

Ortchard, Andy *Pride + Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the "Beowulf" - manuscript.* (Cambridge: Boydell + Brewer, 1995)

APPENDIX IIc

The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle

A translation of the Old English text

§ 1. Here is the text of the letter of Alexander, the great king and the famous Macedonian, which he wrote and sent to Aristotle, his teacher, concerning the situation of the great nation of India, and the extent of his expeditions and his travels, which he made throughout the world. He says as follows in the very beginning of the letter:

§ 2. I always remember you, even in the midst of the dreadful uncertainty of our battles, since you, my dearest teacher, are, next to my mother and sisters, my dearest friend. And since I know that you are well set in wisdom, I thought to write to you about the great nation of India, and the disposition of the heavens, and the countless varieties of serpents, and men, and wild beasts, so that your learning and knowledge might contribute to a certain extent to the understanding of these novelties. Although in you consummate wisdom and erudition and teaching of what is correct require no assistance, yet I wished that you should learn of my deeds, which you love, and of those things which you have not seen, and which I saw in India after manifold struggles and after great danger alongside the Greek army.

§ 3. These things I write and tell you, and each of them is individually worth bearing in mind exactly as I observed it. I would not have believed the words of any man that so many marvellous things could be so before I saw them myself with my own eyes. The earth is a source of wonder first for the good things she brings forth, and then for the evil, through which she is revealed to observers. She is the producer of well-known wild beasts, and plants, and stones and metal-ore, and of wondrous creatures, all those things which are difficult to comprehend for those who look and observe because of the variety of their forms.

§ 4. But now I will write to you about those things that come first to mind, in case I can be accused of empty talk and shameful lies. Look, you yourself know that the nature of my mind is always such as to keep me continually within the boundaries of what is true and right; and I have described things in words more sparingly than they actually occurred. So now I hope and believe that you perceive these things so as not at all to reckon me to boast in telling of the greatness of our struggle and contest. For I often wished and wanted that fewer of them were so severe.

§ 5. In this I give thanks to the Greek army, and especially to the strength of youth and our unconquered troop, because they were with me in the easy things and did not depart during the hardships, but with patience they bore with me always so that I was called king of all kings. Be pleased with these honours, my dear teacher. And now I shall write these things jointly to you and to my mother Olympias, and my sisters, for the pair of you shall share a common love. And if it is otherwise, then you show yourself a lesser man than I previously believed of you.

§ 6. In the previous letters which I sent you, I explained and indicated to you about the eclipse of the sun and moon, and the courses of the stars and configurations, and the heavenly signs. All these things cannot be otherwise than so arranged and foreordained by a great intelligence. And now I shall write down all this new information for you in a letter. When you read it, be aware that this is all such as seemed appropriate, in the opinion of your Alexander, to send to you.

§ 7. In the month of May we overcame and conquered King Darius of Persia at the river Gande, and there took all his kingdom into our possession. And we set and designated our stewards over the eastern nations, and we were enriched with many royal honours. In the earlier letter I told you about this; and, in case reporting it will seem to you too repetitious to write, I will pass over it, and tell you what has happened now.

§ 8. In the month of July, in the final days of that month we came into the land of India to a place called Fasiacen. And with amazing swiftness we overcame and conquered Porus, the king. And we took his entire nation under our control, and in that land we were enriched with many royal honours. But I want you to know those things which are worth having in mind. First I will write to you about the countless multitude of his troop, which comprised (not counting an innumerable number of foot-soldiers), sixteen thousand men and eight hundred cavalry, all equipped with battle-gear. And there we captured four hundred elephants, on whom were there stood armed archers, and the elephants carried towers and platforms, on which the mail-clad warriors stood. After that we entered the royal city of Porus with our weapons. And we saw his hall and his royal quarters. There were golden columns, very great, and mighty, and firm, which were enormously large and tall, of which we counted a tally of four hundred. The walls were also golden, sheathed with gold plates the thickness of a finger. When I wished to see these things more keenly and went further, I saw a golden vineyard, mighty and firm, and its branches hung about the columns. And I was greatly amazed at that. The leaves of the vineyard were of gold, and its tendrils and fruits were of crystal and emerald, and jewels hung among the crystal. His bedrooms and his main chambers were all most highly embellished with precious stones, the gem-stones unions and carbuncles. On the outside they were wrought in ivory, wonderfully white and fair, and posts of cypress and laurel supported them on the outside, and twisted golden props stood within, and there were countless hoards of gold inside and out, and they were manifold and of various kinds. And many jewelled vessels and crystal drinking-cups and golden pitchers were brought forth there. Seldom did we find any silver there.

