

16. ALAU (c. 9)*alau* TA³, LT

This is the name, in TA³ and LT, of the city where Nicolò and Matteo Polo left Qubilai's envoy. It is very probably the result of a clerical error, as explained by BENEDETTO (B, 246).

17. ALEXANDRE¹ (THE GREAT)*alesander* Z*alesandro* TA³, V, VA, VB*allessandro* R*alexander* LT, P, Z; G*alexandre* F*alexandro* VA, VL*alixandre* F, FA, FB*allessandro, allexandro* VA*allessandro* TA¹, VB*allexander* L; G*alyxandre* FA

On his epithet of Dū-'l-Qarnain, « the Two-Horned », see « Çulcarnein ».

Alexander's name occurs several times in Polo's text. His information about the Macedonian conqueror is not derived from genuine historical sources, but from stories heard in the East and perhaps from some mediaeval *rifacimenti* of that fabulous history of Alexander which is known as the work of the Pseudo-Callisthenes. In two cases (see « Gate of Iron » and « Lone [Dry] Tree »), Polo formally refers to the « Book of Alexander ». The world-wide popularity of the Pseudo-Callisthenes in hellenistic and mediaeval times is aptly illustrated in YULE's Introduction (I, 113-115). Yet I would like to add a few remarks.

Polo left Venice when he was about fifteen, to return only two or three years before he dictated the account of his travels, so that he could certainly not have been well versed in Western literature. Of course, he had heard of Alexander in Mussulman countries, where the same stories circulated about him as in Europe, but the question may be asked whether the express mentions of the « Book of Alexander » are due to him or the professional recaster of romances, Rustichello. In the account of his outward journey, Polo speaks, when dealing with Eastern Persia, of the « arbre seul que les cristiens appellent l'arbre seche » (B, 32); but in the latter part of his book, we read of « l'arbre sol que en livre d'Alexandre est appelé l'arbre seche » (B, 222). This second mention belongs to the chapters where the fastidious and stereotyped descriptions of battles are generally attributed to Rustichello. Now the legend of the Dry Tree was well known among Christians in the East, where Polo may have heard it, and a repetition of the same sentence in another part of the book would have been nothing abnormal. But that the « Book of Alexander » should take the place of the « Christians » the second time is the more surprising since the « Dry Tree » does not occur in the Pseudo-Callisthenes, nor in most mediaeval versions derived from it, but only in additional sections sometimes joined to the Romance of Alexander, like the *Vœux de Paon*. The mention of the « Book of Alexander » in the present case would perhaps be easier to explain if we assume that Rustichello intervened here.