like Alexios. On folio 153v (fig. 2.7), Alexander wears a white belt over his bejeweled loros, a stemma crown with prependulia, and the red tzangia. This costume similarity, down to the smallest of details, draws an immediate visual comparison between the very image of Alexander and that of Alexios in the imperial portrait (1r), where Alexios also wears the white belt, loros, crown, and imperial slippers.

As a final point to how this manuscript and the imperial portrait would have spoken directly to Alexios III and his emulation of Alexander is the missing facing folio to 1r. Scholars have proposed that this missing page would have held a second portrait, one of Alexander, forming a bifolio. Furthermore, the caption texts express a dialogue between the images, thereby placing Alexios in direct conversation with and in the same space as Alexander.

A few other details of this Alexander Romance reference imperial Byzantine practices, further placing this codex in the realm of courtly Byzantium. The first is a relatively small detail found in the burial scene of Philip on the lower half of folio 30r (fig. 2.4). On the left of the image, amidst a crowd of mourners, Alexander embraces Philip’s body that lies on a type of bier. In the right foreground, an open purple sarcophagus lies waiting to receive Philip’s body, and two men wait beneath a ciborium
in the background. The right side of this image references the Byzantine practice of burying its kings in sarcophagi and placing those sarcophagi beneath a ciborium.

The other byzantinizing detail finds expression in the image on folio 29r (fig. 2.3) and in the caption on 190v (fig. 2.8). On folio 29r, Alexander is proclaimed king of the Macedonians and then makes a speech in front of Philip’s statue and convinces his father’s old army to follow him to a new war. In the upper register, Alexander is the absolute center and the largest figure - even the two background buildings are slanted in towards Alexander, in order to draw the eye to his figure. He stands in front of the throne on a red footstool, holding an orb and scepter, and dressed as a Byzantine emperor. Courtiers bow to either side of him while musicians blow trumpets and beat drums. In the lower register, Alexander is shown to the left of Philip’s statue (sharing the middle), again shown in the regalia of a Byzantine emperor on the red footstool, with his arms stretched out in appeal to his fellow Macedonians. The statue of Philip, set into a niche, is also costumed as a Byzantine emperor. Part of the caption accompanying the mourning Macedonians on folio 190v reads, “'What happened,... who extinguished the light of our day, who wanted to defeat the power of the Macedonians....'”

These two examples, both an image and a caption, reference the imperial prokypsis ceremony. The prokypsis ceremony was an imperial epiphany performed at religious feasts, imperial weddings, and coronations. The emperor, alone or with the royal family, would appear from behind a curtain high above the assembled court on a brightly lit platform. This curtain would remain closed until the prescribed right moment, indicated by lights and sound, at which he would be revealed. Once revealed,
the standing emperor, dressed in glittering jeweled robes, would remain still, almost icon-like, until the curtain was again closed. Though missing the curtain, the scene of Alexander’s coronation as king of the ancient Macedonians is undoubtedly rendered in the language of the Byzantine prokypsis ceremony.

A symbolic visual effect of the prokypsis was to present the emperor as rising high above his subjects, as the rising sun. Hymns accompanying the ceremony specifically named the emperor the sun (and the empress the moon). The caption on 190v reflects these hymns and names Alexander as the sun, “who extinguished the light of our day,” expressing not only an ancient idea but one that had taken on new life in the Byzantine Komnenian court.

In conclusion, Alexander has not only been shown to be a favorite model for Byzantine emperors, but specifically the Komnenian dynasty. Keeping with family tradition, Alexios III Megas Komnenos of Trebizond, more than others, utilized Alexander as his imperial paradigm. From the text of this manuscript to the many details of its extensive illustration, Alexander and his Romance are thoroughly byzantinized into the language of a Byzantine court. Furthermore, they are presented in a manner that would bring the narrative to life and encourage the young emperor Alexios to see himself in the actions, deeds, and the very figure of Alexander the Great. In this vein, Codex Graecus 5 can be seen to function as a guidebook, reflecting the circumstances, context, and needs of a 14th century Trapezuntine Byzantine emperor. The next chapter will focus on elements of the codex that would help guide a Christian ruler.
CHAPTER THREE: CHRISTIAN SIGNIFIERS IN THE ALEXANDER ROMANCE

Christianity is not a religion specific and unique to Byzantium. Instead, the Christian religion found expression across Europe, Byzantium, the Holy Land, and other locations. Further, though the Byzantine Empire saw itself as a Christian empire, it was heir to the cultural traditions of the Greeks and Romans, meaning that pagan elements and beliefs were very much active in Byzantine life. This chapter will examine elements of the Trebizond Alexander Romance that reflect its production within a Christian society. Some of these elements may be a survival of pagan thought or a reflection of relatively new Christian thought, or even the imposition of Christian compositions and iconography onto pagan features. Pagan and Christian beliefs mixed and co-existed in Byzantium, and so what this chapter will reveal is how these Christian signifiers further serve to bring the Romance out of its antique past and situate this particular version within a later, medieval Christian context.

The historical Alexander was undoubtedly a pagan; he worshipped the gods of the Greek pantheon and even claimed to be the son of the god Zeus-Ammon.¹ On the other hand, the Byzantine society was undoubtedly a Christian one. So how does one reconcile this religious distinction between the subject of the Romance and the society that produced the Trebizond version? Part of the Trapezuntine Byzantine appropriation of Alexander and his legacy is an attempt to place him within the run of
Christian world history – to make this mighty pagan figure palatable and acceptable as a role model for a Christian emperor.

It is important to note that many of the examples given in this chapter are not meant to be presented as explicit to a Byzantine reader. Instead they are meant to be understood as things that a viewer firmly entrenched and indoctrinated in a Christian culture would easily accept in making the comparison between Alexander and Christianity or would largely ignore, as they are so natural or implicit to a Byzantine viewer. Keeping with this idea, the points presented in this chapter are again meant to show the effect of an artist working within a Christian culture – the presence of Christian iconography does not imply an automatically Christian reading, but does imply a world where these compositions were common enough to be used to illustrate the scenes found here.

For a long time, Alexander was actually regarded as a negative role model – not quite the anti-hero, but nevertheless a problematic figure for Christians. In the East as well as in the West, the rise of Christianity marked a shift in learning and a new complicated relationship between beliefs from the old dominant religions and the new ascendant one. However, Alexander’s name and story survived in fragments, whispers, and popular folklore. In fact, there is evidence that the invocation of his name and image had apotropaic and talismanic power (found on coins, medallions, etc). The resurgence of classical learning in Byzantium during the Komnenian period also marked a resurgence in the interest given to Alexander and his great deeds.
As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the imperial portrait of Alexios III on folio 1r (*fig. 3.1*) depicts the emperor as a Byzantine ruler (*fig. 3.2*). This title carries with it the additional role of a Christian ruler.\(^4\) The orb and cross that Alexios holds on 1r function as a representation of God’s dominion over earth and the emperor’s authority due to his role as His servant on earth.\(^5\) Additionally, the crossform of the *prependulium* on Alexios’ and Alexander’s crowns also suggests a Christianization of the pagan ruler.\(^6\) Unfortunately, the Alexios portrait miniature is missing its companion Alexander portrait on the opposing page so it is impossible to note whether Alexander explicitly carries the same insignia. Though Alexander is never shown with the cross and orb, he is presented throughout the manuscript as a Byzantine ruler. The image of Alexander in the guise of a Byzantine emperor, along with other indicators, displays the Byzantine desire to place Alexander in conversation with their Christian worldview. As K. Mitsakis cleverly put it, Alexander “died an antique pagan and was born again as a Byzantine Christian.”\(^7\)

As previously stated, many of the Christian elements found within the Trebizond codex’s illustrations are not overt; rather they would be familiar and so perhaps insignificant to a Byzantine reader. These commonplace elements help to further familiarize the ancient and pagan Alexander to a 14\(^{th}\) century Christian. On folio 19r (*fig. 3.9*), the pointed red hats that some of Alexander’s companions wear are similar to those worn by chanters in illustrations from the Palaeologian period.\(^8\) The artists of the Trebizond manuscript clearly were familiar, or actively looking at, other Byzantine religious images, as the compositions of multiple scenes in the *Romance* mimic those used in images depicting Christian themes and events.
On folio 10r (fig. 3.5), Philip is told via a dream that Olympias is pregnant with divine intervention. In the dream, Philip creates a book and stamps it with his seal. In the illustration, Philip (in full emperor regalia, complete with crown with *pendulía*) sits in front of a desk that is tilted slightly to show its full surface and the book that sits atop it. This representation of Philip at a desk is immediately relatable to representations of the Evangelists in Byzantine art (fig. 3.6).9

The next major compositional examples are found on folio 30r (fig. 3.11) that depicts the funeral procession and burial of Philip. On the top portion showing the funeral procession, a man wipes his eyes with a white handkerchief. A cross from the mid-14th century artist Marco da Venezia depicts the Virgin Mary wiping her eyes with a handkerchief at the Crucifixion.10 A western influence, this iconographic type was apparently common enough for the Trapezuntine artists to utilize it in a similarly funerary image. More significant, however, is the burial scene of Philip on the bottom portion of the page. Here, Alexander is shown embracing his dead father and giving him the last kiss. This iconographic type is derived from scenes of the Lamentation, Dormition, and Assumption of the Theotokos. In the Lamentation, Mary embraces her dead son after his crucifixion (fig. 3.12). In many Dormition and Assumption scenes, the Apostle John embraces the dead, or sleeping, Mary, in the same way that Alexander embraces Philip (fig. 3.13).11

The use of these iconographic types is not an attempt to Christianize Philip or Alexander and is simply an artist utilizing familiar visual vocabulary instead of creating a new composition.12 Nevertheless, we have here an example of how Christianity
permeates this 14th century Byzantine work. Quite similarly, the remaining death scenes in the codex, on folios 84v (fig. 3.29), 191v (fig. 3.54), and 192r (fig. 3.55), also make use of existing Christian visual language to represent the mourners present at the deaths of Darius and Alexander. On 84 verso, Alexander finds Darius dying in his bed and cries for him. Two Persians included in the scene raise their hands to their cheeks as a sign of deep sadness. Later in the manuscript, as Alexander himself lay dying in bed, adjutants are shown touching their hands to their cheeks (191v), and Alexander himself repeats the gesture on folio 192r. The Venice Hellenic Institute relates this gesture to that of John and the Virgin from a crusader icon of the Crucifixion (fig. 3.30) and the Marco da Venezia cross mentioned earlier.13

Another type of scene that would likely trigger a Christian association is that of Alexander bathing, found on 65v (fig. 65v) and 94r (fig. 3.33). These scenes, which show a shirtless Alexander covered from the waist down in a robe and attended by a servant against a blue river background, draw comparison to compositions of the Baptism of Christ. The Baptism of Christ scenes generally show the adult Christ standing exposed in a body of water (articulated by a blue background, sometimes with blue lines across his body indicating his immersion) (fig. 3.24 and fig. 3.25).14

Two final compositions that are utilized in the illustrations of the Trebizond codex and derived from Christian imagery are the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and All Saints configurations. On folios 138 recto and verso (fig. 3.37 and fig. 3.38), Alexander arrives in the Indian kingdom of Porus and enters one of the subjugated cities. In both images, Alexander and his army arrive on horseback from the left, while a
cityscape fills the right side of the image. Dark-skinned Indian men prostrate themselves in front of Alexander in front of the city walls. Scenes of Christ’s Triumphal Entry provide the model for these two folios (fig. 3.56).

Finally, on folio 98r (fig. 3.34), Alexander is shown building a city in Egypt and “invoking the God of heaven and earth” to abolish the old deity statues of the land and rightfully establish his own statue high on the city’s walls. The single image fills the entire page, but three distinct sections are detectable. In the upper left hand corner Alexander stands, invoking God in front of three statues placed in niches and a personification of the Sun in the sky. The entire right side of the image is occupied by the construction of the city, and, at the top, sit Alexander’s four new statues.

However, the bottom left portion of the image is the significant section. Here, a group of men look upward from beneath an archway. The first of the men lifts his hands in a supplicatory gesture. This image mimics a part of a larger composition of figures known as the All Saints, from the Palaeologian period, depicting groupings of the apostles, prophets, propators, and saints of Christianity (fig. 3.35 and fig. 3.36). Again, the use of Christian iconography to express a scene set in antiquity, for example in this last folio (98r), is not necessarily indicative of a deeper Christian meaning. Rather, it is an example of the use of popular and familiar visual language. Nevertheless, there are examples that do blatantly attempt to shift the tone of the narrative or Alexander from pagan to Christian, such as the use of the κοσμοκράτωρ title to be discussed later.
The Presence of Christian elements within the text-image relationship:

The discussion of the All Saints composition allows for a brief foray into the image-caption relationship within the codex as further evidence of the Christianization and byzantinization of the Romance. The main text goes further in aligning Alexander with Christianity, but echoes of that can be found in the image captions. For example, the caption accompanying the just-discussed folio 98r uses the phrase “God of heaven and earth.” This statement derives from Judeo-Christian language, and follows Alexander’s renouncement of the local gods, as well as his visit to Judea.16

Many of the caption examples do not use explicitly Christian language, instead including terms and adjectives that would likely reflect Byzantine Christian values. One example is Darius “giving up his spirit” when he dies (folio 85r).17 Additional examples include the described “decency and poverty” of the Gymnosophists (folio 109r) and the description of Alexander as “wise” and facilitating a “loving resolution” between brothers (folio 163v).

The caption on 167r (fig. 3.45) presents a quandary, for it uses a term that can be understood in both pagan and Christian traditions. This caption relates Alexander’s letter to the Amazons and part of it states, “As this is what the Providence desired for us...” “Providence” here undoubtedly refers to the will of a divine source. Given that this manuscript belongs to the γ recension and therefore consciously has chosen the most Byzantine (and so also Christian) language, it is unlikely this is a holdover from an earlier,
pagan version of the Romance and should be considered as part of this codex’s Christian indicators.

The caption on folio 128v also presents a similar ambiguity, with its usage of the word “god.” In this image, Alexander is greeted by two birds with human heads. One bird warns Alexander not to advance any further in that direction for “The ground you step, Alexander, is only for god. Go back, you poor, for you cannot step on the islands of Makaron.” In Greek mythology, Makaria, a daughter of Hades and Persephone, was the goddess of blessed death and was connected with the souls’ passage to the Nesoi Makarioi (Islands of the Blessed). Together with the human-headed birds, there is a clear pagan element to this caption; yet it would not have been a stretch for a Byzantine to relate this caption to his or her own belief system.

The warning functions to deter Alexander from blurring the boundaries between heaven and earth, god and mortal, reminding him of his place in the order of things. The birds warn Alexander of the limits of his mortal power, and a more subtle warning that his power is all vanity – a message recognizable to Jewish, Muslim and Christian beliefs.

In addition to these ambiguous examples of Christian influence on the captions of the Trebizond Romance, there are just as many explicit examples. On the very first page of the manuscript – and in fact in the very first caption of the book relating to the emperor portrait (1r) - one finds these words: “In Christ God,….” The title kosmokrator then appears (once on 1r for Alexios, and again on 2r), which was a specifically
Byzantine term used to describe the emperor as a “universal ruler,” a Christian implication since the Byzantine state was a Christian one.18

**Softening the Paganism of Alexander:**

While the pagan elements inherent to Alexander’s life are not erased from this version of the *Romance* (after all, Christianity did not exist until many centuries after Alexander’s death), there are attempts in the visual language of the codex to indirectly disprove the pagan Greek religion. This tone is set early in the manuscript’s illustrations. On folio 16v (*fig. 3.8*), Philip visits the oracle at Delphi to learn who shall succeed him. Here, the ancient Delphic temple is translated into a double-storied medieval building with arches in the façade - removing a recognizable and powerful symbol of Greek paganism from the image and replacing it with a familiar medieval architectural form. Two naked statues of pagan gods fill the archways of the second story, and three statue torsos the bottom archways. The torsos are all intensely malformed – one figure possesses horns and another’s limbs are twisted around its upper half. This is the first example of a temple that the reader is shown in the manuscript. So, even though the malformation is a detail and the architecture unremarkable, these elements mark an immediate jab by a Christian artist at a pagan religion.

Considering the fact that Alexander was very much a pagan himself, the number of overtly pagan scenes in the *Romance* is minimal. Furthermore, only one example, when Alexander enters the cave of the gods on folios 155r and 156r and verso, occurs after his visit to Judea (*figures 3.41, 3.42, and 3.43*). The other examples all occur in the
first half of the codex: Alexander visiting a shrine of his “father,” the god Amun (folio 44r, fig. 3.14); an appeal to the god Serapis (48r, fig. 3.16); a sacrifice to Zeus and Hera and the eagle of Zeus (folio 48v, fig. 3.17); a statue of Orpheus (63v, fig. 3.22); and finally a dove that speaks in a human voice to warn Alexander against confronting “god” (folio 47r, 50v, figures 3.15 and 3.18).

This shift away from overt pagan details mirrors the growing association of Alexander with Christianity that occurs in the text. The divide that the Judean episode then represents can also be interpreted as a subtle shift in Alexander’s own belief system. Alexander will always be a pagan and the fantastical stories an integral part of the Romance; however, Alexander can be portrayed as less obviously so. Moreover, a tale that is a known part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Gog and Magog story, is included toward the end of the narrative.

Aspects of the Alexander Romance are of legendary quality (such as his encounter with the Amazons or the battle with centaurs), while others are purely fictional. Alexander’s visit to Judea is one such example. A very short episode in the run of the Romance (only two images are dedicated to it), it is nevertheless an extremely important one for this discussion. On the upper part of folio 92r (fig. 3.31), Alexander and his army arrive in Judea from the left of the image, while Judean spies wait behind a hill. The spies, now dressed as priests, greet Alexander on the lower section of the image.
The following folio (92v, fig. 3.32) is of particular interest. Here, Alexander and his cavalry greet the archpriests of Judea at the city walls, where the archpriests offer Alexander much gold and silver. In the lower part, Alexander stands in front of his throne, with his right hand against his chest with the two middle fingers inside his tunic and his left hand extended out towards the audience of archpriests and other figures. He is refusing their gift, saying, “Let these gifts and the tax that I determined be dedicated to God and the Lord. I shall receive nothing from you.”