§ 9. When I had all these things in my possession, I wanted to see the interior of India. Then I came into the land of Caspia with all my army. There was the most fruitful soil in the country. And I marvelled greatly at the fertility of the soil, and, truly rejoicing in my heart, I wished more eagerly to see that land. Then the inhabitants of the land told us that we should beware the various kinds of serpents and savage wild beasts, in case we came upon them. A multitude of them dwell in these hills and valleys, and in woods, and in open country, and they hide themselves in stony hollows. And yet I wished rather to travel the dangerous paths and ways than the safe paths, so that I could catch up with Porus, fleeing from the battle, before he could escape into the deserted tracts of the world.

§ 10. I took with me 250 guides who knew the shorter routes of that journey. Then we travelled in the month of August through the boiling sands, and the rough places devoid of water or any moisture. And I offered a reward to those who led us knowledgeably through the unknown land of India and were willing to lead me with my army safe to the land of Patriacen. And most of all I wished that they would lead me to the secret weavers of precious cloth, who spun it wonderfully from a certain tree, and from its leaves and fleece, and wove and worked it into precious cloth. But those natives strove to fulfil the will of our enemies rather than ours, since they led us through those lands in which there were intolerable varieties of serpents and savage wild beasts. Then I realised myself and saw for my part that these difficulties beset me. For I had discounted and disregarded the useful advice of my friends and of those men who tried to dissuade me from travelling on those paths. Then I gave orders to my thegns and commanded that they kept their weapons to the ready, and proceeded in battle-array. And my troop and my thegns and all my army had brought and carried a great deal with them of the gold and precious stones that they had plundered. For they expected and feared that if they left it behind their enemies would secretly take it and steal it away.

§ 11. And indeed my thegns and all my troop had gained so much wealth that they could only with difficulty bring and carry with them the burden of all that gold. Also their weapons were no little burden because I had commanded that all the weapons of my thegns and all my troop and army be covered with gold plate. And all my troop looked like stars or lightning because of the amount of the gold. It shone and glittered before me and around me in glory, and they led before me war-banners and standards. And so great was the sight and spectacle of that troop of mine in splendour beyond all the other mighty kings there have been in the world. When I myself gazed and saw my prosperity and my glory and the success of my youth and the prosperity of my life, I was somewhat uplifted with joy in my heart.

§ 12. But as it turns out so often in better and sounder things, fate and appearance often change them, and turn them into something else, and at that time it happened to us that we were sorely vexed and afflicted with thirst. We bore and suffered that thirst sorely, when one of my thegns who was called Seferus found water in a hollow stone and poured it into a helmet and brought it to me. And that thegn of mine was himself thirsty, and yet he cared more for my life and health than for his own. And when, as I have said, he brought that water to me, I ordered together all my troop and all my trusted band and poured it away in the sight of them all, so that I should not drink and leave thirsty my thegn and my army, and all who were with me. And then before them all I praised the deed of Seferus my thegn, and gave him precious gifts for that deed in the sight of them all. And when my troop was heartened and

calmed by this, we went ahead on the route we had taken before, and it was not long until we came to a certain river in the wilderness. On the river-bank there stood reeds and pines, and silver-fir trees of huge size and stature grew and flourished on the cliff-edge.

