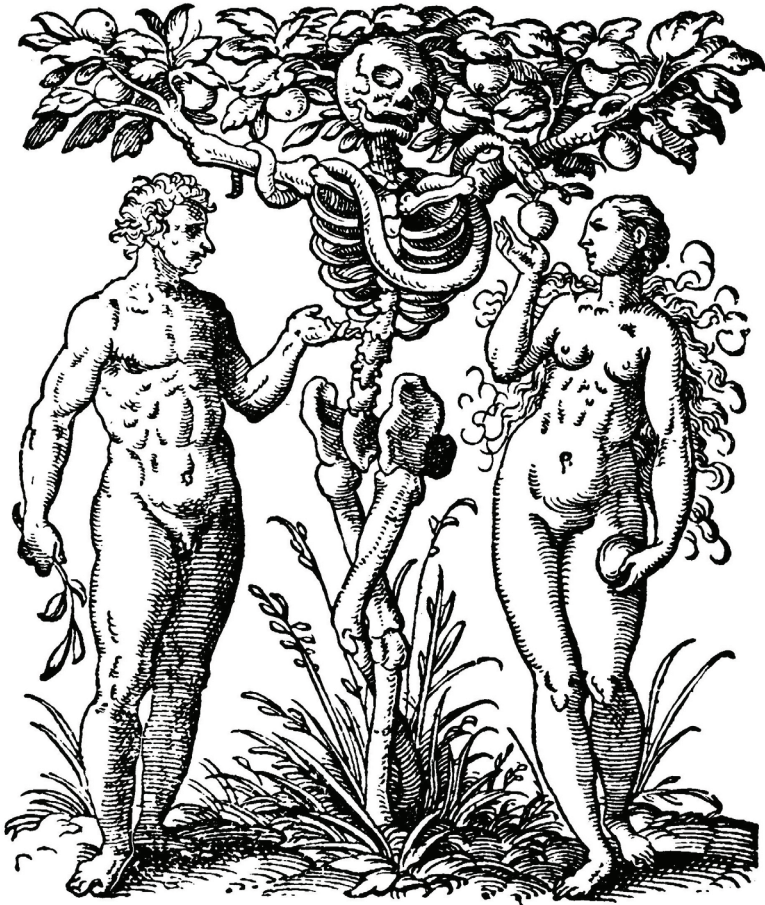


*The Book of
the Treasure of Alexander*



The Poison Edition

*Translated by Nicholaj de Mattos Frisvold
and Edited by Christopher Warnock, Esq.*



Renaissance Astrology

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Renaissance Astrology

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Occult Virtue & Hermetic Philosophy



discussing astrological magic in his *Speculum Astronomiae*, the “Mirror of Astronomy”, the thirteenth century scholar, philosopher and scientist Albertus Magnus recoils from what he describes as the abominable use of necromantic images, “which have presumed to usurp the noble name of [astrology] for themselves.” “But the worst of these”, says Albertus, “is that written by Aristotle to Alexander...this is the one which some call *Mors animae* (The death of the soul).”¹

The *Book of the Treasure of Alexander*, here in its first complete English translation, certainly merits Albertus’ description even if, as many manuscripts attributed to Aristotle and Alexander circulated

¹ Albertus Magnus, *Speculum Astronomiae*, trans. Burnett & Lippincott, (Kluwer, 1992) page 243.

The Book of the Treasure of Alexander

in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, this is not the specific version Albertus consulted. Much of the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* is taken up with descriptions of deadly poisons, often composed of rather noisome substances. Even the antidotes require brains, blood and other body parts, both animal and human.

But unlike a modern horror film, these ingredients are not meant to shock, but to allow the mage to utilize the occult virtues or hidden powers scattered throughout material things. Explicitly referring to Hermes Trismegistus and Balinus, the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* is reliant on Hermetic and Neoplatonic philosophy holding that all things existed perfectly and undifferentiated in the One, then manifested perfectly, but differentiated as archetypes, Platonic Ideas and Archangels, thoughts in the Divine Mind, the Anima Mundi. Next all things manifested in the intermediate Celestial or Imaginal world, where the Platonic Ideas took on form and form existed without space or weight. Finally, all things manifested in the Material World, while retaining their spiritual connection to the intermediate worlds and Platonic Ideas that gave rise to them and ultimately to the One itself.

Hidden in the natural world and particular in Man himself, a perfect microcosm or little world, encapsulating the Macrocosm or Greater World of the Cosmos, were spiritual powers and potencies. The wise man could find the power to kill or to save from death concealed in vipers' heads, in donkey's urine or even wild onions.

But a nobler use of these hidden powers was alchemy, one of the three Hermetic arts along with astrology and magic. Here the virtue of the quintessence, the fifth element, was sought in nature, purified, repeatedly transmuted and transformed, until the lapis philosophorum, the Philosopher's Stone was revealed to the adept. The *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* adds several fascinating new chapters to our knowledge of authentic Hermetic alchemy, explaining the successive preparations of various "waters" and the purification of metals. Each of these waters and purified metals has its uses, but contributes to the next step in a unified process. Finally, the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* explains four principles used to create, "the All, a red Stone that tends a little to black. This is the Great Elixir." Among the potencies of this elixir is the power to

change silver into pure gold.

After scaling the heights of the creation of the Philosopher's Stone, the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* then descends to descriptions of over a dozen deadly poisons, including the "Royal Water", the "cold poison" and the "poison that kills through laughter" many of which have their powers enhanced through their creation according to astrological timing. The effects of these poisons are all explicable as the combination of astrology and their respective natural occult virtues. Soundly Hermetic in theory while despicable in actual use, the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* does not shrink from carefully describing the preparation of these virulently lethal compounds. Yet the Hermetic balance of nature is restored by the fourth section, a recognition that for every poison, as every evil, a stronger and more potent antidote exists.