Thus, it appears that Alexander has declared his faith to the Jewish God – undoubtedly one of the fastest and easiest conversions in history. By including this episode, and considering the phrasing of its captions, the author is attempting to place Alexander in the framework of Christian history. Judaism was chosen as a precedent for Christianity and was conveniently a contemporary religion to Alexander. In this manner, Alexander can be shown to be a paradoxically pre-Christianity Christian figure. Additionally, the robes that the spy-priests wear on folio 92 recto, robes that do not have sleeves nor an opening at the front, were the vestment of priests in the Byzantine period. The costume that the archpriests wear on 92 verso - belted tunic, a cloak that fastens on the chest with a brooch, and a small mitre - is common for Jewish archpriests of the Old Testament. This costume also interestingly appears in the codex on priests to pagan gods (folios 53r, 139r and v, figures 3.20, 3.39, and 3.40), but seems to be only a convention for showing higher religious officials than any religious commentary. These small details scattered throughout the Trebizond illustrations further indicate that the
artist was familiar with the Judeo-Christian tradition and was communicating a pagan narrative in the visual language he was familiar with – a Christian one.

The association of Alexander to Judaism, the precursor to Christianity, is one vehicle for placing the pagan conqueror in positive conversation with Christianity and making him more acceptable as an imperial model. The main vehicle for placing Alexander into the sacred history of the Christian world is the story of the enclosure of the Unclean Nations, also known as Goth and Magoth. His struggle against Goth and Magoth is what makes him worthy to be considered a part of Christian world history.

Depicted across a large number of illustrations (173r-180r), the story follows Alexander going to war against the Belsyrians and their king, Eurymithres. Alexander pursues them beyond two mountains called “The Breasts of the North” (Mazi) and into the unknown. There he makes a prayer to God to enclose the Belsyrians, along with other nations. God answers his prayer and the two mountains come together. Alexander builds giant bronze gates and oils them so they can withstand fire and iron weapons, thus trapping twenty-two kings and their nations behind the gates. The captions accompanying the images on folios 179 recto and verso (fig. 3.46 and fig. 3.47) and the scenes depicting the prayer and the building of the bronze gate, reflect the Christian origin of this story – the prayer to, response from, and praise of the Christian God.22

Eurymithres and his Belsyrians, along with the other enclosed kings and nations, are nowhere identified directly as Goth and Magoth in the captions; yet the story is immediately recognizable by its visual features, namely the gate and the twenty-two
kings. The story of the Unclean Nations can function as an example of the age-old
definition of “us versus them.” Alexander stands as the culture-hero of the Greeks
against the evil of Goth and Magoth, and subsequently is the culture-hero of the
Christian Byzantine Greek culture.

Goth and Magoth appear as Gog and Magog in the Hebrew Old Testament (in
Genesis and Ezekial) and in the Christian New Testament Book of Revelation – they are
old enemies of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this tradition, Gog and Magog are
indeed trapped in a corner of the earth, but will be loosed by Satan at the end of a
thousand years and join him in the last battle before the coming of Christ’s kingdom.23
This connection to Christian apocalyptic thought leads to another aspect of Alexander
being utilized in a Byzantine Christian context (though a visual expression of this next
point is not found in the Trebizond Romance).

Alexander possessed a privileged position in Byzantine eschatological belief.
These apocalyptic traditions centered on a complicated figure known as the Last
Emperor. Much scholarship has been devoted to the topic of the Last Emperor, so only a
brief summary of pertinent ideas will be given here. The story of Goth and Magoth as
given in the Alexander Romance is derived from an early source named the Revelation
by Pseudo-Methodius.24 The Revelation related that after the reign of Satan/the Anti-
Christ, the Last Emperor of Rome, the “king of the Greeks,” will present his crown to
God, and that crown will be borne into heaven atop the Cross.25 Importantly, this
mantle of the “Last Emperor” is a rather protean one and can be made to fit almost any
Byzantine Emperor (perhaps even Alexios III if the need arose).26 Significantly, Alexander
himself is never the Last Emperor, though at times he relinquishes his power directly to
the Last Emperor; rather, he is always a preparatory, prototypical figure (perhaps due
to his status as a pagan, he must wait for a Christian ruler). Additionally, Alexander is
presented as one of four great empire rulers that will appear at the Last Judgment
alongside the Last Emperor (Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Alexander, and Augustus).27

In Trahoulia’s tracing of the history of Alexander as a Byzantine imperial
paradigm, she demonstrates that Alexander was not always a positive comparative
model within the Roman world.28 To many of the later Roman emperors, such as
Constantine, Alexander “[represented] an instructive contrast” to a Christian emperor in
many ways. Constantine’s victories were shown to be equal to Alexander’s, yet greater
because they was peaceful and Constantine was a pious ruler. This last point was
probably due to Constantine’s late-in-life conversion and his association with
Christianity. Additionally, a Christian emperor derived his confidence and position from
his faith in God (and vice versa).29

Another aspect of the negative model Alexander provided Christian emperors
was the very nature of his victories. Alexander has always been regarded as a master -
strategist, one for dramatic flair in battle, and as one whom the gods smiled down upon
on the battlefield. As such, Alexander was unavoidable as a comparison for a conquering
emperor. The Christian emperor was said to be victorious because of the true God’s will,
not luck or even brilliance – there was a preordained sense of victory for a Christian
ruler.
Trahoulia notes that these qualities are certainly topoi used in the description of a victorious Christian emperor. What is significant is that, early on, Alexander served as a foil for these topoi; and yet, later, as the Trebizond Romance displays, Alexander served as a positive comparative model for Christian rulers and was even given a place in Christian history.

**Association of Alexander with Christ:**

One of the roles given to Alexander during the medieval period was as a knight of God, and there are times where he comes close to being identified with Jesus Christ. The narrative of the gamma recension used in the Trebizond Alexander Romance demonstrates this attempt to associate Alexander with Christ. Events and characters from Christ’s life appear in this illustrated Alexander’s life, albeit, and importantly, in modified form.

Folios 8 recto and verso depict the sequence of events regarding Alexander’s divine birth. Olympias bemoans her barrenness to the Egyptian Pharaoh and magician, Nectanebo. On 8r (fig. 3.3), Nectanebo is shown creating a magic potion and wax-figurine that will help Olympias dream of the god Ammon, which she then does. Folio 8 verso (fig. 3.4) shows Olympias relating her dream to Nectanebo and then extending him permission to sleep in her quarters. She dreams again of the god Ammon visiting her, but it is really Nectanebo in disguise. This trick of Nectanebo functioned to legitimize Alexander’s claim to the Egyptian throne, as he is really the son of a Pharaoh.
In the context of this current discussion, though, this particular sequence takes on a different role. The obvious comparison of this version of Alexander’s birth, and its illustration, is to the Annunciation, where the Virgin Mary received word that she would bear the son of God. The dream-Ammon on 8 recto floats down to the reclining Olympias, much as a dove or ray of light is often shown descending to Mary in visual accounts of the story. Further, the idea that Alexander is the son of a god, matches that of Jesus being the son of God – both are the product of a god and thus are afforded a special mission and place in life.

A tenuous connection to the Annunciation is the involvement of the Holy Spirit, in this case Nectanebo as Ammon. Earlier in the narrative, Philip is shown threatening to divorce Olympias if she does not bear him a child, leading her to get involved with Nectanebo. There is no overt visual indication that Olympias has had sexual intercourse with Philip, but there is also no attempt in the textual or visual account to designate her as a virgin either. Though the reader is privy to the information that the “god” is actually a mere mortal, Olympias is apparently not aware of that.

Considering the trick and Olympias’ obliviousness and/or gullibility, she can be interpreted as a virginal figure receiving the will of a deity. In this manner, Olympias is immediately comparable to the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ, and Alexander to Christ. An additional Virgin association is found in the upper register of folio 14v (fig. 3.7). Here, Nectanebo delays the birth of Alexander until the most auspicious moment. A small blue semi-circle with four white stars sits at the top of the golden background. Though there
are four stars, a Christian reader likely would be reminded of the Star of Bethlehem signaling the birth of the Christ Child from the Virgin.

Alexander’s birth is nevertheless clearly part of a pagan tradition. As mentioned previously, the dream-Ammon that descends to Olympias could be compared to the ray of light that is often used to represent the Holy Spirit as it impregnates Mary. The classical author, Plutarch, relates one version of Alexander’s birth story that has Olympias dream that a bolt of lightning strikes her womb and starts a great fire, signaling her divine conception of Alexander. The lightning bolt can easily be re-imagined to be the Christian Holy Spirit and ray of light.\(^{31}\) It is these similarities to the birth of Christ and re-fashioning of pagan elements that create a dialogue between the two narratives that places Christianity as the superior religion. Alexander and Olympias are placed into a Christian context not quite as anti-models, but as close-but-not-quite-there examples.\(^{32}\)

Two crucifixion scenes are found within the Trebizond *Romance*. During his conflict with the Persian king, Darius, two of Alexander’s messengers are crucified as retaliation, depicted on folio 52v (*fig. 3.19*). Four folios later, on 56v (*fig. 3.21*), Alexander is shown deciding not to reciprocate and crucify Darius’ messengers. Crucifixion was a common method of punishment in antiquity, usually used as a public and extremely slow and painful means to dissuade witnesses from committing crimes. For Christians, however, the act of crucifying and its symbol, the cross, held special meaning, as it marked the torture and death of Jesus before his resurrection.
The two crucified messengers on folio 52v are shown in a manner consistent with other Byzantine depictions of the Crucifixion, making them a clear Christian indicator within the manuscript. On folio 56v, however, the two messengers are shown restrained, but only one crucifix is included in the scene. Though these scenes occur pages apart, the appearance of a total of three crucifixes would draw comparisons to the Passion of Christ and the crucifixion of the two thieves alongside him. The messengers on 52v, then, are the thieves, while the empty cross on 56v would be for Christ.33

Since the Romance is being Christianized and Alexander shown as a benevolent, good figure in a Christian vein, he is shown pardoning Darius’ messengers. The choice to only show one cross, though, is deliberate – not only does it keep the composition simple, it places a strong Christian symbol on the same page as Alexander and his performance of a good act.

On folio 82v (fig. 3.28), Alexander comes across the tombs of the Persian kings, along with a group of Greek captives with leprosy. Here, the specific narrative is unimportant. Alexander, on horseback and in imperial costume, enters from the left and greets a group of lepers. On the right side of the image, a turbaned figure grasps the hands of another leper. The lepers are indicated by the white canes they carry.

In the Christian tradition, Christ meets a leper who asks to be healed. Christ touches the leper and cleanses him. Significantly, Alexander is shown stretching his left
hand out towards that of one of the lepers, showing his willingness to touch the diseased man.

The figure on the right side of the image can also be identified as Alexander, visually depicted in “street clothes” that humble him. This identification is significant because, here, Alexander touches the leper. Additionally, this Alexander and the leper are shown close together and with a deliberate attempt to show eye contact between the two, whereas the lepers to the left seem to look above, not at, the approaching Alexander. Though supported by Alexander, the leper that makes contact with Alexander is also the only one shown not dependent on his cane. One complication of leprosy is blindness. The deliberate eye contact between Alexander and the leper then indicate that the leper has been healed – much like the episode of Christ healing the leper.

The episode of the Romance that relates Alexander’s encounter with the Meroitic queen Kandake also contains possible Christian parallels. Relevant to this discussion is the fact that, in this episode, Kandake commissions a secret portrait of Alexander; later on, although Alexander comes in disguise to Kandake, she recognizes him with the help of the portrait. The portrait is shown on folios 143r and v. Though the story itself dictates that there is a recognition scene, that potential scene is missing from the Trebizond version.34

Towards the end of the Kandake episode, Alexander reveals himself to her son, Kandaules, after Kandaules has escorted him safely to his camp. This scene is depicted
on folio 165r (*fig. 3.44*), where the two are shown embracing as Alexander discloses his disguise.

Together, these two pieces of the Kandake episode form a comparable narrative to that of Christ appearing to Mary Magdalen and the disciples after the Resurrection. Kandake would play the role of the Magdalen and Kandaules that of the disciples.

Throughout the Kandake episode, Kandaules is shown as loyal and protective to Alexander (though he does not know it is Alexander), making the association with the Disciples of Christ a plausible one. Kandake, though she uses the portrait in order to recognize Alexander, is able to ascertain his true identity when no one else is able to, just as the Magdalen is the first to recognize the risen Jesus Christ. An additional Christian element to these scenes is the portrait itself and the box in which Kandake stores it. The portrait resembles an icon and the box a reliquary — two ubiquitous and important facets of Byzantine Christianity.35

Magi also make an appearance in the *Romance*. They appear on folio 185v (*fig. 3.49*) to interpret for Alexander the birth of a half-human, half-monster child. The word “μάγους” (plural for “μάγος” = “magi”) is written in the caption accompanying 185v. While the three figures are identified as “magi” in the caption, there is no obvious visual indicator of their role as augurers. That there are three magi here is what connects the image to a Christian context, for the most accepted version tells of three magi visiting the Christ Child during the Nativity.36 On the bottom half of 185v, there are 6 figures that surround the enthroned Alexander. It is possible that only three of the figures are magi, the leftmost three. The figure in the middle above Alexander in the red is simply a
courtier to the king, while the two figures behind the throne and facing away from it are
two of the magi repeated in a secondary act of viewing the monster-child.

The final event from Christ’s life that is paralleled in the Trebizond Alexander
Romance is the betrayal of Christ by Judas. On folios 66 recto and verso (fig. 3.26 and
fig. 3.27), a doctor attempts to poison Alexander, but fails. Alexander recovers and
forgives the doctor (indicated by their embrace). The first poisoning attempt
foreshadows the one that ultimately kills Alexander and Alexander displays Christian
values by forgiving the doctor.

At the very end of the manuscript is a second, successful poisoning of Alexander
by dissatisfied members of his court. Shown on folios 187v-189v, one of Alexander’s
generals creates a poison, gives it to his son, and dispatches his son to Alexander
(figures 3.50-3.53). The poison is administered at a dinner, hosted by a Macedonian
named Medius, where Alexander falls ill.

Of the four accomplices in the poisoning, it is the wine-bearer to Alexander,
Iollas, who can be most closely compared to the Judas Iscariot figure in Christianity.
Judas betrays Christ to the Roman soldiers by giving him a kiss, thereby identifying
Christ to the soldiers. Iollas, though one of four, is the one that directly interacts and
administers the poison to Alexander. The composition of folio 189v repeats the figure of
Alexander three times down the horizontal length of a table, showing the poisoning,
revelry, and outcry of Alexander and his companions. Though the figure of Alexander is
repeated, the scene recalls that of the Last Supper of Christ and his disciples.
Mentioned in the previous chapter, Alexander is presented in the Trebizond Romance in the guise of a 14th century Byzantine emperor. This role, communicated through the visual elements of dress and the text of the captions, also affords Alexander an association with Christianity and places him as an “instrument in the plan of God” even though he is a pagan ruler.\(^{37}\) The anachronism of Alexander and Christian elements was clearly accepted by the codex’s Byzantine readers. Many of the Christian elements are subtle due to their ubiquity in Byzantine life. Significantly though, those Christian elements exist in this narrative about a pagan ruler firmly set in antiquity, thereby indicating the influence of the later Christian Byzantine culture.
fig. 3.1
Folio 1r
fig. 3.2
Imperial chrysobull of Alexios III of Trebizond granted to Dionysiou Monastery, late 14th century
fig. 3.5
Folio 10r

fig. 3.6
The Evangelist Mark, Walters Ms. W.531, Trebizond Gospels, mid-12th century
fig. 3.11
Folio 30r
fig. 3.12

The Lamentation (detail), Monastery of St Panteleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia, 12th century
fig. 3.13
The Assumption of Our Lady, an icon from Desyatinny Monastery in Novgorod, c 12th century, Tretyakov Gallery
fig. 3.14
Folio 44r

fig. 3.15
Folio 47r
fig. 3.18
Folio 50v

fig. 3.19
Folio 52v
fig. 3.24
Baptism of Christ, mosaic in the dome of the Arian Baptistrey, Ravenna, Italy, 5th century
fig. 3.25
Baptism of Christ, fresco painting, Church of the Peribleptos, Mistra, Greece, late 14th century
fig. 3.30
Crucifixion icon, St. Catherine’s Monastery, Mt. Sinai, late 13th century
**fig. 3.35**  
Icon with Christ  
"Overseer of All" and the Chorus of Saints, steatite,  
Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
c. 1300-1500 CE
fig. 3.36
Altarpiece: Virgin, Prophets, Apostles and Saints icon, Venice Hellenic Institute, early 14th century
fig. 3.39
Folio 139r

fig. 3.40
Folio 139v
fig. 3.48
Folio 180r

fig. 3.49
Folio 185v
fig. 3.56
Christ’s Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, detail of the Pala D’oro, 12th century
Basilica San Marco, Venice, c. 12th century
CHAPTER FOUR: THE WOMEN OF ALEXANDER’S LIFE

Comprising a great number of characters within the Romance, and involved in many of its most interesting moments, are the women of Alexander’s life. Featured in almost 60 of the 250 images in the manuscript, the women, clearly, are significant. Episodes involving Alexander’s mother, Olympias; his wife, Roxane; the legendary Kandake of Meroe; and the mythical Amazons are shown fully illustrated alongside other episodes of the codex. This chapter seeks to examine how the Trebizond Romance visually renders its female characters and how they interact with Alexander within the imperial Byzantine context of the manuscript. A brief discussion of how the depictions of these women relate to Alexios III and his wife, Theodora Kantakouzene, and his mother, Irene of Trebizond, will also be advanced.

The explicit detail of the textual illustrations is extended to the scenes involving female characters, and the episodes themselves show a complex and layered relationship between Alexander and women. In a society where women were second-class citizens, why is such an emphasis, or at least equality of attention, paid to scenes involving (active) female characters? The mere presence of these strong, forceful women brings a rich and complicated history of meaning to the conversation of Alexander, his relationship with women, and further, the relationship between male and female in Byzantine society. The women of the Romance help to define Alexander as a
Byzantine Emperor as well as clarify how women (perhaps “proper” women) were perceived in Byzantine court society.

Several common threads run through the presentation of the women discussed here. A woman’s role within the Byzantine world was dictated by her gender. The Byzantine woman was either the virgin or the mother and was defined by her relation to those two roles (youth, prostitute, nun, married, single, etc.). The women in this chapter are all of royal pedigree, and all examples of rulers and empresses, placing them in a special category already, since the right to rule was normally reserved for men, with only the most exceptional of circumstances allowing otherwise. There are examples of empresses wielding immense power, but, again, these women are the exception and not the norm. The Empress was often considered to be the ultimate woman, or an example, in the Empire, and it is through her position and status that we should understand the women of the Trebizond Romance. It will be argued that these women - Alexander’s mother, his wife, the African queen Kandake, and the Amazons - embody the paradox that is the Byzantine Empress – the archetypal Byzantine woman with access to immense masculine power and position.