§ 13. When we came to the river, because of the unbearable thirst which was afflicting myself and also all my army and the animals that were with us, I ordered my host to rest and make camp. And when we had camped there I wanted to ease and cool my thirst. When I tasted the water it was more bitter and harsh to drink than any other I had tasted. And neither was any man able to drink it, nor could any animal taste it. Then I was particularly disturbed in my heart for the dumb animals, since I knew that men could more easily bear their thirst than the beasts. There was a great multitude of four-footed animals with me, and a great multitude of elephants, a thousand of huge size who bore and carried the gold, and two thousand four hundred horses (not including the cavalry), and twenty thousand foot soldiers, then there was two and a half thousand mules who carried the packs, and thirty thousand pack-horses and oxen who carried the wheat, two thousand camels, five hundred cattle, of which some were slaughtered every day for food. There was also an innumerable tally of horses and mules and camels and elephants who followed us in countless droves. They were all vexed and afflicted with unbearable thirst. Then the men sometimes licked their iron tools and sometimes they tasted oil and cooled their thirst in its pungency. Then in their shame some men in their need drank piss.

§ 14. Things had then become difficult for me for two reasons: first with regard to my own necessity, and that of my troop. Then I ordered each man to equip himself with his weapons, and set out, and gave a strict command that any man who was not equipped with his weapons in battle-array should be killed with weapons. Then they wondered greatly why they had to bear the weight and size of their weapons in such great thirst when no enemy was in sight. But I knew that our path and journey led through those lands and places in which various kinds of serpents and savage wild animals had their dwelling. And since we were unfamiliar and unaware of that terrain, any disaster might suddenly befall us.

§ 15. Then we went forth along the bank of the river, at the eighth hour of the day. Then we came to a village, built in the middle of the river on an island. The village was built and constructed from the reeds and trees that grew on the river-bank, and which we have written about and described already. When we looked into the village we saw dwelling in it a few half-naked Indians. But as soon as they themselves saw us they hid themselves furtively in their houses. I wanted to catch sight of these men, to find out about clean fresh water.

After we had waited a long time and none of them would emerge, I ordered a few arrows to be shot into the village, so that if they would not come out to us voluntarily, they should of necessity, through fear of battle. Then they were still more greatly afraid, and hid themselves more securely. Then I ordered two hundred of my thegns from the Greek army to arm themselves with light weapons and go over to the village by swimming, and they swam over across the river to that island. And when they had swum about a quarter of the river, something terrible happened to them. There appeared a multitude of water-monsters [hippopotami], larger and more terrible in appearance than the elephants, who dragged the men through the watery waves down to the river bottom, and tore them to bloody pieces with their moults, and snatched them all away so that none of us knew where any of them had gone. Then I was very angry with my guides, who had led us into such danger. I ordered that one hundred and fifty of them be shoved into the river, and as soon as they were in the water-monsters were ready, and dragged them away just as they had done with the others, and the water-monsters seethed up in the river as thick as ants, they were so innumerable. Then I ordered the trumpets to be sounded, and the army to head off.

§ 16. It was the eleventh hour of the day, and we set forth. Then we saw men coming over the river, and they had made boat-shapes from the reeds and trees that stood on the river bank, and sat on top of them. When we asked the men about fresh water, they answered us in their own language and told us where to find it and said that we would find a very big lake in which there was plenty of clean fresh water, and that if we were keen we would get there fairly soon. And in addition to so many hardships we travelled throughout the whole night vexed with thirst, and greatly afflicted by the burden of our weapons. And throughout the whole night as we travelled, lions and bears and tigers and leopards and wolves attacked us continually, and we held them off. And on the next day, when it was the eighth hour of the day, we came to the lake that had been described to us. It was entirely overgrown with woods a mile deep, but there was a path to the water. I was delighted in this clean fresh water, and immediately slaked my thirst and then that of all my troop, and immediately ordered all our horses and our animals to be watered, since they were all greatly suffering with thirst. After that I immediately ordered the army to pitch camp. The campsite was twenty furlongs in length, and the same in width. After they had camped, I ordered the grove cleared, and the trees felled to make it easier for people to get to the water, and to the lake by which we had camped. Then I ordered all our horses and animals and elephants to be gathered together, and ordered them brought to the middle of our encampment, into the midst of the tents, in case any of them were lost, since we did not know what might occur during the night. And then I also ordered that fires be lit from the wood which had been felled, and the troops with me did so: they lit fifteen hundred fires, and I did that so that if something unexpected should happen to us, we should have the light and comfort of the fires.