The *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* then shifts its focus to astrological talismans. Thirty hitherto unknown talismans are set forth, most provided with special images from the original Arabic manuscript, giving us a wealth of new astrological talismans to work with. The *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* even provides a new set of planetary invocations for Venus, Mars and Mercury accompanying its section on creating astrological statuettes.

One of the most fascinating uses of occult virtues is the "melon magic" Eighth Art of the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* which appears in an abbreviated form in Book IV, chapter 7 of *Picatrix*, the most famous of astrological grimoires. The *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* explains that melons most easily blend or transform whatever they are mixed with. Melons planted in the skull of a donkey cause the eater to lose intelligence, while those planted in the skull of a human, increase knowledge and wisdom!

What might, at first glance, appear to be a miscellaneous collection of chapters on astrology, poisons, antidotes, alchemy and astrological magic, in fact, share the common thread of the practical application of Hermetic philosophy through occult virtue. For the scholar of Hermeticism and the practicing Hermetic adept, this truly is a treasure.

Alexander, Aristotle & Hermes Trismegistus

Alexander the Great, the 4th century BC king of Macedon, attained legendary status even during life and his stature only increased after his death. Building on his father Philip's control of Greece, he conquered the mighty Persian empire and extended his rule over Egypt, Asia Minor and even into India. The Greek *Alexander Romance* and later Islamic *Iskander Namah* detail the legendary exploits of Alexander, including explorations of the sky carried by eagles or griffons and diving beneath the sea in a crystal or wooden vessel. In the advanced Islamic civilization of the Middle Ages Alexander was equated with the Quranic *Dhul-Qarnayn*, the "Two Horned One", a great ruler who reached the rising place of the Sun and erected a great iron wall against the giants Gog and Magog. That Alexander had been tutored and advised by the great philosopher Aristotle excited considerable interest in the Middle Ages, particularly as esoteric works on astrology and magic were later attributed to Aristotle. Alexander's magical reputation was further enhanced by the *Alexander Romance* which explained that he was the son of the Egyptian pharaoh and renowned magician, Nectanebo.

The *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* is prefaced by an introduction explaining its magical provenance. It was found, according to the introduction, during the reign of the 9th century Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutasim in the Byzantine city of Amuria, known in Arabic as Amuriyat or Ammuriye. After the forces of the Caliph conquered the city they investigated the contents of a monastery known as the House of the Legacy. After considerable effort and a prophetic dream of the Caliph himself, they discovered within the walls of the monastery a vault of copper containing a smaller vault of gold, within which was a book engraved in gold and written in Greek and Latin, the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander*.

Despite the fascinating and exotic story of its origin, the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* is clearly in the mainstream of medieval

Islamic Hermeticism as can be seen from the frequent references to Hermes Trismegistus and its reliance on Hermetic philosophy. Julius Ruska, the famous German scholar of alchemy, discussed the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* in his magisterial 1926 *Tabula Smaragdina*, the “Emerald Tablet.” of Hermes Trismegistus and it appears to stem from the pagan Harranian Sabians who were the source of so much magical, astrological and alchemical material, including *Picatrix*.²

Notes on the Translation



The English translation of the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* that appears here was made by Nicholaj de Mattos Frisvold from the *Livro do Tesouro de Alexandre, Um estudo de hermética árabe na oficina da historia da ciencia* (translated from the original Arabic) by AM Alfonso-Goldfarb & SAC Jubran (Petropolis, Brazil, 1999). The Portuguese translation was in turn made from three Arabic manuscripts, Department of Arabic Studies of the Public Library of Berlin, cod. 4193 (Ahlwardt Cat./We II 1209) dating from 1688 AD; British Library, cod. 473 (Loth Cat.) undated; Derenbourg Catalogue 947 of Escorial Library, Madrid, dated to 904 AD, but likely produced in the fourteenth century.

The *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* has thus taken a rather circuitous route in being translated into English. Rather than leaving passages in a literal but unintelligible state I have used my knowledge of traditional astrology and magic, gained from over a decade of study and practice, to recast them in logical and coherent form.

² *Listening to the whispers of matter through Arabic hermeticism: new studies on The Book of the Treasure of Alexander*. Alfonso-Goldfarb AM, Jubran SA. *Ambix*. 2008 Jul;55(2):100.

Ibn Wahshiyya & the Poison Edition

The *Poison Edition* of the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* includes the astrological poisons of Ibn Wahshiyya. Ibn Wahshiyya was a celebrated 9th century Nabatean alchemist, scholar and mage, who wrote a number of esoteric texts including books on magic, alchemy, ancient alphabets and most famously, *Nabatean Agriculture*, an important source for *Picatrix*.

The astrological poisons are contained in Ibn Wahshiyya's *Kitab al-sumun*, the *Book of Poisons*, translated as "Medieval Toxicology" by Martin Levey, (APS, 1966). They include a clay that kills on sight that Ibn Wahshiyya learned of in a dream, its antidote, and three poisons that kill by sound alone, after being placed on castanets and two different drums. All of these poisons, uniquely in Ibn Wahshiyya's *Book of Poisons*, need to be prepared according to astrological elections. They also include quite elaborate planetary invocations. We felt that this unusual astrological emphasis made them worthy of inclusion in the *Book of the Treasure of Alexander* in a special *Poison Edition*.