Together with the visual representations of the women, the captions utilize wording that works within the Byzantine idea of the ideal empress. As noted, the very nature of the empress is a paradox – she is a woman with access to power. The ideal Byzantine empress is one that respects her role as the emperor’s consort and (potential) future emperor’s mother – returning to the concept that a woman is defined by her status as a virgin or mother. She stays within the private sphere, and serves to
legitimize and support her husband. She may accompany him on campaigns as a sign of support, but she is not welcome on the battlefield, nor is she welcome in any institutional place within the state organization. The paradigmatic good empress is pious and philanthropic, humble and chaste, devoted to her marriage, and educated. Beauty is not stressed nearly to the extent as it is for the emperor, but it is an aspect of the persona. With this definition in mind, this chapter will examine how these four female characters embody the ideal empress personality, together with their relation to Byzantine practices and their effect on Alexander’s story.

As stated above, the involvement of these four female characters in the narrative of the Trebizond Romance and its images is pervasive. A sense of each woman’s own storyline and totality of her involvement is essential to an in-depth reading of this manuscript. Therefore, a visual analysis of every scene in which Olympias, Roxane, Kandake, and the Amazons appear will be included in their respective sections. The intent with this format is to not only give a sense of their entire individual stories within the Romance, but to also approximate how this manuscript was read and performed, as discussed in Chapter 1. The reader of this thesis is encouraged to pick one of the means of reading the manuscript to apply to the visual analyses given – interact with the text first and then the images (treating them as separate entities) or to interact with the text and images in conjunction with each other.
Olympias:

The first woman the reader encounters in the Trebizond *Alexander Romance* is Alexander’s mother, Olympias. Almost as famous as her husband and son, and equally as formidable, she first appears on folio 6r (*fig. 4.1*) in an argument with Philip of Macedon. Olympias and Philip are the first Greek characters to appear in the manuscript, after the beginning of the story in Egypt with the Pharaoh and magician Nectanebo. Her presence and importance to Alexander’s story is immediately apparent. Much like Alexander’s personality and legacy which has captured the interest of history and been subjected to scrutiny and myth, so too has the figure of Olympias been the object of many imaginations – her most recent imagining brought to life by Angelina Jolie in Oliver Stone’s motion picture, *Alexander*. In the Trebizond Romance, Olympias retains her historically-attributed strong presence and presents the first of many privileged female relationships with Alexander. The Olympias in this codex is recognizable as the Olympias of history, but she is also molded to fit the contemporary imperial Byzantine context of the manuscript.

The images of Olympias, much like the other women in the manuscript, are many – both the text and its illustrations pay careful attention to this female character. Matching the acknowledged historical relationship between mother and son and within the politics of Alexander’s rule and life, Olympias appears at multiple points within the story and images. Her role in the Romance begins at the very start, with the conception, birth, and childhood of Alexander. She reappears consistently throughout the rest of the codex as the recipient of letters from Alexander relating his journey and adventures.
As stated, the reader’s first glimpse of Olympias is on folio 6r. Shown in a single scene with successive encounters of the king and queen of Macedon, the reader sees Philip threaten to divorce Olympias if she does not bear a child. On the left side of the image, Philip, dressed in red, and Olympias, in blue, stand close together. Philip reaches out to Olympias and she reaches back towards him and holds his hand. A building stands behind them. On the right side of the image, Philip and Olympias move toward a building with a curtained opening. Philip repeats his pose from the left side, reaching out towards Olympias, though now it seems as if he is pushing her away, through the curtain that she is shown drawing open. Olympias stares back at Philip, as a woman in green, a maid, watches the two of them from the window of the curtained building. The curtained building is part of the palace complex that is alluded to with the inclusion of architecture and, in this image, specifically refers to the women’s section of the palace—a topic that will be addressed later in this section.

The top of the following folio, 6v (fig. 4.2), shows Philip departing for war, while on the bottom, Olympias greets the Egyptian magician, Nectanebo, and asks if he can cure her infertility. She is enthroned to the right, in front of a building, with three maids; the old, bearded figure of Nectanebo faces her and the maids and presents an object, the horoscope that is detailed in the text. The next decorated page (8r, fig. 4.3) depicts Olympias having a vision of the god Amun in her sleep. The scene makes use of continuous narrative, showing Nectanebo three times, as he gathers the herbs needed for his magic potion, preparing the potion in a cooking vessel, and holding a wax figurine.
of a girl. On the right, Olympias lays in her bed and sees the god Amun descending to her. Interestingly, Amun is dressed as a Byzantine emperor, with loros and crown.

Folio 8v (fig. 4.4) is split into two registers. The top register shows Olympias relating her dream to Nectanebo and allowing him to stay in her quarters. Nectanebo sits to the left of the image field, then moves to her bedside on the right. Two maids also stand at Olympias’ bedside; one looks to Nectanebo and raises her hands with pointed fingers, signaling the relation or conversation between the two. The bottom register of 8v depicts Nectanebo, transformed by magic into the god Amun, appearing to and sleeping with Olympias. Three women appear to the left and express surprise using their gestures, while a fourth woman, expressing the connivance, stands at Olympias bedside to the right. Nectanebo as Amun stands over Olympias’ bed and reaches down towards her. A thin, white veil covers Olympias’ face, and a massive serpent circles the bed.

Olympias is not depicted in the following images on 10r, but is involved – a falcon reveals to Philip in his sleep that Olympias is pregnant via divine intervention, the dream-Philip makes a book and stamps it with his seal, and Philip summons an interpreter to explain his dream.

Olympias’ next depiction is on folio 14v (fig. 4.5), which illustrates Nectanebo delaying Olympias’ childbirth until favorable astrological signs present themselves. The bottom of the double-register image depicts the birth and Philip meeting the child, Alexander. In the upper image, Nectanebo stands to the left and looks upward to a small
cluster of blue sky and white stars placed into the gold background. He gestures with his
left hand towards a clearly pregnant Olympias on the right, who is attended by four
maids on her throne, amidst a group of buildings. She gestures back at Nectanebo as if
saying “Now, may I give birth?” The lower register shows Olympias ensconced in her
bed, with a handmaid seated beside her. Nectanebo and Philip, who holds the newborn
Alexander presented to him by the midwife, stand to the left.

Alexander grows quickly in the narrative and images and on 15r (fig. 4.6) throws
Nectanebo, his father, off a cliff, killing the magician. The distressed Alexander carries
the body to his mother in the lower register and pleads for her help. The young
Alexander is shown carrying the body strapped across his back beneath a mountainous
landscape, and again placing the body before his much older-looking mother, who sits
on a cushioned chair.

The top of folio 19r (fig. 4.7) is partially destroyed, but has been found to depict
Alexander being crowned victor at the Olympic Games. This particular event is entirely
legendary— Alexander never competed at Olympia; this is a fiction created to compare
Alexander to Philip, who did compete, and win, at the Games. The bottom, which
remains intact, shows Alexander returning home to find that Philip has exiled Olympias.
Mounted soldiers fill the left side of the image, while, at the right, Alexander and his
mother embrace. A male servant stands behind Alexander and another looks out from
the window of the building in the background; this composition is mirrored with
Olympias and two female servants.
The two register-image on folio 23v (fig. 4.8) is the last time Olympias appears in the first section of the visual narrative, before Alexander gains the Macedonian throne and sets out to defeat Persia. It illustrates the reconciliation of Alexander’s parents. In the upper image, Alexander, at right, stands in front of his enthroned father, at the left, and pleads for him to return Olympias, arguing for their continued co-reign. Three turbaned adjutants stand behind each man. Olympias appears in the bottom register, standing behind her son, who kneels at Philip’s feet and kisses his left hand. Philip and Olympias reach out to each other to signal the reconciliation. Male adjutants stand behind the throne and female attendants accompany the queen.

The next time Alexander’s mother is shown is on folio 42v (fig. 4.9). Olympias sits enthroned in the center of the image and receives spoils of war sent by Alexander from Darius’ satraps. Three turbaned men present the gifts from the left, and two male adjutants flank the queen. She next appears in the sequence of images relating Alexander’s marriage to the Persian princess, Roxane.

In the bottom register of 89v, Alexander writes to Olympias requesting that she send all he needs for his upcoming wedding. This is the first example that displays the oft-repeated letter-writing iconography that is standard throughout the manuscript – an enthroned ruler figure, here Alexander, dictates a letter to a secretary that sits at the foot of the throne and writes the message. The ruler then hands the letter to a messenger, who then exits the scene on his mission. On the top of the next page, 91r (fig. 4.17), Olympias receives the letter and sends all that Alexander requested. At the left, the iconography of Alexander sending the letter is repeated and, at the right,
Olympias enthroned reads the letter. Behind a low wall in the background of the scene, soldiers and horses travel from Olympias on the right to Alexander, bringing his wedding supplies.

The images on folios 134v (fig. 4.18) and 135r (fig. 4.19) depict Alexander writing another letter, this time to his mother and teacher, Aristotle, and Olympias reading that letter. On the top of 135r, Olympias hands the letter to a man, who then reads it, while she and Aristotle, and the rest of the court, listen. Aristotle, turbaned and with a black collar on his robe, places his hand to his chin in a questioning gesture.

The remainder of Olympias’ images comes at the end of the narrative. On folio 186r (fig. 4.51), Olympias writes to Alexander complaining of the treatment she is receiving from Antipater, Alexander’s appointed general in Macedonia, who revolted against her. Olympias is shown twice – centrally located both times, she stands, facing left, and converses with Antipater, and sits, facing right, dictating her complaints to Alexander. Alexander is shown on the following page (186v) reading and responding to her letter by sending Carterus to look after her. On 187v (fig. 4.52), Carterus arrives in Macedonia and Antipater realizes his difficult position. In the top register on this page, Carterus and his army arrive from the left and Olympias and three officers, one of whom is Antipater, occupy the right side. The lower folio depicts Antipater’s response - preparing a poison and sending his son to Babylon to poison Alexander.

The last image of Olympias is on folio 193r (fig. 4.56), one of the last remaining pages in the codex. On this page, Olympias receives the letter telling of her son’s
poisoning by one of his own. Beneath the crenulated tops of a group of buildings,
Olympias stands from her throne and brings her hands to cup her face and cover her
mouth in response to the news. Two female attendants also participate in the mourning
– the maid to Olympias’ left pulls the hair beneath her headdress in distress. Many
turbaned male figures fill the remainder of the space on the left of the image, one reads
the letter and the rest turn to each other in astonishment at its content.

The historical reality of Olympias is not far from the figure represented in the
Trebizond codex. The pervasive presence of Olympias in the early part of Alexander’s
life, the continued correspondence between the two while Alexander was on campaign,
and the power struggle between Antipater and Olympias are mentioned by multiple
antique sources, such as Plutarch and Diodorus.8 These sources, generally hostile to her
and, unsurprisingly, written by men, also tell of Olympias’ strong, to say the least,
personality and countenance.9

Born a princess of the Molossian tribe of Epirus in northern Greece, the woman
named Polyxena, Myrtale, and Stratonike, yet better known as Olympias, was royalty all
her own.10 Her family claimed descent from Achilles, through Molossas, the son of
Neoptolemus and Andromache, and the grandson of Achilles.11 In 357 BCE, Olympias
entered into a political marriage with Philip II of Macedon. Olympias and Philip, a force
of nature all his own, clashed frequently due to her passionate and imperious nature, as
well as her failure to produce an heir. Her fondness for the cult of Dionysus and snake-
worship, as well as her reputation as a sorceress, supposedly soured the marriage.12
In 356 BCE, Olympias gave birth to Alexander III. The ancients believed that the birth of a great man was signaled by portents. Alexander’s birth supposedly coincided with two such signs: the victories of Philip’s general in Illyria and of Philip’s horse at the Olympic Games. Philip acknowledged this miraculous confluence of triumphs by bestowing upon his wife a new name, and the one history best remembers her by - Olympias.  

Olympias and Philip both heavily influenced Alexander’s early years. Philip gave Alexander a role model for warfare and politics, as well as a near-impossible list of achievements to follow. Olympias, on the other hand, arranged for Alexander’s education and, undoubtedly, gave the boy some of her commanding and fiery nature. There is no doubt that the historical Alexander is the product of these two monumental figures.

It is Olympias that connected Alexander to an education by some of the greatest minds of the age, and of history, first being tutored by Leonidas of Epirus and then by Aristotle. Through the teachings of Aristotle and the influence of Olympias, Alexander developed a love for Achilles and sought to emulate the great Greek warrior-hero and his ancestor.

It is also likely that Olympias is responsible for Alexander’s belief in his godly paternity, from Zeus-Ammon, which would only grow more prominent as Alexander’s campaigns continued. The Macedonian βασίλεια even involved herself in her son’s sexuality – both she and Philip were concerned with Alexander’s seeming lack of
interest in women and so she arranged for Alexander’s involvement with a well-known and beautiful Thessalian prostitute, Kallixena. This disinterest or asexuality on the part of the historical Alexander is reflected in the lack of sexual tension and sexual conquering motifs within the Romance, a topic that will be addressed later.

Though she was a continuous presence in Alexander’s life, it seems that even her son did not trust her to her own devices, assigning the aforementioned Antipater to co-rule with Olympias after Alexander departed for Persia. Alexander’s correspondence with his mother during his travels seems to be a system of checking in on conditions in Macedonia, rather than one born of great maternal love - he generally ignored the advice and complaints in her letters. It must be noted, however, that, although Alexander kept (or attempted to keep) Olympias from politics, she was an astute politician and played a role in maintaining a stable rule while he was gone.

When Alexander died in 323 BCE, Olympias fought for the succession of her grandson, Alexander IV, to the Macedonian throne, even leading an army against the forces of Cassander, Antipater’s son. Olympias was condemned to death in 316 BCE. She was stoned to death by the relatives of her many political victims, thus ending the influence of this memorable queen in a memorable fashion.

History seems to have taken a liking to Olympias, as she has survived the ages as a central character within Alexander’s story. The Trebizond Romance includes this focus on her, while also molding her to fit into the idea of a Byzantine woman and female ruler. She is a dangerous figure that must be handled correctly. As the mother of
Alexander the Great, world-conqueror, Olympias is perhaps the greatest example of the Byzantine empress paradox in the *Romance* – she was responsible for raising Alexander and maintained a steady influence in Macedonian politics. The Trebizond codex presents an Olympias that operates within Byzantine gender constructs and fulfills her role as a good empress. The *Alexander Romance* as a story (not solely this version) sets Alexander’s birth as a divine act and is unconcerned with establishing Philip as Alexander’s father, instead maintaining the fiction that the deity Zeus-Ammon was Alexander’s rightful father. Considering that Olympias is shown in relations with “Zeus-Ammon,” actually the magician Nectanebo in disguise, she fulfills her duty as queen in providing an heir to her husband. Philip recognizes the divine intervention and recognizes Alexander as his son. Olympias also fulfills her role as a Byzantine mother and provides for her child’s education.

The visual description of Olympias is that of a Byzantine empress. As the Venice Hellenic Institute notes, the first time Olympias is depicted (6r) she wears a costume typical of the Byzantine empress in official appearances, namely the *loros*, the long *manicae* (sleeves), red slippers (*tzangia*) and the bejeweled super humeral, as well as the *stemma* crown with *prependulia*. This can be classified as the official ceremonial imperial costume and visually establishes her position as a ruler. At times the *prependulia* disappear from the crown and the *manicae* are tight to the arm, but Olympias’ costume never resembles the chitons that her maids wear – costume functions as a simple indicator of status.
Added to the clear visual indicator of Olympias’ position and the other byzantinizing elements discussed, there is a caption-image relationship that expands on the byzantinizing of the *Romance* and the Olympias scenes. As stated earlier, the captions provide a third way for the reader to interact with the story and are often word-for-word sentences from the text that quickly summarize the action of the image. Together with the visual representation of Olympias, the captions utilize wording that works within the Byzantine idea of the ideal empress. The rubrics on folios 6r, 89v, 91r, and 193r underline Olympias fulfilling her duty as wife and mother, providing an heir for Philip, helping to arrange Alexander’s wedding, and mourning the death of her son.\(^{24}\)

The rubrics on folios 186 recto and verso do not express any great emotion on Alexander’s part, but show Alexander responding to the suffering of his mother at Antipater’s hands and seeing to her care, displaying the actions of a good son. Alexander’s actions in turn are a reflection of Olympias as a good and dutiful mother.

The attributes of the good Empress archetype given earlier include her intelligence and education. The top rubric on folio 135r explicitly states Olympias’ ability to read, “When Olympias had received Alexander’s letter, she read it in the presence of Aristotle.” She is depicted multiple times sending and receiving letters, but does not write them or read them herself, except here. This mirrors the actual practice of the Byzantine court. The empress would not write her own letters but dictate them, yet it should be demonstrated that the empress at least has the ability and education to do so.\(^{25}\)
The caption, “Alexander says to Philip: Olympias will reign with you, Despot, and will govern with you,” accompanies the image on 23 verso. This caption not only expresses Alexander’s wish to reconcile his parents, but of the perceived rightful state of a marriage, particularly a ruling pair. Olympias must support her husband and Philip needs her presence to legitimize his position as a (Byzantine) ruler. The remaining captions relating to Olympias’ imagery will be discussed in the following points.

The rubrics on folios 6 recto and verso read, (top) “Philip says to Olympias: if you do not bear me a son when I return from war, you will no longer know my embrace” and (bottom) “Olympias immediately sent for Nectanebo, the wondrous prophet, and asked him if it would be possible to cure her infertility so that she may have a child with Philip.” These captions are yet another textual emphasis on Olympias and her expression of her role as a Byzantine empress. The image on 8 verso that follows these words, shows Nectanebo, in the guise of the deity Zeus-Ammon, sleeping with Olympias. Olympias’ face is covered with a thin white material that signals the deception to the viewer and hides it from Olympias.

Most importantly, though, is the serpent creature that is shown curling around her bed, with its head reaching up towards the sleeping queen’s. This snake not only connects to the popular understanding of Olympias, but also to Byzantine fertility practices. The historical Olympias was long devoted to the cult of Dionysus and may have introduced snake-handling to Macedonian cult worship of the god from her native Epirus. She is also rumored to have even slept with snakes (being the cause, in part, of driving Philip from her side). The snake was just one animal sacred to the wine-god
Dionysus, who was heavily associated with fertility. The inclusion of a snake in this image, therefore, with its phallic and fertility connotations, plus its connection to the popular image of Olympias, makes sense. However, the snake further alludes to a specific Byzantine belief and practice.