§ 17. When we had lit as many fires as seemed necessary, my trumpets were sounded, and I ate some food, and so did all my army. It was then one hour before night-time, and I ordered two thousand of the golden lanterns I had with me to be lit. Then before moon-rise there came the type of insect called a scorpion, just as they usually did, towards the water. There was a great multitude of these insects, beyond number, and they hastened greatly and scurried into our camp. Then after that there came horned serpents, the kind of serpent called Carastis. They were all of different colours, some red, some black, some white. On some of them their scales glittered and shone as if they were gold when one looked at them. And the whole country resounded with the hissing of the serpents, and we had no little terror of them. But we shielded ourselves with our shields and slew and killed them with long-shafted spears, and also burnt many in the fires. We endured these things to the extent that we were fighting and struggling with the serpents for fully two hours of the night.

§ 18. After the serpents had drunk the water they went away, and harmed us no more. When it was the third hour of the night, and we wanted to rest, there came serpents still more marvellous and more fearsome than the others. They had two heads, and some even had three. They were of a fantastic size, as big as columns, and some even bigger and mightier, and these serpents came down from the neighbouring hills and caves to drink the water there. The serpents came and slithered in an extraordinary fashion, with their bellies turned up and travelling on their backs, and as they advanced they ripped and tore the ground with their scales as well as their mouths. These serpents had three-pronged tongues, and when they breathed their breath came from their mouths like a burning torch. The breath and exhalation of the serpents was very deadly and poisonous, and many men died because of their pestilential breath. We fought against these serpents for more than an hour of the night, and the serpents killed thirty men from the army, and twenty of my own thegns.

§ 19. Then I commanded the army nonetheless to maintain good spirits in the face of those things that afflicted us in the shape of so many difficulties and hardships. Then it was the fifth hour of the night, and we intended to get some rest, but there came white lions in the shape and size of bulls, and they all approached roaring mightily. When the lions came closer they immediately attacked us, and we defended ourselves against them as well as we could, but there had been such difficulty and hardship from beasts in that dark and shadowy night. There also came boars of an immeasurable size, and many other wild animals and also tigers kept us busy during the night. There also came bats in the shape and size of doves, and they scratched our faces and pulled at us. The bats had teeth like those of humans, and wounded and tore the men with them.

§ 20. In addition to the other trials and difficulties which afflicted us there came suddenly one very huge beast bigger than the others. That beast had three horns on the front of its head and was fiercely armed with those horns. The Indians call the beast *Dentotyranus* [rhinoceros]. The beast had a head like a horse, and was black in colour. Once this beast had drunk the water, it saw our camp-site, and immediately attacked us and our campsite. It was not put off by the burning of the hot fire and flame that was in its path, but it went and trod on everything. After I had rallied the force of the Greek army, and we tried to protect ourselves, it promptly slew twenty-six of my thegns in a single charge and trampled fifty-two, rendering them cripples who could be of no further use to me. And we determinedly shot at it with arrows and also with long-shafted spears until we slew and killed it.

§ 21. When it was just before dawn there appeared a pestilential vapour of a white hue, which was also variously tinged with billowing swirls, and many men perished because of the pestilential stench which arose from the pestilential vapour. Then there also came against the army Indian mice the size and shape of foxes, which bit and wounded our four-footed animals; and many of them died from their wounds. Each of the men escaped, although they were all wounded. When it was just before daybreak there appeared birds, called night-ravens, looking like falcons, birds which were brown in colour, but with beaks and claws completely black. These birds sat about round the whole edge of the lake, and caused no harm or ill to any of us, but with their claws they snatched up and ripped to pieces their usual fish which were in the lake. We did not put the birds to flight nor harm them, but they soon departed of their own accord.

§ 22. When it was daylight next morning I ordered all my guides who had led me into such hardships to be tied up and their bones and legs broken, so that they might be devoured that night by the serpents on their way to the water. And I also ordered that their hands be cut off, so that they might experience torment through those that wrought the torment into which they had knowingly led and brought us.