Infertility was a source of great shame in Byzantine society. It indicated the failure of a woman and her very role in society, as well as the failing of the marriage. Olympias requests Nectanebo’s help specifically for curing her infertility – she is clearly referring to some type of ritual or object to aid her natural function. One manner in which Byzantine women combated infertility was through the use of *hystera* amulets. The use of these amulets was widespread throughout the Byzantine Empire. *Hystera* translates to “womb.” The Byzantine era described the womb as black, curling like a snake, hissing like a serpent, and roaring like a lion; infertility aids and supplications asked the womb to then “lie down like a lamb.” An infertile womb was seen to either have roamed out of its natural position in the body or to have been attacked or possessed by the demon figure Gylou. *Hystera* amulets, along with other spells and aids, protected women from demonic harm or a wandering womb. The physical composition of the amulet varied, but its imagery commonly featured a “rider saint” vanquishing a female dragon, or six or seven double-headed or elaborately intertwined serpents. They often also carried Christian phrases, such as an invocation of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a saint. Olympias’ entreaty of a magician, her invocation of a deity, and the snake specifically included in the scene in which she is impregnated, deliberately echo the practice and beliefs of an infertile Byzantine woman seeking to
change her condition. The inclusion of a midwife and her assistant in the birth scene on 14 verso also echoes Byzantine practice.²⁵

The caption accompanying the image on 8 verso alludes to a fascinating intersection of text, image, and Byzantine societal beliefs on sex and gender roles. The caption translates to, (top) “Here Olympias gave Nectanebo a place in her bed chambers.” Women in the ancient and Byzantine world were relegated to the private sphere of society, i.e. the home, while men were allowed to move between the private and public spheres. In court life, the empress possessed her own section of the palace. Men were not permitted in these quarters in order to protect the reputation and well-being of the empress.

The exception to this rule was her husband, the emperor, and eunuchs. Eunuchs occupied a tentative position in Byzantine society, forming a type of “third gender.”²⁶ They possessed the physical characteristics of a male, but could not procreate and grew differently than “normal,” making them something other than male. Eunuchs as such were highly prized and were allowed into the empress’ quarters.²⁷ They became a common aspect of court life and politics, often being used by the empress as a sort of spy or courier and a means via which she could exercise influence in the court.

Nectanebo is neither Olympias’ husband nor a eunuch. In the Byzantine context of the Trebizond Romance, by inviting him into her quarters, Olympias compromises the sanctity of her private chambers and blurs the lines of proper male-female relations. This provides the means in the narrative through which Nectanebo can sleep with
Olympias and by which Alexander is produced. Aside from providing a necessary plot point, this sequence, and its visual interpretation, would have also provided a scandalous, dramatic moment for its Byzantine audience. Olympias is saved from impropriety by the use of the trick - she cannot deny a god after all - and by the birth of Alexander, who represents a prototype and model for Byzantine emperors.

There is a final point concerning Olympias which will also appear in the discussions of the other women in Alexander’s life. Beginning with his mother, Alexander seems to have a susceptibility to motherly queens, as well as a pattern of allowing women to see him in a different, and more vulnerable, position. Olympias interacts with Alexander at an impressionable stage in his life; she educates him and influences his personality – she is his mother. As his mother, and as the correspondence demonstrates, Olympias retained the ear of Alexander throughout his life. Her recognized and important status as the mother of the basileus, her documented and influential involvement in his childhood, and the political games after his departure, show a woman exercising all the avenues to power she possesses – exceptional but not unacceptable or impossible to a Byzantine mind.

Olympias is the first example of the unusual relationship between women and Alexander within the Trebizond Romance. These women see Alexander as more vulnerable than others and also play a role as a force within the story, driving it forward and setting up future events and underlining themes. The moment Olympias opens herself up to the divinity and gives birth, she paves the way for an amazing life to occur.
Roxane:

The second female character the reader meets in the *Alexander Romance*, and featured in images of the Trebizond *Romance*, is a foreigner. Not only is she a foreigner, she is the daughter of Alexander’s main antagonist up to this point in the story, the Persian king Darius. Roxane continues the theme of women within Alexander’s life being privy to his moments of weakness, as well as the byzantinization of the story within the manuscript. As all the women in the *Romance* prove to be, she is a paradox of history and myth.

Roxane’s involvement in the *Romance* occurs in two places: first, halfway through its first act, at Darius’ defeat, and second, at the very end of the manuscript at Alexander’s death. The reader first encounters an image of the Persian princess on folio 59r (*fig. 4.10*), when Darius departs for war with Alexander and brings his wife, mother, and children with him. Roxane is not mentioned by name, nor are any of Darius’ women, in the caption that underlines the image field, but based on later information in the *Romance*, she can be identified as one of the female figures in the scene. She is likely the woman at the far left with the green head-covering, as the other two women in royal costume should be identified as the queen-mother and queen. The three Persian women form the back end of a retinue of soldiers (representing the army) that accompany Darius from left to right across a mountainous landscape. The group is arrayed in a slight “V” formation, with Darius at its point.
The princess, again with no visual identifier, appears next on folio 62r (fig. 4.11). Three tents are stacked vertically along the right side of the image, and a woman emerges from the open flaps of each tent. Alexander and his army dominate the scene with their size and advance towards the tents from the left. Three soldiers reach out and grab a hand of each woman (Roxane is likely the woman in the bottom tent). The caption tells the reader that Alexander has captured Darius’ camp and tent, but shows respect to his family.

The next depiction of the princess is on folio 85r (fig. 4.12), at the death of Darius. A single image field dominates the lower half of the folio. Darius, bedridden, occupies the center of the frame and is surrounded by family and courtiers. With his right hand he touches his beard in a gesture of bereavement for his own death, while with his left he hands his daughter to Alexander who stands at the end of the bed and who also reaches out for Roxane and Darius. Darius’ mother and wife also stand next to Roxane at Darius’ bedside, as the king dies in Alexander’s arms. Alexander and the three women are shown again in the top right corner, where Alexander receives them. The viewer’s eye flows from the largest figure of Darius, down his beard and hand into figures of Roxane and Alexander at his bedside, then over to the immediate next figure, the second Alexander, and up to the three Persian women in the top corner. This framing composition of the Persian characters around Alexander serves to draw attention to the conquering king, but also to the progression of focus from the dying Darius to the Persian women, who will continue to play a role in the Romance.
Folios 85v (*fig. 4.13*) and 86r (*fig. 4.14*) show the funeral procession and burial of Darius. Three women in white headdresses are included in each scene and, though they are not identified by any special clothing or in the caption, they may be Roxane, her mother, and grandmother.\(^{38}\)

On folio 89r (*fig. 4.15*), Alexander writes a letter to the three Persian women, the contents of which can be inferred visually from the succeeding images or gleaned from the text. The standard writing of letters iconography is repeated on this folio (Alexander enthroned at left, dictates to a scribe at his feet and hands the letter to messengers, who, shown a second time, depart at the right of the frame). Folio 89v (*fig. 4.16*) sees the women receiving Alexander’s letter in the top register of the image. The women sit enthroned at the right of register, while courtiers and the messengers stand to the right. The movement of the action from Alexander on the left of 89r to the women on the far right of 89v establishes a visual relationship between the two images, forming a complete scene. The lower register of 89v, and its accompanying caption, provide the context for the previous two scenes – here, Alexander enthroned at the right sends a letter to his mother requesting the necessary wardrobe for his wedding. The letter iconography is again repeated in this register.

Olympias’ reply and the wedding are shown in a two-register image on the next folio, 91r (*fig. 4.17*). In the upper register, Alexander, enthroned at the left, is again shown sending a letter to his mother, who receives and reads it on the right side of the register. Soldiers and horses are depicted (from the chest up) behind a wall in the background, moving from Olympias to Alexander on the left, bringing him the necessary
wedding supplies. The wedding of Alexander and Roxane is depicted on the larger lower register on 91r. A large table with utensils and various dishes is split into two levels. Alexander sits in the middle of the upper level, with male attendants to his right and Roxane, her mother, grandmother, and a fourth woman to his left. It is interesting that Alexander occupies the absolute center of the scene, while Roxane is placed just off center to him, though attention is still drawn to the royal couple as a unit through their luxurious costumes. Other officials fill the second level of the table. Male and female musicians are included in the scene.

The next image of Roxane then appears in the last episode of the Romance, the poisoning and death of Alexander. On folio 189v (fig. 4.53), Alexander is offered the poisoned cup, drinks from it, and screams out in pain as shown in the upper register. On the right of this scene, Alexander throws his hand up in agony, while his guests recoil in horror and touch their beards as a sign of worry. It is Roxane, identifiable by her headscarf and crown, who catches and supports Alexander. In the lower register, Alexander withdraws, telling the others to finish their dinner. Servants clear the table at the left, while everyone attends the departing Alexander on the right side. One guest rips his robe open as a sign of distress, another repeats the beard-touching gesture from above, and, again, Roxane is shown supporting Alexander.

On folio 190r (fig. 4.54), Alexander realizes he has been poisoned and announces his forthcoming death. He also requests Roxane to attend to him. Alexander is depicted in bed with Roxane at his side – she leans in attentively towards him. His officers fill the
space and express their grief through ripping at their robes, putting their hands to their cheeks, and tugging at their beards.

On folio 191v (fig. 4.55), Alexander wants to summon his most important officers to assign them their duties, but suddenly the Macedonian soldiers in the palace courtyard put up a shout that they want to see their king. Antiochus tells the king and Alexander orders that his bed be put in a high place, so that the soldiers can see him. In a full page image, the soldiers congregate in the lower half below the wall that Alexander’s bed is placed upon. Alexander and his bed are placed in the center of the wall and upper half of the scene, while his officers occupy the left side and his attention. Roxane stands on her own to the right, behind Alexander’s bed, and weeps, using her own headdress to dry her tears.

The final surviving page of the manuscript, folio 193v (fig. 4.57), depicts the Diadochi, the Successors of Alexander the Great, receiving their kingdoms from the dying king. Alexander is shown dying in his bed to the left and the Diadochi stand to right at the end of his bed. Two women are shown to the lower left of the king, one of whom is Roxane who touches Alexander with her hand.

Though she plays a smaller role in the visual narrative of the Trebizond Romance than the other female characters, Roxane is one of the more well-known historically. The Romance identifies her as a daughter of the Persian king, Darius. In reality, Roxane was from the region of Bactria and the daughter of a Sogdian chieftain, Oxyartes, and
Alexander met her after his defeat of Darius. Her name, Roshanak in the Bactrian language, means “little star” and her beauty was said to be unrivaled in the East.\textsuperscript{41}

At this point in Alexander’s campaign, following the defeat of the Persians and his claim to their throne, it was clear that Alexander could not hold together his new Asian lands without concessions to the locals. Alexander’s idea of a universal empire was also beginning to take hold in his mind and he took steps to mix Greek and Persian customs.\textsuperscript{42}

One manner in which Alexander hoped to strengthen his empire and combine East and West politically and culturally was through marriage. In 327, when he conquered Bactria, he married Roxane, much to the dismay of his Macedonian soldiers who wanted him to marry a Macedonian. Why Alexander chose to marry a politically insignificant woman as Roxane, versus Darius’ daughters or other powerful noble women, is up for debate – perhaps it really was love.\textsuperscript{43} We do know that Roxane was not Alexander’s only marriage. Three years later in 324 BCE, the famous mass wedding at Susa took place, in which Alexander married Stateira, the eldest daughter of Darius, and Parysatis, the youngest daughter of Artaxerxes III/Ochus, Darius’ predecessor. Alexander forced many of his Macedonian soldiers to also marry Asian women in order to fulfill his dream of unification, though most of the marriages ended in divorce.\textsuperscript{44}

Though Alexander married three times, only Roxane managed to give him an heir. She accompanied him throughout his campaign into India and returned with him to Babylon where he died. In 323 BCE, at the time of Alexander’s death, Roxane was
pregnant with the future Alexander IV, the only heir of Alexander the Great. This put her in a precarious political position. She aligned herself with one of the Diadochi, Perdicas, who had been named as regent for Alexander’s mentally deficient half-brother (Philip Arridaeus) in Macedonia. Roxane had Stateira, Alexander’s second wife and potential rival, executed. After more political maneuvering, a rival Diadochi, Cassander, came to power in Macedonia and negotiated a treaty in which he would be regent for the young heir until he came of age in 305 BCE. This clear line of kingship succession to Alexander IV created incentive for the Diadochi to eliminate the young boy so they could become kings in their own right. Cassander also clashed with and executed Olympias, who wanted to see her grandson, the continuation of her royal bloodline, take the throne. Roxane and the only genetic heir to Alexander the Great were executed in 311/310 BCE - with this, the elimination of the long Argead dynasty, the house of Alexander III of Macedon, was complete.

Considering what is known about the historical Roxane, an obvious change made by the Trebizond manuscript is the conflation of her character with Stateira, the actual daughter of Darius. In the Romance, Roxane is clearly identified as a Persian princess and daughter of Darius. This conflation of two female characters is both a narrative choice and a historical and political one. Within the narrative, the description in text and image of two weddings (to Roxane and at Susa) so close to one another would be repetitive, would slow the pace of the story, and would add unnecessary characters.
More so than literary, the choice for conflation seems to be political. As stated above, the real marriage of Alexander to Roxane was widely questioned and disapproved of by the Macedonians in his army. Roxane was a political non-entity and a foreigner. But the reality was she was the consort that produced an heir to Alexander – thereby enabling her to rapidly ascend the political ladder. Due to this tension between her heritage and status as Alexander’s wife and mother of the heir, some changes had to be made to the character to make her more palatable to Greek and Byzantine audiences. By combining her with Stateira, the Romance gives her a political position more worthy of Alexander’s bride and maintains an economy of characters. This conflation also maintains the historical accounts of Alexander attempting to politically and culturally mix Greek and Persian; by marrying into the Persian royal family, Alexander positions himself as both the rightful inheritor to and conqueror of the Persian throne. The son by Roxane and Alexander then is also given more pedigree and dignity.

The relative inattention in the manuscript paid to one of the most historically significant women in Alexander’s life, especially in comparison to the other female characters is relatively odd. Roxane appears only eight times in the images, yet she is given the room to fully function within the Byzantine context of the codex. Her relative absence from the visual narrative of the Romance can partially be explained by necessity. The audience is informed through the text (and history) that she accompanied Alexander on his campaigns, but she is not an active part of those
adventures; therefore she does not need to be visually rendered. She reappears when she is reactivated by the story.

The Trapezuntine Byzantine context of the manuscript offers an additional reason for her visual absence, as well as the short-shrift given to the wedding scene (only one register of a full-page image). As a Persian, a stand-in for the Ottoman Turks beleaguering Trebizond as discussed in Chapter 2, she represents not only the “other” and a non-Greek, but a particularly negative “other.” The Trebizond manuscript may have wanted to minimize visual reminders of Alexander’s chosen Persian wife. With the exception of folio 191v and perhaps the wedding scene on 91r, Roxane is often depicted within a group of figures, smaller in scale, or otherwise not immediately identifiable.

Another potential reason for the lack of Roxane-related imagery is the issue of sex. A multitude of motives can provide for this reason. Considering the wedding scene and the fact that Roxane is pregnant at the time of Alexander’s death but her pregnancy is not visually indicated, along with the lack of sex and sexuality surrounding Alexander’s other encounters with women, the absence of sex is interesting.\textsuperscript{49} It may have been considered scandalous and inappropriate by Byzantine and Christian standards to show sexual relations between characters beyond the semi-divine conception of Alexander by Olympias and Nectanebo. Chastity and the triumph over lust by men (pre- and marital status) were highly praised qualities within Byzantine society, so it would make sense for Alexander to reflect those values.\textsuperscript{50} Sex for the sake of procreation may also have been implied by the very nature of a wedding. It may also be due to the ascribed historical personality of Alexander that may have become the standard for his personality within
the Romance and so separate from a necessarily Byzantine or Christian lens. Many believe that Alexander was a homosexual and involved with one of his generals and childhood friend, Hephaesteion. Alexander himself invited the rumors by actively comparing himself and Hephaesteion to Achilles and Patroclus, another rumored homosexual coupling.51 Olympias actively pushed a young Alexander to marry and pick a concubine, as she was alarmed at his apparent lack of interest in women (that seemed to be so natural an urge for his own father, as well as other “normal” boys).52 To my interpretation, Alexander’s specific sexual preferences are immaterial, since he did his duty and produced a male heir. The important aspect is Alexander’s own professed asexuality, for lack of a better term, that this author believes has filtered down to inform the sexuality, personality, and tone of the Alexander in the Romances. Alexander would often say that sleep and sex only reminded him of his mortality.53 This type of sexual role model, a man who only engages in sex for procreative rather than pleasure-driven needs, and sees sex as a distraction from his noble goals, would prove worthy for a Byzantine Emperor such as Alexios III.

As a counterpoint to the idea that the Byzantines would have found Roxane’s foreign-ness displeasing and as a complaint about the marriage, it should be noted that Alexios III’s own family line, descended from the Constantinopolitan Komnenians, had a history of political marriages to foreign brides.54 Within this family history, the marriage to Roxane would have made sense to a Komnenian ruler. Therefore the relative inattention paid to Roxane by the text and images may just be a reflection of a male-centered story created by an androcentric society.
The attention that is paid to Roxane in the images, though, functions in a similar manner to other depictions of women within the codex. She is always shown finely dressed and crowned in the informal dress style most commonly applied to female figures of the manuscript (folios 85r, 85v); on the occasion of her wedding, when she assumes the position as wife and empress to Alexander, she is shown in full formal, ceremonial dress, with the *loros* and crown with *prependulia*, and wide sleeves. In this way, Roxane is presented visually as a Byzantine empress. Olympias, Roxane and, as will be demonstrated, Kandake, can all be visually considered proper Byzantine empresses through their costume. However, the Amazons do not possess the same costume status indicators, indicating their differing position and function from the three female characters above. On the other hand, if Alexios III and the Byzantines saw Alexander as prototypical Byzantine emperor, then perhaps only Olympias and Roxane are to be considered proper Byzantine empresses, while the other women of the manuscript who are depicted in a similar fashion are to be simply understood as other royal figures.

With the simple visual assertion that Roxane is to be viewed as a Byzantine empress, other aspects of her visual character play into her role as an example of a good woman, the Good Empress archetype. She is first presented as a good daughter to Darius – obedient and attentive to her father. Roxane follows his wishes and willingly accepts her betrothal to Alexander, and she mourns the loss of her father (folios 85r and 85v).

The most important visuals of Roxane, though, occur after the wedding scene on 91r. Her primary role as a Byzantine empress was to be the wife and supporter of
Alexander and to bear him children. She is required, and shown, to physically fulfill the role of support to her husband when he is poisoned at the end of the Romance. In the top register of folio 189v, she embraces and catches Alexander from behind as he screams in pain due to the poison – she is the only figure that makes physical contact with the king in this scene, and one of two in the lower register as he departs. On folios 190r and 193v she stands attentively at Alexander’s bedside and again is one of the only figures physically close to Alexander who makes physical contact with him, indicating her importance in the story. The reader also is aware that she fulfills her procreative role and role as queen-mother, as she is pregnant with Alexander IV at the end of the manuscript. Her sadness and emotion at the loss of her husband is indicated through her weeping gesture of raising her hands and handkerchief to her face (folio 85v), which further informs her personality as a good Byzantine woman and empress figure.

The captions accompanying the scenes of Roxane largely ignore her. She is only mentioned by name for the first time on folio 91r in the wedding scene caption; and is described only as “kind” on folio 190r, though kindness is a quality tangentially related to the Good Empress. This seemingly purposeful ignoring of Roxane within the captions may speak to the Greek, and then Byzantine, reluctance to acknowledge the fact that Alexander married a Persian. The Greeks found the marriage questionable, and, as discussed in Chapter 2, the Persians of the Romance were conflated with the current Turkish threat to Trebizond. It is significant, though, that the caption reiterates the text that Alexander specifically requested Roxane’s presence at his deathbed, underlining her importance and proper wifely personality.
Though Roxane and Alexander are never depicted alone in the manuscript’s images, it is important to see Roxane’s privileged position within the Trebizond Romance. Much like the other female characters in the codex, Roxane views Alexander as many others, specifically males, do not – she sees him vulnerable, weakened by poison, and, again, she is one of the few who makes physical contact with him. Her position as wife and empress would afford her this privilege and honor.

The other byzantinizing aspects of the Roxane images are found within the wedding scene. The long rectangular wooden table, as well as the utensils and food (radishes) included on the table, are indicative of the Late Byzantine period. Byzantine weddings were not as formalized an affair as many current-day wedding ceremonies, with the exception of the betrothal ring(s), the wedding crown, and perhaps the veil. No specifically designed or colored costume was exclusively associated with the Byzantine bridal costume. The formal loros dress was not worn at imperial weddings.

The most important part of a Byzantine wedding ceremony was the “crowning” of the couple – in fact the ceremony itself was named after this practice, στεφανωμα (“crowning”). The coronation of the couple with two special crowns, usually of flowers, metal, or silk, and connected to each other by a long white ribbon, defines the moment the couple is married. The crowns symbolize the couple’s chaste triumph over lust, their “enthronement” as king and queen of a new home, their martyrdom of selfishness and egotism. Long established since the 300s CE, these traditions, interestingly, do not seem to be explicitly visually rendered in the Trebizond wedding scene. The artist, of Georgian/Laz descent, may have been unfamiliar with Byzantine wedding practices,
leading to the omission of specific wedding imagery. This thesis proposes that the artist depicted the aftermath, or reception, of the wedding ceremony itself, after the couple have been symbolically crowned in marriage and have assumed the political crowns of the Byzantine emperor and empress. Alexander appears to wear the *loros* dress, but Roxane does not; though, again, there was no set wedding costume, so this detail is not entirely telling. A Byzantine reader would have assumed the image of the complete wedding ceremony (the crowning) and costume details, further supported by Alexander’s request to his mother on folio 89v and the top of 91r for everything necessary for his wedding.

**Kandake:**

If the performance of the Trebizond *Romance* had an intermission, then the second half would likely begin with the story of Alexander and Kandake. Situated immediately after Alexander’s foray into India and the prophecy of Alexander’s death, the Kandake episode essentially begins the falling action of the *Romance*, as well as Alexander’s fixation on avoiding death. Her story leads directly into Alexander’s confrontation with the last of the female characters, the Amazons.

The world-conqueror specifically seeks Kandake out, wishing to see this renowned queen. The make-up of the story involving Kandake follows this pattern: Alexander announces his intention to visit her, has another adventure on the way, and finally meets her and experiences another adventure with her. Another queen-mother figure, similar in many ways to Olympias, Kandake is the third example of a strong
female character within the Trebizond Romance, with a clear, byzantinized persona and intriguing interaction with Alexander.

The narrative concerning Kandake and Alexander is perhaps one of the most intriguing episodes within the Trebizond Romance. Trickery, secrecy, suspense, battles, and the whims of a queen all feature within the roughly 50 images (folios 140v-166v) that comprise this section.

Folio 140v (fig. 4.20) begins with Alexander departing on horseback with his cavalry, leaving a city and mountains behind him, hastening to reach the “famous palace of Semiramis,” where a middle-aged woman of admirable and rare beauty reigned. Alexander sends the woman, Kandake, the queen of Meroe, a letter on 141r (fig. 4.21). Many soldiers fill the background of the scene that utilizes the standard letter-writing iconography. Kandake receives and responds to the letter on the following page (141v, fig. 4.22).

The first impression the viewer is given of the queen shows her enthroned underneath a ciborium on the left of the scene, crowned and impressively dressed. The scene repeats the letter-writing composition. Kandake’s response is read to Alexander on 142r (fig. 4.23). Here, the scene mimics and responds to the previous one on 141v. Alexander, on the right of the image, is also enthroned and framed beneath a ciborium. He faces left and listens to Kandake’s letter. These two pages are constructed to reflect the action they narrate. As the narrative dictates that the two characters are communicating and responding through letters, the composition of the images reflect
that sense of call-and-response. Alexander and Kandake are similarly composed and respond to each other via the optical relationship between the pages. The captions found on these pages do not relate the contents of the letters and so, without access to the text itself, a bit of a jump occurs to the next scene. On the next page, Alexander responds with yet another letter to Kandake, but also sends the Egyptian Kleomenes to collect her gifts.

The next image, on 143r (fig. 4.25), introduces a curious aspect to the Kandake episode. When Kandake hears how Alexander has conquered many lands and defeated many great kings, she sends a painter to secretly make a portrait of Alexander. Here, Kandake is again enthroned beneath a ciborium to the left and the conspiratorial nature of the scene is indicated by her gesture as she speaks with the artist. Two artists depart on horseback on the right. The artist is shown secretly painting Alexander’s image on the next page (143v, fig. 4.26). The upper register shows Alexander, enthroned, facing soldiers and a courtier on the left, while the painter and his assistant are situated behind the king. Their bodies face right, but they turn back to look at Alexander while they work, their body language suggesting their furtiveness. The artist enters from the left of the lower register and brings Alexander’s portrait, which resembles an icon, to Kandake, who then hides the image in a box, which looks like a reliquary. A maid and three courtiers complete the scene.

The next sequence of images, spanning from 144v through 156v, do not feature Kandake, but focus on a story that involves one of Kandake’s sons, Kandaules. Alexander arrests Kandaules as he flees the country, coincidentally in fear of Alexander. Kandaules
tells Alexander that another king, Evagridis of the Vevrykes, has now captured his land and his wife. Alexander, before meeting directly with Kandaules, dresses his second in command, Antiochus, as the king – Alexander and Antiochus secretly switch places. Alexander/Antiochus defeats Evagridis and restores his possessions and wife to Kandaules. Antiochus as Alexander commands Kandaules to return to his mother, Kandake, and tell her of all the good he has seen. Kandaules asks that Antiochus (secretly Alexander) accompany him home. Along the way, the party comes across the caves of gods, and Kandaules says “...If you are not afraid, proceed and you will learn everything that will happen to you.” Alexander (still understood to be Antiochus by Kandaules) enters the cave and is advised not to become arrogant. Kandake reappears on folio 157v (fig. 4.27), where she is informed of the coming of Kandaules and his company. Kandaules, his wife, Alexander as Antiochus, and soldiers enter from the left in a rocky landscape, and Kandake, enthroned within a city setting, is informed by a messenger.

Folio 160v (fig. 4.28) depicts the first meeting of Alexander and Kandake. Kandaules and Antiochus/Alexander are situated on the left of the frame. Kandake, regally dressed, appears from the front of the palace and takes “Antiochus’” hand. A city occupies the background of the scene; a wall decorated in bas-relief with soldiers and elephants stands to the right of the queen. Importantly, and unfortunately, there exists the possibility of a folio missing in between 160v and 161r (fig. 4.29). The narrative of the Romance itself ties together the two threads woven by the images previously described – the secret portrait of Alexander by Kandake and Alexander’s trick of posing
as Antiochus. Kandake uses the portrait to recognize that “Antiochus” is actually King Alexander. The actual recognition scene, a candidate for high drama, is missing from the Trebizond Romance, leading many to believe that a page is missing from the codex.

In the next image, Kandake offers “Antiochus” gifts for saving her son and his wife. Kandake is depicted twice, to the left leading Alexander, whose hand she has taken, and to the right enthroned and speaking with her son and his wife.

The next folio, 161v (fig. 4.30), shows a confrontation on the left between Kandake, enthroned under a ciborium, and her other son, Doref, and his Indian wife (her ethnicity indicated by her dark skin coloring), who stand before the queen. Doref wants to kill Antiochus in retaliation for Alexander killing the Indian king Porus, the father of Doref’s wife. At the right of the scene, the two brothers, Kandaules and Doref, argue the point. The brothers almost come to war on folio 162r (fig. 4.31), but Kandake intervenes. Here, she is placed in the middle of the scene, between the brothers who flank her with two soldiers each. On 162v (fig. 4.32), Kandake pleads with Alexander to restore the peace between her sons – to the left Alexander listens to her concerns and they exit together at the right. Alexander again facilitates a reconciliation on folio 163v (fig. 4.33). Here, Alexander is shown speaking with three soldiers while Kandake looks on with a gesture of relief. The brothers embrace in the next image (164r, fig. 4.34). The brothers are placed in the center of the image under a kind of ciborium; Kandake and Alexander stand on the left encouraging them to reconcile; and three soldiers stand witness on the right. What is most intriguing about this particular image is that the artist
uses perspective – this is the only example throughout the entire codex and is uncommon for the usually flat Byzantine style.

The following image on folio 164v (*fig. 4.35*) depicts Kandake offering gifts to Alexander (the caption tells the reader that after ten days of his visit, Kandake still has not revealed Alexander’s secret). The queen is enthroned underneath a ciborium to the left and sends a string of her people with gifts to Alexander who is seated on the right. Alexander, still dressed as Antiochus, receives a gold crown and precious garments from the queen. Kandake sends Alexander back with many more gifts and Kandaules as an escort. Kandaules and Alexander are shown embracing in the upper left half of the single register, showing the moment Kandaules discovers Alexander’s identity. Alexander arrives back at his own camp, musicians play, and Kandaules’ men bow and honor Alexander, surprised at his real identity.

Alexander sends Kandaules and his men back with a message to Kandake on the next folio (165v, *fig. 4.36*), “Tell admirable Kandake that I wanted to attack against you with my phalanx, but her modesty, her real and pure love do not let me do it, as well as that she kept her promise to me.” The standard letter-writing iconography is used here. The final image of Kandake, and this particular story, is found on folio 166r (*fig. 4.37*). Kandake sits on her throne in the center of the image, surrounded by her court, beneath the city walls. To her left sit the wives of her sons, also enthroned, who speak to each other. An adjutant stands before Kandake and reads Alexander’s letter, while a turbaned man, who must be identified as Doref, stands behind Kandake and pulls his beard, a sign that he regretted not killing Alexander/Antiochus.
The figure of Kandake outside the world of the *Alexander Romance* is one shrouded within legend and myth – not far removed from the regal, intelligent woman depicted in the Trebizond manuscript. On folio 140v, Alexander is shown “hastening to reach the kingdom of Semiramis.” Semiramis was a legendary Assyrian warrior queen. She ruled over the kingdom after the death of her husband, conquered lands all the way into India, and had restored the great city of Babylon. There also existed a historical Assyrian queen, Shamuramat, who ruled on her own in the 9th century BCE and who is conflated with the figure of Semiramis. Semiramis’ military prowess and ability to rule proved to be of interest to Alexander, who also wished to be a great king, had conquered India, and settled in Babylon.

The location of the “kingdom of Semiramis” in the *Romance* is combined with the location of another great ancient power, the African kingdom of Kush. The capital city of Kush was Meroe – the seat from which the queen Kandake of the *Romance* ruled. The Kandake of the *Alexander Romance* can be understood as an ideological descendant of Semiramis in the tradition of female rulers.

Historical records reveal an intriguing political and ruling dynamic in this African kingdom, one quite different from the Greek or Byzantine construct. The rulers of Kush were both the males and females from the royal family. The power it seems, though, ran through the females of the royal family. A male did serve as king, yet he was the consort of the female ruler. Further, the king’s mother served as the main political advisor and co-ruler. In the Meroitic script, this queen-mother was called “Kandake.” The title carries the additional meanings of “honest” and “clear” – two qualities that can be
conveniently applied to the romantic version of the queen in the Trebizond codex.\textsuperscript{68}

Importantly then, the character from the \textit{Romance} named “Kandake” in the text and its captions is therefore a misnomer – this is in fact her title, not her name. All the queen-mothers of Meroe carried this title; four were known in the Greco-Roman world, Amanishakhete, Amanirenas, Nawidemak, and Malegereabar, signaling that this seeming error on the part of \textit{Romance}’s author is rather a convenient conflation of these historical figures into one character that carries their common title.

Additionally, the kings of Meroe carried the title, “sons of the Sun.”\textsuperscript{69} The relative positioning of the female and male rulers is made vivid on folio 160v. No king is depicted alongside Kandake anywhere in the codex. The lack of a male co-ruler, together with the hieratic scaling (Kandake is the same size, if not bigger, than main male characters, and always bigger than other female characters and courtiers), and her costume, visually underscore her status as the ultimate ruler in the kingdom. The sons, Doref and Kandaules, are included along with their wives, but they are relegated to the background of a scene or otherwise secondary to the figure of Kandake, especially the other royal women. These visual devices that help the viewer to focus on Kandake as the head ruler, on par with Alexander, also help to implicitly draw attention to the oddity of female rule in this exotic episode of the \textit{Romance}.

An important detail of this encounter is the word “supposed,” or, rather, “legendary.” The historical Alexander never traveled south of the oasis at Siwa in Egypt; he never traveled to Kush. Some versions of the \textit{Alexander Romance} also claim that Alexander brought his army to attack Meroe, but saw the army of Kandake brilliantly
arrayed and decided not to attack. Clearly, Kandake is a worthy descendant of Semiramis. This particular aspect of the Kandake episode does not appear in the Trebizond Romance, but the intelligence and presence of the queen-mother remains. As is often the case with legend, fact and myth mix to create a more compelling story, and Kandake is no exception.  

As with the other women discussed in this chapter, the first visual indicator of the byzantinizing of Kandake is her costume. Kandake, again like the other women, wears both a formal and informal Byzantine costume in her images. The first time the reader views the queen on folio 141v, she is shown wearing the formal robes of an empress – the manicae are wide and show an additional shirt underneath, it is a rich fabric, and the queen’s crown is large and decorated with prependulia. Kandake again wears the formal dress on folio 160v, when she first appears to Alexander. By far the most impressive visual rendering of female and royal Byzantine dress in the manuscript, the loros Kandake wears here is thoroughly detailed. The extra wide sleeves, elaborate decoration, and multi-colored (blue, gold, and red) fabric of the robe and sash leave no room for mistaking Kandake as anyone other than an empress. 

The difference between the formal and informal costumes is best seen on the facing folios 160v and 161r. In the other images, Kandake does not wear the loros, but instead a costume of a red robe/chiton and tight manicae, and a crown that lacks the prependulia. Kandake’s dress, similar to Olympia’s, includes a white veil underneath her crown that covers her hair and falls down over her shoulders. Additionally, Kandake’s chiton on folio 162v includes a white belt with a bow, drawing visual comparisons to the
costume of Alexios III in the emperor portrait on 1 recto. Again, regardless of which costume Kandake is shown wearing, she is undoubtedly identifiable as a Byzantine royal.\(^72\)

The most interesting aspect of the Kandake episode is one that relates back to the story of Olympias and Alexander’s conception: a trick. On folio 143r, the audience is shown Kandake dispatching an artist to paint a secret portrait of Alexander, so that she may know the face of this conquering king. The key element to the mission is its secretiveness, indicated by the artist sitting behind Alexander as he paints – out of sight and shielding the painting with his body (folio 143v). The image is a frontal portrait bust of Alexander.\(^73\)

When Alexander decides to dress up as his second-in-command, Antiochus, he leaves behind his imperial dress and becomes unrecognizable to anyone who had not seen him before. Only Kandake can later identify him as Alexander, because of her secret portrait. At first she does not reveal her knowledge of his deceit, but then, on a page that is missing from the codex, she reveals her knowledge of the trick to Alexander. In essence, Kandake plays her own trick on the world-conqueror.

Importantly, according to the textual versions of this episode (\(\alpha\) recension), the recognition scene happens in private – it is a secret shared only between Kandake and Alexander. This shared secret becomes a source of vulnerability for Alexander when Kandake’s second son, Doref, expresses his wish to kill Alexander’s messenger (the real Alexander) in retaliation for the death of Porus, Doref’s wife’s father, at Alexander’s hands. Kandake could easily be a good mother and give in to her son’s request, but
instead she saves Alexander by not revealing him and by supporting her son Kandaules, who protects “Antiochus” because he saved Kandaules’ wife.

The secret portrait and Alexander’s vulnerability at the hands of the queen-mother bring up two important byzantinizing aspects to the visual narrative. First, on folio 162v, and on the possible recognition page, Alexander is shown within Kandake’s private quarters. Like with Olympias inviting Nectanebo into her own bedchambers, Kandake does the same with Alexander. Both males trick, or attempt to trick, a queen with a false identity (Nectanebo as Zeus-Ammon, Alexander as Antiochus). This time, though, Kandake is aware of the deceit and outmaneuvers Alexander.