§ 23. Then I ordered my trumpets to be sounded, and the army to set forth on the journey which we had started. We passed through inaccessible and impassable territory. There was soon once more gathered against us a great army of Indians and other strangers who inhabited that land, and we fought against them. We then further realised that more battles and more struggles lay ahead. Then we abandoned the dangerous routes and paths, and proceeded on the better ones. And so with my troop we came safely into the land of Patriacen, greatly enriched with gold and other wealth, and they received us there in a friendly and generous fashion. When we left the land of Patriacen, we came to the frontiers of the Medes and Persians, and there we fought once again a further great battle. And I camped there with my army for twenty days.

§ 24. Afterwards we journeyed for a period of seven nights, until we came to the land and the place where Porus the king was encamped with his army. And he trusted more in the security of the terrain than in his own martial prowess. Then he wanted to know more about me and my thegns, so that he asked and inquired from people coming from my camp, and I was told that he wanted to know more about me and my troop. Then I laid aside my royal attire, and dressed myself in unfamiliar garb and lowly clothes, as if I were an ordinary man in need of food and wine. When I was in Porus's camp, as I have already said, as soon as he learnt that I was there, and he was told that someone had come from Alexander's war-camp, he had me brought to him immediately. When I was brought to him he asked me and inquired what King Alexander was doing, and what sort of man he was, and of what age. I deceived him with my answers, telling him that he was extremely old, so old that he could not keep himself warm except at the fire and coals. He was at once very glad, rejoicing at these words and answers of mine, since I told him that he was such an extremely old man. And then he said 'So how can he have any success in battle against me, when he is such an extremely old man and I myself am young and fit?' Then he asked me more keenly about his affairs, and I said I did not know many of his affairs, and only saw the king seldom, since I was his thegn's man, and his cattle-herd, and his retainer. When he heard these words, he gave me a document and a letter, and told me to give it to King Alexander, and also promised me a reward if I would give it him, and I said that I would do as he asked. So I left there, and came back to my war-camp, and both before I read the document and also afterwards I was greatly rocked with mirth. I am telling you these things to you, teacher, and to Olympias my mother and my sisters, so that you can hear and understand the overweening brashness of the foreign king.

§ 25. I had spied out the king's camp and the protective surroundings into which he had gone with his army. Early the next morning King Porus came into my hands with all his army and personal retinue, when he realised that he could not fight against me. And after the hostility that had been between us, he became a friend to me and to all the Greek army, and my companion, and ally. And I gave him back his kingdom, and in return for the unexpected favour of the kingdom, since he did not expect any kingdom, he showed me his entire store of treasure, and he endowed both me and all my troop with gold. And he had cast and wrought in gold statues of the two gods Hercules and Bacchus, and set them both up on the eastern edge of the world. Then I wanted to know if the statues were entirely cast as he described. So I ordered holes to be drilled into them, and they were made of solid gold, and then I ordered the holes which had been drilled to be filled up and replaced with gold, and decreed sacrifices to be offered to both gods.

§ 26. Then we went forth and wished to see and witness more marvellous and noteworthy things. But as we travelled we saw nothing but desolate expanses and woods and hills by the ocean, which were impassable for men because of wild beasts and serpents. Yet I still travelled along the sea, because I wanted to know if I could go right round the earth, which the ocean surrounds. But the inhabitants told me that the sea and all the ocean was too dark for any man to travel it by ship. And then I wished to make a trip through the left-hand region of India, in case anything in that land had been hidden or concealed from me.

§ 27. Then all the land through which we passed was dried up and marshy, and canes and reeds grew there. Then there came suddenly out of the fen and fastness a beast, and the beast's back was all studded with pegs like a snood, and the beast had a round head like the moon, and the beast was called *Quasi caput lunae* ['moon-head'; crocodile], and it had a breast like a sea-monster's breast and it was armed and toothed with hard and large teeth. And that beast slew two of my thegns. And we were unable to wound that beast with spears in any way, nor with any kind of weapon, but with difficulty we beat it and subdued it with iron mallets and sledge-hammers.