The discussion of gendered spaces in the Olympias section again applies here – why is Alexander, a male that is not Kandake’s son, husband, nor a eunuch, inside her private space? More so, the absolute private meeting of the two is odd, not even a maid is shown accompanying the queen in the presence of an unfamiliar male. If parallels are being made between Olympias and Kandake, one could argue for an implied sexual tension between Alexander and Kandake that mirrors Nectanebo’s motives. Kandake’s awareness of the deceit, and the caption on a later image that references Kandake’s “genuine and guileless love,” strip folio 162v and the assumed recognition scene of any erotic reading.

Instead, one reading may be that Kandake can serve as a sort of adoptive queen-mother to Alexander. In some recensions, Alexander describes Kandake as resembling his own mother. The identification of Alexander as the son of Zeus-Ammon would also
match the title given to the male rulers of Meroe, “son of the Sun.”\textsuperscript{74} This reading continues the pattern of Alexander’s perceived lack of interest in women, at least the lack of the erotic in the Trebizond Romance, but also Alexander’s susceptibility to women, especially motherly queens.

This potential adoptive reading to this set of images lines up with a historical encounter in Alexander’s life, adding another layer to the composition of Kandake. Early on in the Eastern campaign, Alexander fought to subdue the region of Caria (in modern day southwestern Turkey). Caria was a powerful kingdom under the Hecatomnid dynasty, but was considered to be a Persiansatrapy.\textsuperscript{75} The current king of Caria was deposed and his queen, Ada, reached out to Alexander for help. If Alexander restored her to the throne, she would submit to his army. Importantly, in relation to the Romance and Kandake character, Queen Ada adopted Alexander.\textsuperscript{76} This adoption made Alexander the legal heir to the Carian throne, especially given the Eastern tradition of descent through the female line, enabling him to smoothly integrate the region into his new government.\textsuperscript{77}

The second byzantinizing element connected to this particular sequence is the portrait itself. The portrait is included in the representation on folio 143v. Icon-worship was a very important aspect of Byzantine Christianity and was the source of two great periods of struggle within the Church and Empire known as Iconoclasm (726-787 CE, 814-842 CE). The Iconoclasm struggle focused on the use of icons to worship the holy, whether one was worshipping the image and committing idolatry or worshipping the entity the icon represented. The period of Iconoclasm was long passed at the time of
the creation of this manuscript and so the portrait image should not be read as a commentary on icon-worship, but instead as another unconscious indicator of the manuscript’s “byzantine-ness.” To a Byzantine audience, the image of Alexander would draw comparisons to the ubiquitous icon. This association would be taken further on folio 143v, in which the artist renders Kandake receiving Alexander’s portrait and hiding it away in a box. This box clearly resembles a reliquary, in which an icon or other holy item would be stored.

The biggest proponents of icon-worship in the Byzantine Empire were women. It was a series of empresses that ensured the survival of the practice and helped to end Iconoclasm. And it was women, more specifically mothers, that were responsible for teaching and perpetuating religious practice and custom to the children, helping to strengthen the health, or hygeia, of the household and Byzantine culture. Women were further associated with icon-worship because of gendered spaces within Byzantine culture. Icons could be kept within the house or private sphere and provide a means of worship to women without exposure to the public space of a church (which was an even further gendered space). Therefore the combination of a portrait that resembles an icon with the female figure of Kandake would create strong visual cues to icon-worship and its female associations. Kandake, as a Good Empress-like figure, would especially be involved and associated with the religious practice.

The captions that accompany the images of Kandake reinforce the visual portrayal of her as a Byzantine empress and add to the perception of her as a model ruler within Byzantine understanding. The first mention of Kandake within the rubrics
occurs on folio 140v, two folios before the audience first sees her. The caption translates to (top) “...he hastened to see the famous palace of Semiramis. The whole of that region was ruled by / (bottom) a middle-aged woman of remarkable and incomparable beauty.” With the very first mention of the queen in the captions which precedes the first image of her, Kandake is immediately identified as the ruler of the land, with no mention of a co-ruler, consort king or other figure. As the images and captions tell the viewer, the only royal males around Kandake are her sons, Kandaules and Doref; there is no mention of the husband visually or in the captions. Her age testifies to her wisdom, and the mention of her “incomparable beauty” marks her as a figure to meet.

The next set of rubrics that refer specifically to Kandake is found when Alexander finally meets the queen-mother. On 160v, when she and Alexander see each other for the first time, she is described as wearing “…a royal diadem, and exhibited incomparable bearing.” These words emphasize the visual representation of Kandake as a Byzantine ruler (the diadem) in the manuscript, and also the manner in which she is expected to conduct herself. The words assure the reader that Kandake is able to handle herself and situations properly, specifically one in which she is greeting the (assumed) courtier of another leader.

On 162v, the rubric speaks to Kandake’s desire to keep her family together and her intelligence in consulting such a wise person as Alexander, “Kandake, anxious that her sons not come to a confrontation, asked Alexander, as a wise person, to make peace between them.” Folio 164v reads, “The noble Kandake keeps Alexander’s secret and,
after ten days, she gives him royal gifts worthy of his scepter.” The final caption referring to the queen, on 165v, translates to, (top) “...Alexander...said: tell the wondrous Kandake, previously I wanted to dispatch the phalanx against you; / (bottom) but your dignity and genuine and guileless love do not allow me to do this, as well as the fact that you kept your promise to me.” These last two rubrics both refer to Kandake’s trustworthiness, her comportment (noble and dignified), and her generosity and awareness of politics (she gave him the correct amount of gifts). A reference to the proper type of love she shows Alexander is also given, one devoid of sexual intent, “genuine and guileless.”

As mentioned above, one version of the *Alexander Romance* has Alexander retreating before the face of a brilliantly arrayed army led by Kandake. In the Trebizond version, though, it the queen’s kindness and trustworthiness that stays Alexander’s army. Related to the captions, this change in narrative still reflects the strength of Kandake, but shifts it into a strength appropriate to a Byzantine empress, who was not allowed in military affairs. The captions chosen to describe Kandake certainly reinforce the re-forming of the African queen-mother into a familiar Byzantine model of a female ruler. 80

In the course of his encounter with Kandake, Alexander comes perilously close to death, but is saved by the good graces of a clever old queen. This queen embodies many of the traits that a good Byzantine Empress should possess — devotion to family, proper social etiquette and political savvy, to name a few. Kandake represents the last of the
three direct models for a Byzantine Empress. Her story transitions easily into that of the next female characters in the Trebizond Romance, the almost anti-model Amazons.

Alexander initiated contact with Queen Kandake through letters and he does the same with the Amazon leader. The geographic liberties that are clearly taken within the Romance are utilized in this narrative transition. Alexander supposedly travels from India straight to Kandake, who is located in Africa. The subsequent Amazon encounter has two potential geographic locations – the first, by the Black Sea and Pontus area, and the second, somewhere in Africa, a potential origin site for the Amazon race. The African site would align nicely with Alexander’s current geographic location within the story at the time he leaves to go find the Amazons, but the first option provides a more stimulating thought. As seen in Chapter 2, the area occupied by the Empire of Trebizond was the Pontus area and the Transmarine Provinces by the Black Sea. By situating the Amazons in the Pontus region, these characters are brought even more to life in the imagination of the codex’s audience, as they once occupied the very space the Trapezuntines now rule.

Just as the Byzantine aspects of the manuscript work to bring the narrative into a present 14th century Trapezuntine context and situate Alexander and Alexios in the same symbolic literary space, so, too, the Amazons, those mythical women, are brought into direct conversation with the book’s Trebizond context and audience.
Amazons:

The scenes of the Amazons, found on folios 168r-172v and 182r and v, immediately follow those of the Kandake episode and book-end those of Alexander and the Unclean Nations. Importantly, the Amazonian episode comes near the end of the Romance and Alexander’s life – these scenes would be fresh in the mind of the reader when he or she completes the codex.

As with the discussions of the other female characters, a brief description of the Amazonian images is needed to familiarize the reader with these characters.

On folio 166v (fig. 4.38), Alexander departs from the Kingdom of Meroe and Kandake toward the Amazons – he purposefully seeks them out. He and his cavalry move across a mountainous landscape. Alexander initiates contact with the Amazons by sending a letter stating,

I believe that you know that we have defeated Darius then Poros...and all the kings of the world. As this is what Providence desired for us, come and meet us gladly. Because we are coming to you. We are not coming for a bad cause, but in order to see your country and benefit you. Be well, you the most powerful Amazons.

On folio 167r (fig. 4.39), the king is depicted enthroned and surrounded by soldiers, dictating this letter, and dispatching the messenger. The captions above these two scenes communicate the contents of the letter. A page of text follows these two scenes, and then, on 168 recto (fig. 4.40), the first Amazons appear.
Alexander’s messenger arrives from the left and presents the letter to the enthroned Queen of the Amazons. She is attended by other Amazons bearing shields and spears. The caption states that the Amazons then replied “wisely and prudently” to Alexander. The actual formation of their response, though, is shown on the following folio, 168 verso (fig. 4.41). The Queen is, again, enthroned in the middle of the image, attended by comrades, dictating to a secretary, and a messenger is dispatched. In the upper part of the image, more Amazons are shown in a hollow from the waist up. A page of text separates this image from the next on 169 verso (fig. 4.42). Here, Alexander, enthroned, receives the letter and it is read by an adjutant. Folio 170r (fig. 4.43) sees a slight shift in the mood of the epistolary exchange.

Alexander continues the correspondence, but orders the Amazons to submit in order to save themselves. The letter iconography seen in the previous images is again repeated. The Amazons receive the letter (171r, fig. 4.44), replying with their submission and asking for an image of Alexander, “so that they may honor it in his place.” The letter iconography shifts in this scene, as well. The queen (still enthroned) hands the letter to another to read at the left; and at the right of the scene, a conference table of sorts is set and the queen and her women stand around it and gesture in a manner indicative of a meeting. Folio 171v (fig. 4.45) sees the Amazons sending their letter to “world ruler King Alexander,” along with gifts. Instead of a male messenger conveying the letter, two Amazons accompany him on horseback through a mountainous landscape. This scene marks Alexander’s first visual and physical contact with the Amazons, when he receives the two Amazonian messengers, their gifts, and
three years taxes. The caption states that he “admire[d] the beauty and prudence of them.”

Folio 172v (fig. 4.47) is not the most arresting visually, but important to the overall focus of this essay. Alexander, enthroned at the left, gives his large red war spear, in place of his likeness, to the two Amazons and instructs them to keep it, so that they “remember him.” To the right and above the city walls in the background, the two Amazons return home with the spear.

The next pages are dedicated to Alexander battling the King Eurymithres and shutting the Unclean Nations behind a mountain range and “Alexander’s Gate” (for example fig. 4.48). The mountains that frame his gate are named the “Mazi” or “Breasts” of the North. Once Alexander repels these kings back, he returns and “conquers the world in 100 days.” On folio 182r (fig. 4.49), though, he re-encounters the Amazons, though they seem to be of a different tribe, or at least a different group than those previously depicted. Alexander’s army, at left, reaches the Thermodon River, shown running vertically down the middle of the scene, and find Amazons in an array on the right bank of the river. These women are armed with shields and weapons of silver (as they did not have iron or bronze) and are said to be much larger than “the other women.” These Amazons are on horseback, and uniformly dressed in gold armor with black spots, with red shields. On the following folio, 182v (fig. 4.50), Alexander, enthroned in the middle, receives taxes from Amazons at the left, after “persuading them through letters to be subjugated and to pay taxes.” To the right of the scene, Alexander and his army depart the land of the Amazons, onto their next adventure. The
text of the *Romance* supplies more details of the encounters, such as the full extent of the letters, which, in turn, present more information to the reader on the Amazonian society and culture. The story is fully described to a reader solely through the images, though. It is what is included, and what is excluded from these scenes that provide clues as to which Alexander exists in this 14th century Byzantine context.

To fully examine and understand these scenes, one must first understand who the Amazons were popularly understood to be. They were a tribe of female warriors renowned for their skill and ferocity in battle, but also for their beauty. One possible derivation for their name “Amazon,” is from “a-mazos,” or “without breasts,” from their practice of cutting off the right breast in order to aid the use of weaponry. They lived isolated from men, only leaving the island they supposedly lived on to mate with the men of a nearby tribe once a year. To be an Amazon you had to be a virgin; once you had been “violated” by a man you could not return to the tribe, though you could send your female children to be raised as an Amazon. They carried battle-axes, small crescent shields, wore mid-length coats, long pants, and Phrygian hats. Supposedly after seeing the Greeks carry them, they adopted the bow and war spear into their arsenal.

The first mention of the Amazons comes in the *Aethiopis*, a poem attributed to Arctinus of Miletus that forms part of the epic Trojan cycle. The Amazons appear on the side of the Trojans and their queen fights, and loses to, Achilles in an incredibly pathos-laden episode. Ever since, the Amazons have been a favorite of story-tellers. The Amazons are sex and danger in one body. They appear frequently in Athenian
mythology, and nearly every Greek hero has an Amazon encounter, from Heracles to Theseus - why should Alexander be any different?\textsuperscript{88}

There are three important points to note in considering Amazons. First, they are called \textit{antianeirai}, or “equivalent to men.” Amazons stand as an “other,” and perhaps the ultimate “other,” as they are foreigners and women operating outside “normal” Greek social parameters.\textsuperscript{89} Women were understood to be the inverted male, and the Amazons only carry that association further. They stand as an anti-model for Greek women, and a nightmare for Greek men.\textsuperscript{90} Secondly, Amazons are always used as a motive, rather than the subject of the myth itself – they are always part of someone else’s story. Lastly, it is important to note that many Greeks did not believe that the Amazons existed, or at least that they were alive and active at any point in near history, especially by the time of Alexander.\textsuperscript{91} The Trojan episodes happened hundreds of years before even Homer and Arctinus told their stories. Since the Amazons were understood to be mythical, their presence within the \textit{Romance} must be examined. Their relegation to the realm of fiction and myth accentuates their use as a motive with an express purpose, rather than as an independent set of characters.\textsuperscript{92}

Regardless of their mythical status, Amazons still represented an “other” to Byzantine society. The Byzantines called themselves \textit{Romaioi}, Romans, and the largest ethnic population within the Empire was Greek. The Byzantines understood themselves as inheritors of the mythical and social legacies of these two ancient civilizations. Women were still second-class citizens within the Byzantine Empire, subject to the wishes of the patriarchy, and legally restrained and excluded from many societal
privileges and opportunities, such as military office. The right to rule was reserved solely for men, with only the most exceptional circumstances allowing otherwise. There are examples of empresses wielding immense power, but, again, these women are the exception and not the norm.93 A woman’s role within the Byzantine world was defined through her sex, relating back to the Greek idea that women were “inverted men.” The Byzantine woman was either the virgin, the mother, or a role defined by those two categories. The Empress was often considered to be the ultimate woman, or example, in the Empire, and it is through her position and status that we should understand the Amazons of the Trebizond Romance.

The Amazons depicted in the Trebizond Romance resemble contemporary fourteenth century Byzantine women through their dress, actions, and the wording applied to them through the text. This narrative device, of anachronistically dressing the characters and so placing them in the viewer’s immediate time period, brings the narrative to life on a much deeper level.

In comparison to the three other women of the codex, the Amazon queen is depicted in a much simpler, less formal costume. She wears a chiton with long, tight manicae, and a shoulder-length veil that covers her hair. Though her dress pales in comparison to Olympia’s or Kandake’s, there is no mistaking her for anyone but a queenly figure in Byzantine dress – she still wears the stemma crown and is enthroned with a footstool. Granted, again, it is a rather simplified version of the female royal dress (no loros is depicted), but nevertheless, her royal dress responds to the emperor regalia that Alexander wears, the jeweled loros, tzangia, and diadem with prependulia.94 The
Amazon women that accompany her are also dressed as contemporary Byzantine women, in long chitons and veils. The Amazons depicted in armor on folio 182 recto are the only outliers, as they are dressed like the soldiers depicted throughout the manuscript. The Byzantines did not depict the mutilated chest area of the Amazons, instead keeping to Greek traditions of depicting the beautiful body. In only one instance then, on 182r, are the Amazons shown as anything but the typical Byzantine woman. The lack of military dress applied to these women, again with one exception, detracts from their role as warriors. The first literary mention of these female warriors is in Homer’s *Iliad*, where he names them “Amazones antianeirai,” “Amazons, equals of men.” This adjective, “antianeirai,” carries the connotation of the male-like ability in warfare. The choice of costume here, then, presents the viewer not with the image of a warrior, just one of a woman.

The use of clothing to detract from the image of the female warrior that takes on male roles and male adjectives, such as “arête,” “axioma,” and “andreia” (honor, worthiness, manly courage), is taken a step further on folio 168r, where the viewer is first confronted with the image of the mythical Amazons. The viewer is in fact in a privileged position to first see the Amazons before Alexander does (his contact is through letters until 172r, *fig. 4.46*). In this image, three of the women hold shields. Two are round and have a red flower pattern. The third, located between the two round ones, is in the shape of an inverted teardrop and is rust-colored. These shapes are seen on soldiers throughout the codex, but the color and patterns exist only on this page. Immediately, the viewer is presented with a sign of the Amazons gender; the round
shields are a woman’s breasts, and the inverted teardrop her reproductive genitalia. Their weaponry, usually a symbol of their maleness, is given a feminine slant. The shields become almost decorative rather than functional, visually stripping the female warriors of part of their identity and reflecting the exclusion of Byzantine women from military duty.

An intriguing aspect of the Amazon-Alexander relationship is its sexual nature, or lack thereof. Historically, one way for a male to represent his conquest was through sexual relations with the women of his enemy. Additionally, Greek heroes are continuously sexually involved with women, either by consent or force. Alexander looked to heroes such as Heracles and Achilles as both ancestors and role models. Each had an Amazon encounter and so Alexander must have one as well. Both Achilles and Heracles’ interactions are sexually charged in similar, and different, ways to Alexander’s. The famous battle between Achilles and the Amazon Queen Penthesileia sees Achilles stab her through the chest and, as he does so, her helmet slips, revealing her femininity, and he falls in love with her. One way to dispatch an Amazon was through a chest wound, but the phallic and conqueror imagery is overwhelming. Achilles strips Penthesileia of her maleness when he pierces her with his spear and causes her helmet, her mask of masculinity, to fall away. It is the victory of the male over female, of right over wrong. The fact that it is a spear Achilles uses to kill his Amazon is significant in relation to Alexander’s Amazon encounter.

On folio 171r, the Amazons decide to submit to Alexander’s authority and additionally request for a portrait of the ruler so as to honor him. On folio 172v,
however, Alexander sends his giant red war spear in place of himself or an image. The caption reads, “...Alexander said to the Amazons: this is an eternal memorial for you, in place of King Alexander himself.” Alexander had used the spear as a symbol of his conquest earlier in the codex, against the Persians on folio 34v, but here, the spear takes on an additional meaning. His very image and identity is reduced to a symbol of his sex organ. He uses a powerful, and unmistakable, symbol of his male authority over the gender-confused Amazons. By sending the spear, he claims the virginal Amazons as his sexual conquest, deflowers the entire tribe, asserts his military authority, and places himself in the company of heroes, especially his ancestor Achilles. Aside from the blatant phallic imagery of the spear, the use of it as a symbol of sexual conquest further strips the warrior identity, or male-ness, of the Amazons. The Trebizond Amazons also wear veils instead of helmets, again visually triggering their femininity. Furthermore, the sexual nature of the act presupposes that the Amazonian women are exactly that, women, without any male attributes, physical or identity-related.

The Amazonian request for an image of Alexander to honor also works within Byzantine societal constructs, as has been demonstrated with the images of Kandake. Women were responsible for taking care of the household and teaching the children social and religious traditions, one of which was icon-worship. The spear is meant as a stand-in for the image of Alexander and so cannot be directly compared to an icon, which assumes an image. The spear, then, may instead refer to a relic and the practice of relic veneration popular in Christian tradition. In this way then, the artist
subtly keeps the Amazons in accordance with familiar Byzantine and Christian practices and associations.

The fact that Alexander chooses to conquer the Amazons symbolically through the spear-gift and through the use of letters is yet another fascinating layer to their relationship. As proud warriors, it would likely make sense for Alexander to fight a battle against the Amazons. Yet the closest he comes to that is on folio 182r when he comes across an array of armed women. Again, though, he chooses letters as his means of getting them to submit. That Alexander chooses diplomacy rather than warfare speaks to his ability as a leader, as well as his reluctance to fight them – perhaps this is the only acknowledgment of their agency and identity as warriors. The text illuminates the source of the problem for Alexander – “...If we conquer the enemy or put them to flight, that is regarded as a humiliation for them for the rest of time; but if they conquer us, it is only women that they have defeated. Now beware, Alexander, that the same thing does not happen to you” (α recension). If he fought them and lost, he would not only lose his empire, but his very identity as a man. Thus, letters and symbols are the only way in which Alexander can effectively conquer the Amazons, further emphasizing the unusual relationship of Alexander to women within the Romance. Perhaps it is also a visual metaphor for the victory of civilization over barbarians that Alexander chooses diplomacy over war. Additionally, two traditional symbols of triumph and glory that occur within the codex - celebratory musicians and prostrating figures - are absent in any of these scenes.
With this point in mind, the fact that the Amazons show up twice in the visual narrative highlights a text-image connection. In the text, the Amazonian scenes take place in an unbroken sequence, yet, in the images, there is a story placed between when Alexander gifts his spear and when he finally departs the land of the Amazons. The scenes depicted on folios 182 r and v (Alexander encountering an array of Amazons at the Thermodon and persuading them to submit) are included within a letter Alexander writes recounting his interaction with the Amazons. The adventure that is inserted between the Amazons scenes functions as both an entertainment device and another layer of emphasis on the abnormality of the women warriors. In the interlude scenes, Alexander goes to war with Eurymithres and beats back the armies and kings of 22 nations. He barricades these 22 nations behind a mountain range and a gate. He names the gate, “Caspian,” and the mountains that frame the gate, the “Mazi of the North.” Mazi translates to “breasts,” as we have seen with the potential etymology of the name “Amazon.” The battle scenes, such as on folio 178v, and rest of the Eurymithres and Unclean Nations interlude, function to break up the visual monotony of the static letter-exchange scenes between Alexander and the Amazons. The interruption also seems to function as a release for Alexander, a way for him and the artists to show his military prowess and the conventional manner of conquest. It also leaves the warfare to the male characters, signaling to the viewer the oddity of the Amazons, again neutering their agency, and adhering to Byzantine practices. The term mazi also works as a witticism on the part of the artists. The captions make use of the plural of the root of the word “Amazon” to refer to the fact that, here, there are two breasts versus the
single Amazon one, and also as a clever reference to the Amazonian scenes that frame this one.

Finally, there is a caption-image relationship that expands on the byzantinizing of the Romance and the Amazonian scenes. As stated earlier, the captions provide a third way for the reader to interact with the story and are often word-for-word sentences from the text that quickly summarize the action of the image. Together with the visual representation of the Amazons, the captions utilize wording that works within the Byzantine idea of the ideal empress. The very nature of the empress is a paradox – she is a woman with access to power. The ideal Byzantine empress, then, is one that respects her role as the emperor’s consort and (potential) future emperor’s mother – returning to the concept that a woman is defined by her status as a virgin or mother. She stays within the private sphere, and serves to legitimize and support her husband. She may accompany him on campaigns as a sign of support, but she is not welcomed on the battlefield, nor is she welcome in any institutional place within the state organization. The paradigmatic good empress is pious and philanthropic, humble and chaste, devoted to her marriage, and educated. Beauty is not stressed nearly to the extent as it is for the emperor, but it is an aspect of the ideal empress. The caption on folio 168r reads, “...When they had received and read it, they replied to him with prudence and wisdom.” 168 verso’s caption also deems their response “extraordinary and truly wondrous.” When Alexander receives the gifts from the Amazons, and physically interacts with them for the first time, the caption notes that, once he had seen “…the beauty of the women, and their wisdom, he was profoundly moved.” It is the use of such adjectives and
phrasing that links the behavior of the Amazons, removed to a Byzantine context outside their normal behavior or expression, to the ideal empress notion. Furthermore, the Amazons clearly possess a queen or empress-like figure, indicated by her dress and enthronement, yet she consults an assembly of women (folio 171r) when debating whether to submit to Alexander. The ideal Byzantine empress likewise would not function on her own without the input of others.

The inclusion of an Amazon encounter into the life of Alexander the Great provides the reader with drama and a lively story. Put into a Byzantine context, this particular episode of the Alexander Romance provides insight into the relationship between Alexander and women, as well as the place of women within Byzantine society. Much like the personality and legacy of Alexander is shifted to fit its current context, so too is the personality and legacy of the Amazons changed to represent fourteenth century Byzantine constructs. From their dress to the captions that label them, the Amazons are thoroughly byzantinized. Furthermore, they allow a specifically Byzantine version of Alexander the Great to play out in this particular Romance. Alexander is an active, benevolent, diplomatic, mighty conqueror who tames even the greatest of threats to Byzantine identity – only Alexander can conquer the famed Amazonian warriors through letters and not war.

**The Good Empress and the Women of Alexios III’s Life:**

The women of the historical Alexander’s own family were strong, fierce figures. Alexander’s half-sister Kynane and his mother Olympias both led armies; Olympias
fought for her and her family’s political position her entire life; and Alexander’s wife Roxane was said to be a beautiful, strong-willed woman. Considering the personalities of the women from Alexander’s actual life, it is not surprising that the women of his legendary one display the same qualities. The images and captions of the Trebizond Romance preserve these strong personalities, as well as their unusual and privileged interactions with Alexander. The women of the Romance see Alexander at his most vulnerable, from the beginning to the end of his life. In the case of Roxane and the Amazons especially, they challenge him to be an astute political and diplomatic leader and know when not to fight. In the case of Olympias and Kandake, one could argue that Alexander owes his very life to these two women.

It seems that the four main female characters of the Trebizond Romance are constructed in a parallel manner – Olympias, a queen-mother, and Roxane, a queen and consort, occupy the first half of the narrative; Kandake, another queen-mother, and the Amazons, a sort of anti-model consort, occupy the second. Therefore, in each portion of the story, Alexander encounters a motherly queen figure and also interacts in an implied sexual manner with a woman, with Roxane through his marriage and with the Amazons through the spear imagery. There are many parallels between their personalities and visual renderings as well. They are all visually described as Byzantine empresses, and the captions work with the images to add to and reinforce this appearance. Each woman can function on her own as a single entity, showcasing qualities associated with the Byzantine concept of the Good Empress, as well as a special relationship with Alexander. Yet taken together they prove a much more compelling figure. As a whole they form the
single body of the archetypal Good Empress. It is only in considering these four separate women as a single entity that another theory appears about this manuscript and its commissioning.

Chapters 1 and 2 discussed the conditions under which the manuscript was created and the likely recipient of the book, the Trapezuntine Byzantine emperor Alexios III. It was proven that Alexios III looked to Alexander as a role model and that the manuscript functioned as a guidebook for Alexios. The focus, or at least the lack of de-emphasis, placed onto the women of Alexander’s life, combined with their formation of the archetypal Byzantine Good Empress, raise the possibility of Alexios’ mother, Irene, being the one who commissioned the manuscript as a gift for Alexios. Irene’s personality may also have been reflected in the strength, iron will, and involvement of Olympias – Irene was one of Alexios’ biggest supporters and advisors throughout his reign and she accompanied him on many of his campaigns, likely as Olympias would have if given the opportunity. Regardless of whether Irene is the one who commissioned the codex, the manuscript still functions as a complete manual for Alexios. With this reading in mind, not only is the codex a guide for Alexios as a ruler, but it is a guidebook for his empress as well, the type of woman she should be or should model herself after.

Irene would have played a role in Alexios’ marriage – it was the maternal duty to help choose the bride; the groom’s mother would also care for and instruct the new daughter-in-law. If the manuscript was commissioned by Irene before Alexios married in 1351 to Theodora Komnene Kantakouzene, it is entirely possible that facets of a model empress would be applied to the female characters. If the manuscript was
commissioned on the occasion of Alexios’ coronation or wedding (within one year of each other), then the book and its images could have helped construct Alexios’ and Theodora’s imperial personality. If the manuscript was commissioned later in Alexios’ reign, then it still would have functioned to inform and maintain an ideal royal persona. The Trebizond Romance then becomes an even more active and performative instructive tool for Alexios III. It is through the empress, after all, that a chance for future life is given.
fig. 4.1
Folio 6r

fig. 4.2
Folio 6v
fig. 4.9
Folio 42v

fig. 4.10
Folio 59r
fig. 4.16
Folio 89v

fig. 4.17
Folio 91r
fig. 4.20
Folio 140v
fig. 4.21  
Folio 141r

fig. 4.22  
Folio 141v
fig. 4.23
Folio 142r

fig. 4.24
Folio 142v
fig. 4.27
Folio 157v

fig. 4.28
Folio 160v
fig. 4.37
Folio 166r
fig. 4.42
Folio 169v

fig. 4.43
Folio 170r
fig. 4.50
Folio 182v

fig. 4.51
Folio 186r
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is to present a Byzantine version of the *Alexander Romance* and, further, of Alexander the Great himself. Why the legend of Alexander III of Macedon has captured the imaginations of millions and survived throughout the ages is a question for another study. What this thesis posits is how one culture has attempted to claim the story of Alexander, and how that story was communicated within that culture. The Venice Hellenic Institute’s *Codex Graecus 5* is a perfect example of how a society has changed the *Romance* to reflect its own values and worldviews. Not only does this manuscript reflect the Trapezuntine Byzantine culture it was created within, but it also speaks to the circumstances and desires of its imperial audience, the Trapezuntine ruler Alexios III Megas Komnenos.

Many of these shifts in presentation are perhaps unconscious choices; for example, how else would King Alexander dress than in the costume of the Byzantine Emperor? As modern viewers, these changes stand out to us, but to a Byzantine viewer they just made sense. Thus, the Venice Hellenic Institute’s version of the *Alexander Romance* embodies the historical context surrounding the mid-14th century Byzantine state and imperial court of Trebizond under Alexios III.
Chapter 1 examined the manuscript itself, how it was made, and how it performed for its readers. Chapter 2 explored the circumstances surrounding the commissioning of this unique and extensive codex, looking at the evolution of Alexander’s image in the Byzantine world and his function as a role model for Alexios III. Chapters 3 and 4 presented two major byzantinizing elements and this thesis’ new contribution to Alexander studies—religion and gender roles. It is clear that Alexander the Great must be situated in the Christian mythology; such a great and influential figure must be related to the current dominant religion. The female characters of the Trebizond codex also embody this idea of unconscious Byzantine signifiers – how else would you visually describe an empress? What better way to reconcile the obvious pagan elements of Olympias’ role than to relate it to a Byzantine superstition?

This thesis has explored the aspects of the Trebizond Romance that reveal the 14th century imperial Trapezuntine court context of this manuscript. If compared to other versions of the Alexander Romance from other cultures and epochs outside of Byzantium and the 14th century, it is clear that one would find a similar attempt at claiming Alexander. The clothing and architecture would reflect popular contemporary styles, the narrative and scenes chosen to illustrate would fluctuate, and the very personality of Alexander might shift as well.

These changes would depend on the purpose Alexander is to serve within his current context. This point is conveniently demonstrated within the pages of this manuscript where Turkish inscriptions have been added to every illustrated page of the codex. These inscriptions were added c. 1461 CE when the manuscript ended up in
Ottoman hands after the conquest of Trebizond by Mehmed II the Conqueror. The inscriptions function to transform the codex into a “pre-modern graphic novel” that would be accessible to a Turkish language reader. The extensive and detailed illustration of the manuscript makes the Trebizond Romance legible and accessible to anyone, but the Turkish inscriptions add another layer of exposition for a Turkish viewer.

What makes the presence of the Turkish inscriptions prescient for this thesis is that they provide additional and different information than that given in the Greek text. The Turkish captions are informed by the Greek ones, but often go further and take great liberties in their interpretation and use of the Greek captions. Their content and formation also comply with Ottoman cultural norms and literary conventions. Clearly the author of the inscriptions was working with a knowledge of the Alexander Romance, yet one that differed from the Greek understanding. Most importantly, these inscriptions provide us with an active participant in the process of claiming Alexander and his story. Much like Alexios III envisioned himself as a new Alexander, the Ottoman ruler Mehmed II also had a great interest in Alexander the Great – likely enabling the nearly complete survival of this fantastic manuscript. Mehmed II also saw himself as a successor of Alexander and, additionally, as a successor to the Byzantine legacy. Mehmed’s claim to Byzantium is likely a more political assertion than one born of true cultural admiration; but, regardless, it seems that Alexander occupied a privileged position within this transition of power. Whoever can claim Alexander, claims the world he conquered.
This project reflects just one avenue of scholarship that can be applied not only to *Codex Graecus 5*, but also to the wider world of Alexander studies. Many more episodes and adventures exist in the *Romance* than have been discussed here, such as Alexander’s relationship with Darius, his patricide of his “father” Nectanebo, and his encounter with the Gymnosophists. Popular Alexander stories like the Diving Bell or Alexander’s Celestial Ascent are not included in this version of the *Romance*, though the missing folios at its end may have contained text and images of the Ascent. Further research could explore the other major narratives illustrated within the Trebizond *Romance* or what has been left out of this version.

Additionally, the Trebizond *Romance* could be compared to the other remaining Byzantine manuscripts of the *Romance*, and could potentially explore any Palaeologian/Nicaean or Epirote tendencies that are reflected in the imagery. The concept of anachronism could also be explored in relation to this manuscript and its teaching role in the imperial court.

With the continued study and discovery of information on the Empire of Trebizond, an exploration of other Trapezuntine or Megas Komnenoi manuscripts and their production could also be enlightening. The Ottoman influence on this manuscript or the manuscript’s influence on Ottoman versions of the *Romance* could also be put forward as a continuation of this particular study. In short, this thesis has contributed an important, but nevertheless evolving, exploration of this extensive manuscript and its intriguing place in history.
In conclusion, the memory of Alexander the Great is very much alive and active within the pages of the Trebizond Romance. The viewer moves along with Alexander as he conquers the world and, as he goes, he teaches Alexios III.

Achilles and the heroes of the past were favorites of Alexander and, as he traveled far outside of home in Macedonia, he carried a copy of the *Iliad* with him, even supposedly sleeping with it under his pillow. When Alexander and his army took Persia, a beautifully decorated and bejeweled casket found its way into the king’s hands. Alexander then put his prized *Iliad* in this precious container, so as to better protect it and signify its importance to him.

For Alexios III, Alexander is that favorite hero of the past, and this manuscript, with its scale and vibrant, jewel-like colors, is his *Iliad* within a precious container. Just as Achilles and his stories were very much alive for Alexander, Alexander, his stories, and the lessons they impart were brought to life for Alexios III within the pages of this magnificent book.

Alexander lives on in modern Greek and Macedonian folklore. A song that tells of the ancient conqueror begins, “Που ιν ο Αλέξανδρος ο Μακεδονις, που ορίσεν την οικουμενήν ολήν – Where is Alexander the Macedonian, who ruled the whole world?” Here, the question is rather “Which” Alexander?
INTRODUCTION (Pages 1 – 7)


2 Stoneman, Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend, 2.


5 Stoneman, Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend, 17, 19-20. To briefly address the multitude of other traditions of the Romance: Arabic and Persian versions of the Romance also appeared by the 6th century CE. A Syriac translation of Pseudo-Kallisthenes was created around this time, as well as an Arabic version circa 680 CE. The most famous version of the Persian line is from the 12th century, Nizami’s Iskandarnamah. In the 5th century CE stories appear in Talmud in the Hebrew tradition. A Latin translation of the story was produced around 338 CE by Julius Valerius. This Latin translation would sink into obscurity until the rediscovery of the Greek original version of the Romance in the 10th century by Leo the Archpriest of Naples during a diplomatic mission to Constantinople. This particular translation, known as the Historia de proeliis (“The History of Alexander’s Battles”) would ensure the survival and popularity of the narrative throughout the medieval period in the West. In total, the Alexander Romance has survived from roughly 338 CE to one of the most recent versions of the narrative, the Phyllada tou Megalexandrou in 1669, and has been translated into French, German, Spanish, Italian, Syriac, Turkish, Ethiopian, Malay, and many other traditions and languages.
6 Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend*, 221. Stoneman proposes 500 CE instead; regardless the 6th century seems to be the accepted timeframe for the α recension.


10 Trahoulia, *The Venice Alexander Romance*, 76.


CHAPTER ONE (Pages 8-18)


2 Another of the Byzantine *Romances, Marciana Graecus 408*, dated to the late 14th century, also bears signs that it was meant to be illustrated. Its pages possess space for 86 illustrations, none of which were executed. University of Oxford, “MSS Barocci,” [http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/medieval/barocci/barocci.html](http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/medieval/barocci/barocci.html). See also: Trahoulia, *Venice Alexander Romance*, 69-70.


4 The scholar Nicolette S. Trahoulia, currently at Portland State University, is the source for much of the information of this thesis, specifically in reference to the material on the physical description of the manuscript, its performativity, and its relation to the Empire of Trebizond. Three of her publications are cited throughout this thesis.


7 Trahoulia, *The Venice Alexander Romance*, 100.


14 Trahoulia, “The Venice Alexander Romance: Pictorial Narrative,” 152, 161. See also: Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, 139-140.


16 Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, 143.

17 Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, 142.

18 Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, 144.


CHAPTER TWO (Pages 24­33)


3 Nicolette S. Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, Hellenic Institute Codex Gr. 5: A Study of Alexander the Great as an Imperial Paradigm in Byzantine Art and Literature (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1997), 158-160. An example of this is found at the beginning of the text in red ink (so comparable to the rubrics in the rest of the codex) on folio 2r. It reads, “Extraordinary and truly wondrous narrative of the universal ruler King Alexander.” This example text possesses both laudatory descriptors and a distinctly Byzantine title, κοσμοκρατορος, to describe Alexander. The κοσμοκρατορ title is consistently applied to Alexander throughout the captions of the codex (141v, 148v, 153v, 171v, and 175v).


5 Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, 148.

6 Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, 96. A substantial consideration on the γ recension is its actual creation. The two earliest examples of this recension, this codex and the Codex Bodleianus Barocci 20, are both from the 14th century. It is entirely possible then that the γ recension was created in the 14th century and specifically for this immense and luxurious example of the Alexander Romance (Codex Graecus 5).


Cyril Toumanoff, “On the Relationship between the Founder of the Empire of Trebizond and the Georgian Queen Thamar,” *Speculum* (1940), 299. [http://jstor.org/](http://jstor.org/) Queen Tamar of Georgia was a relative of Alexios and David Komnenos, Trebizond’s first rulers. The Georgian (and Armenian) influence was noted in Chapter 1 on the manuscript’s production – its three artists were likely members of the Laz, the Georgian population of Trebizond. See also: Eastmond, *Art and Identity*, 20.


Founded in 1204 after the fall of Constantinople to Western Crusaders. Again, a reminder that this Alexios I is not to be confused with the more famous Alexios I of First Crusade and *Alexiad* fame.


21 Trahoulia, *The Venice Alexander Romance*, 11-14. John II Komnenos is the first to explicitly see himself as a successor of Alexander; thereafter the comparison becomes a common rhetorical subject in imperial συγκρισις (“comparison”). See also: Trahoulia, *The Venice Alexander Romance*, 29-35, 44.


25 Trahoulia, *The Venice Alexander Romance*, 47. Though Alexios participated in many military campaigns versus the Turkoman groups, it seems as if the warlike and strategic spirit of Alexander did not quite translate to Alexios III. As one author described him, “a sovereign so destitute of military talents as Alexios III,” though a chronicler of Alexios’ reign, Panaretos, recalls Alexios’ bravery in defeating the Turks. Naturally, though, a historian working during Alexios’ reign would not insult his emperor, so this description may in fact be far from the truth. See: Finlay, *The History of Greece*, 379. See also: Trahoulia, *The Venice Alexander Romance*, 59.


29 In this image, Alexander lacks a beard, which was usually used as an indicator of an of-age male in Byzantine imagery. This beardlessness reflects Alexander’s historically attested young age at his ascension to the Macedonian throne. This visual descriptor of youth would also apply to Alexios III, who gained the crown at the age of eleven – serving as yet another point of connection between the two rulers.

Pseudo-Callisthenes and Trahoulias, *The Greek Alexander*, 39. See also: Trahoulia, *The Venice Alexander Romance*, 160. The architecture that surrounds Alexios likely would have been repeated in the second portrait image of Alexander.

Ball, *Byzantine Dress*, 13-28, 35, 89-92. An additional point to this entire thesis discussion of byzantinization; the dress of the soldiers in the Trebizond manuscript is consistent with medieval Byzantine armor as described in Ball, 89-92, but here is applied to all soldiers (infantry and cavalrymen alike and across ranks, or otherwise no easily visible indicator of rank is detailed). See also: Mark C. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society, 1204-1453* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1992).


Trahoulia, *The Venice Alexander Romance*, 208. This association of a royal figure with the sun was a long tradition harking all the way back to antiquity (and was applied to Alexander in antiquity, as well) and maintained by the Roman rulers. Hailing the emperor as the sun became a stock motif in Byzantine epideictic.
CHAPTER THREE (Pages 38-59)


3 Stoneman, Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend, 204, 219. We do know that a form or forms of the Romance were continuously available before the 12th century and resurgence of education under the Komnenoi. The 12th century is considered the century of the Komnenoi.


5 The orb was not actually a real object, though it is a common symbol in imperial imagery since the Early Christian period. The orb, along with other symbols, expresses the status of the emperor as an intermediary between the people and Heaven. See also: Judith Herrin, Women in Purple: Rulers of Medieval Byzantium (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 15. Add: Liz James, Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium (London: Leicester UP, 2001), 54.


7 Stoneman, Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend, 218.


10 M. Manousakas and A. Paliouras, Guide to the Museum of Icons and the Church of St. George (Venice: Institute, 1976), 33, fig. 3.


12 Stoneman, Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend, 10.


17 Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Art and Death in Medieval Byzantium,” <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/63.68.1-13>. This could reflect the
Christian belief that the soul rises to heaven and a physical shell remains, such as in the ascension of Christ to Heaven.

18 At times, Alexander’s costume has a star pattern, visually relating his status as a kosmokrator, as on folio 28r (fig. 3.10).


21 Venice Hellenic Institute, “Script and miniature painting in the manuscripts of the Hellenic Institute in Venice (12th – 14th cent.).” http://194.177.217.107/scripts_and_miniatures/ These robes are called the “phelonio,” and are related to Roman penula.

22 Caption translation from folio 179r: (top) “Here Alexander prays to God saying: I call upon your much praised name for the fulfillment of my request that these two mountains come together. Do not overlook me, wretched as I am and bold enough to speak in this way. For I know of / (bottom) your guardianship over me and your supreme goodness. Immediately the two mountains came together, though they had been previously separated by twelve cubits.” And on 179v, “When Alexander saw this happen, he praised God....


25 Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, 212. An important point to be made is that, over time (and as the apocalypse kept not occurring), Gog and Magog were continuously identified with the current threat from the East – first the Huns, then the Arabs/Saracens, and during the Trapezuntine Byzantine period, the Turks.


28 A reminder – Byzantines called themselves Romaioi, “Romans.” They were the Eastern Roman Empire. “Byzantine” is a later designation.

29 Trahoulia, The Venice Alexander Romance, 15, 42.

30 Stoneman, Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend, 8, 13-17.

31 Plutarch, Life of Alexander, 2.2.

32 Jesus would be the complete, correct expression of a deity’s issue. Olympias could also draw connections to an Eve-like figure due to her association with snakes. Also, just as Eve is involved in the Fall of humanity and the Virgin Mary in its Redemption, Olympias almost gets the divine birth right with Alexander, but Jesus again shows the correct way and fulfillment of that idea.

33 Quintus Curtius Rufus, “Alexander takes Tyre,” Livius, http://www.livius.org/aj-al/alexander/alexander_t09.html. See also: Encyclopedia Britannica, “Crucifixion,” http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/144583/crucifixion. Historically, Alexander is rumored to have crucified over 2,000 survivors from the siege of Tyre, along with the doctor that failed to treat his friend Hephaestion, though usually the practice is foreign to Greek culture. Crucifixion was outlawed during the rule of Constantine the Great, in deference to Jesus Christ. This means that crucifixion was not a contemporary Byzantine practice and is in fact referring to an ancient practice, and one that was decidedly considered to be non-Greek at that.

34 A folio is in fact missing where the scene should occur. It is likely that the scene was included, but has since been lost.


CHAPTER FOUR (Pages 94-156)


4 Herrin, Women in Purple, 4, 75, 83-92, 191. See also: Barbara Hill, Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025-1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology (Haven: Pearson/Longman, 1999). Some of the most famous examples of these powerful empresses are: Irene, mother and co-emperor to Constantine VI; Theodora, widow of Theophilos; Empress Zoe in the 11th century; and Justinian’s empress, Theodora of Nika Revolt and the mosaics in Ravenna fame. See also: James, Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium, 3.


6 James, Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium, 59, 65, 88. See also: Kalavrezou, Byzantine Women and Their World, 24-31.

7 James, Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium, 12-17, 166. See also: Hill, Imperial Women, 88.


18. Fredricksmeier, “Alexander and Philip,” 310. It is possible that Alexander even claimed paternity from Zeus-Ammon before Philip’s murder.


22. The double paternity storyline enables Alexander to rightfully claim both the Macedonian and Egyptian thrones, as well as lineage from the gods. Alexander’s divine parentage was often used to explain his larger-than-life personality and impressive victories.

24 6r – “Philip says to Olympias: if you do not bear me a son when I return from the war, you will no longer know my embrace.” 89v – bottom “Alexander wrote to his mother Olympias to send him the thing necessary for preparation for his wedding.” 91r – “Having received Alexander’s letter, Olympias sent him all that he had commanded in his message.” 193r – “When Olympias received and read Alexander’s letter, she immediately wept bitterly for the fact that his own household killed such a great king with poison.”

25 Olympias displays the qualities of a learned queen; Kandake later demonstrates another type of intelligence, one associated with cleverness and vision.


28 Encyclopedia Mythica, “Sabazius,” http://www.pantheon.org/articles/s/sabazius.html. There are other animals more popularly associated with the god, such as the leopard and bull. The snake may be retained from the personality of the Phyrgian god, Sabazius, with whom Dionysus was combined. There is also a Christian link to the snake here. A mistake made by Clement of Alexandria claims that a chthonic snake figure was attached to Sabazius and is a symbol of paganism or evil. See also: Karen Hartnup, *On the Beliefs of the Greeks: Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).


31 Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women and Their World*, 275-276. This is also the root of the modern word “hysteria” – Olympias was not the first, nor the last, to be considered crazy due to her gender. See also: Jeffrey Spier, “Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1993), 25, 29.

32 Chryssi Bourbou, *Health and Disease in Byzantine Crete (7th-12th Centuries AD)* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 105.

34 Kalavrezou, Byzantine Women and Their World, 278-280. Sarah Iles Johnston, Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 166. Gylou’s history is complicated, but a simplified version goes that she died an early death as a virgin and her spirit, jealous that she never had children, haunts pregnant women and mothers. She is said to have wild hair and the lower body of a snake. Gylou attacks women once they are pregnant, causing miscarriages or other birth issues. She is importantly a gendered spirit. Her gendering stresses the role of women to have children.


36 Herrin, “The Imperial Feminine,” 33.

37 Herrin, Women in Purple, 17-19. See also: Liz James, Women, Men, and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium (London: Routledge, 1997). Eunuchs were also considered valuable due to the risky nature of their creation.

38 Qantara: Mediterranean Heritage, “Funerary Practices,” Euromed Heritage Program, http://www.qantara-med.org/qantara4/public/show_document.php?do_id=1170&lang=en. It is interesting to note that Byzantine and ancient funerary rites gave women a chance to enter the public sphere and to have a relative voice. Women were some of the main and most obvious actors in the mourning process – self-harm, lamentations, wailing, pulling their hair, etc.


42 Livius, “Proskynesis,”<http://www.livius.org/concept/proskynesis/>. Examples would be dress and the practice of proskynesis before a king. This last custom was particularly offensive to Alexander’s Macedonians and Greeks, who reserved proskynesis for the gods. See also: O’Brien, Alexander the Great, 111-113, 142.

Soon after Darius’ death, Alexander shifted his goals from conquering to governing, and named himself the successor to the Persian throne.


Pothos.org, “Alexander’s Lovers,”


Cecily J. Hilsdale, “Constructing a Byzantine ‘Augusta:’ A Greek Book for a French Bride,” The Art Bulletin (2005), 458-462. Hilsdale’s article discusses the formation of a manuscript that instructs the reader (like this one) and also the Komnenian practice of political foreign marriages.

Herrin, Women in Purple, 5. These women are undoubtedly royal figures considering their dress, but their costume is not the formal wear (there is no loros and the manicae are tight to the arm, for example).
56 Roxane’s pregnancy may be indicated in the text, but visually (and within the limits of this thesis) the pregnancy is not indicated. Perhaps, the pregnancy or heir (Alexander IV) was depicted on the missing final portion of the manuscript.

57 The caption reads, “...Woe’s me, I hasten to arrive in Hades. So be it. O Roxane, he said, show me some small kindness. And leaning on her, he was shut up in his palace.” Perhaps the request for and physical reliance on his wife, the weaker, supportive gender, is yet another indicator of Alexander’s waning mortality, straight from his own mouth. As noted earlier, Plutarch related that Alexander would often say that sex and sleep only reminded him of his mortality.


60 Venice Hellenic Institute, “Script and miniature painting in the manuscripts of the Hellenic Institute in Venice (12th – 14th cent.),” [http://194.177.217.107/scripts_and_miniatures/](http://194.177.217.107/scripts_and_miniatures/). Artist is indicated by his hat, which is specific to that profession. The artists also wear a type of hat that is distinctively Byzantine. It is a style dateable to the 14th century, which matches the dating of the manuscript itself and gives a terminus post quem for the book. This hat type was often used in images to designate that a person was from the Byzantine Empire, making it a clear example of the byzantinizing of the visual Romance.

61 In the interest of this specific thesis, it is important to note that Kandaules’ wife is consistently depicted in these images (she is not an active participant like the women that are the focus of this chapter, but rather stands as one of the chief complaints of the Kandaules/Evagridis struggle and the object/property rightfully returned to Kandaules by Alexander). Alexander also treats her respectfully, as he does with the other female characters.

62 It is important to note that the audience sees Kandake long before Alexander sets eyes upon her in the narrative.


65 Also known as Nubia, Ethiopia.

210

67 David E. Jones, *Women Warriors: A History* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1997), 82-83. The historical information regarding Meroe is scant, but it is known that this society practiced matrilineal descent.


69 By the time Alexander supposedly encounters this kingdom in the narrative, he had claimed his descent as the son of Zeus-Ammon, a sun deity.

70 The Kandake story shows the Greco-Egyptian origin of the original *Alexander Romance* author – “Pseudo-Kallisthenes.”

71 This “super dress” example may not be an emphasis on her as a character, but perhaps just a difference in the artist.

72 Kandaules’ wife is depicted next to Kandake on folio 166r and is dressed similarly, with a gold-colored veil to differentiate her from the queen-mother, but her relegated position to the side and back of the central, and much larger, Kandake keeps the attention on the queen while acknowledging the presence of another royal woman. A detail - Doref’s wife’s ethnicity, Indian, is visually cued by her dark, almost black skin color. She is found on folios 161v and 166r.

73 Venice Hellenic Institute, “Script and Miniature Painting.” The artist of the image on 143r includes a caption within the image above Kandake’s artist that reads, ΖΩΓΡΑΦΟΝ, or “artist,” including a small self-reference to his own craft.


75 Martin L. West, *Greek Fragments from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries BC* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also: Stuttard, *A History of Ancient Greece in Fifty Lives*, 198. Caria’s Capital was one of the famed cities of antiquity, Halicarnassus. Ada’s brother was also the famous Mausolus. Additionally, Carian royalty engaged in brother-sister marriages. Another comparison to Alexander’s hero, Achilles, and the Trojan War is found here. One of the Carian generals Alexander fought against was Memnon of Rhodes. In the *Iliad*, a Memnon from Africa fought alongside the Trojans against the Greeks.


78 Herrin, “The Imperial Feminine in Byzantium,” 4-5, 31-32. These iconophile empresses are Irene, Euphrosyne, and Theodora.
Interestingly enough, but outside the parameters of this thesis, Darius also has a portrait of Alexander painted.

Venice Hellenic Institute, “Script and miniature painting.” A note on the Venice Hellenic Institute’s site says the rubrics on numbers 204 and 205 are far more extensive than the corresponding text in the codex, showing again the emphasis is more on the imagery and captions than on the text itself.


The caption on 170r - “and he responded immediately, telling them to yield to his power and escape destruction.”

Theoi Greek Mythology, “Cult of Dionysus,”
http://www.theoi.com/Cult/DionysosCult.html. The Amazons were alternately friends and foes of Dionysus, but regardless were associated with the god. This connection to Dionysus would relate back to the figure of Olympias and so may help the reader to implicitly compare the two female types and their roles as model/anti-model.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Roundel with Amazons,”
<http://metmuseum.org/exhibitions/view?exhibitionId=%7B60853040-ae7e-4162-8fa7-525505d6b633%7D&oid=477605&pg=8&rpp=20&pos=146&ft=%2A>. Other possibilities exist as to the etymology of the name “Amazon,” but this particular example has become part of the legend and popular understanding of them. Amazons are often shown with one breast covered and the other uncovered, though this depiction was not limited to Amazons. In this manner, the artist avoided showing a mutilated, ugly body but alluded to the legendary practice.

Encyclopedia Britannica, “Amazon – Greek Mythology,”


93 Hill, Imperial Women in Byzantium, 17.

94 Herrin, Women in Purple, 5.


101 Tresidder, Dictionary of Symbols, 188.

102 Herrin, “The Imperial Feminine,” 30.
“Icon” is derived from the Greek εἰκών for “image.”


CONCLUSION (Pages 187-191)


4 The Turkish version, the Iskendername, is heavily based on the Persian version of the Romance, the Iskandarnamah.

5 Kastritsis, “The Ottoman Fate,” 103-31.


7 Stuttard, A History of Ancient Greece, 199.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


<http://www.ou.edu/class/ahi4263/byzhtml/p08-03.html>.


BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Elaine Mathiesen graduated *cum laude* from Tulane University in 2014 with a B.A. in Art History and a double minor in History and Classical Studies. In her junior year, she studied abroad as part of the College Year in Athens program.

She has continued her studies at Tulane University as a member of the 4+1 Master’s Program, enabling her to complete a Master’s thesis and degree one year after her graduation from undergraduate studies.

Ms. Mathiesen has been awarded the Founders Scholarship and the Darden Study Abroad Scholarship at Tulane University. Prior to commencing her studies at Tulane, she was the recipient of the City of Alexandria (Virginia) High School History Award and the Leon Battista Alberti High School Art History Award.

While pursuing her degree, Ms. Mathiesen interned as the assistant to the director at the Newcomb Art Gallery in New Orleans and at the Cross Mackenzie Gallery in Washington, D.C.