§ 28. Then we came to the woods of India, and to the furthestmost edge of that country, and I ordered the army to camp there by a river which is called *Beswicmon*. The camp was fifty furlongs in length and also in breadth. We wanted to sit down to eat, since it was then the eleventh hour of the day, when the order was suddenly given that we should get on and take up our weapons, for there was a great need for us to defend ourselves. We did so, and grabbed our weapons as we had been ordered. Then there came out of the woods a great multitude of elephants, an immense herd of the beasts; they came to attack our camp. Then I ordered the horses to be made ready at once, and the cavalry to mount up; I ordered them to round up a big herd of pigs and drive them on horseback against the elephants, because I knew that pigs were loathsome to those beasts, and their grunting might frighten them. And as soon as the elephants saw the pigs they were afraid, and immediately went into the woods. And we passed the night safely in that camp, and I had securely protected it so that no beast nor any other hardship could harm us.

§ 29. When it was morning, we went into another area of India, and came into a great plain. There we saw shaggy women, and men who were as shaggy and hairy as beasts. They were nine feet tall, and naked, not bothering about any clothing. The Indians call these people *Ictifonae*, and they snatch up whales from the neighbouring rivers and lakes, and eat them and live on them, and drink the water afterwards. When I wanted to take a closer look and observe these people, they immediately fled into the water and hid themselves in stony hollows.

After that we saw amongst the wooded groves and trees a great multitude of Cynocephali who came because they wished to wound us, and we shot them with arrows, and they soon fled away and went back into the woods. Then we went into the Indian desert, and we saw nothing marvellous or extraordinary there.

§ 30. And we returned back to the land of Fasiacen from whence we came, and camped there by some nearby water, and set up all our tents in the evening, and there were also a great many fires lit. Then there came suddenly a very mighty wind and bluster, and the wind grew so fierce that it blew down many of our tents, and also greatly distressed our four-footed animals. Then I ordered all the tents and baggage to be gathered together again, and because of the wind the baggage and camp-belongings were with difficulty gathered together. And then we camped in a milder and warmer valley. When we had camped, and all our belongings were ready, I ordered the whole army that they should sit down and partake of their food, and they did so. When it approached evening, the winds began to swell again, and the weather grew rough, and a hard frost developed in the evening. Then there came much snow, and it snowed as much as if a huge fleece had fallen. When I saw the extent and depth of the snow, it seemed to me that I knew the whole camp would be engulfed. Then I ordered the army to tread the snow down with their feet, and almost all the fires were quenched and put out by the weight of snow. Yet one thing offered us relief, that the snow lasted no longer than an hour. Immediately after that the sky grew very black and dark, and from the dark sky there came burning fire. The fire fell to the earth like a burning torch, and the whole plain was burning from the fire's flame. Then men said that they thought it was the anger of the gods which had fallen upon us. Then I ordered old clothing to be torn up and used as a protection against the fire. After that we had a quiet and peaceful night, once our difficulties assuaged.

§ 31. And then we took our meal and rested without trouble, and I buried there the five hundred of my thegns who had perished and were dead as a result of the snow and fire and other difficulties that had befallen our camp. And then I ordered the army to set forth from the camp, and we set forth along the sea, and we saw the high promontories and valley and ocean of Ethiopia. And we also saw the high and famous mountain which is called Enesios, and the cave of the god Bacchus. Then I ordered condemned men to be pushed in because I wanted to know whether the tradition was true that I had been told, that no one could enter and emerge afterwards unscathed unless he entered the cave with offerings. And that was afterwards made clear by the men's death, for they perished on the third day after they had entered the cave. And I humbly and eagerly asked the gods that they honour me with splendid victories as the king and lord of the entire world, and that I be led back to Olympias my mother and to my sisters and family.

§ 32. Then I intended to go back to the land of Fasiacen, but as I travelled with my army, there came two old men to meet us on the way. Then I asked them and inquired whether they knew of any noteworthy thing in that land. Then they answered me and said that there was, and could be reached in no more than ten days. But I could not travel there along with all my army, because of the narrowness of the way, but I could travel with four thousand men, and see something extraordinary. Then I was very pleased and delighted by their words. I addressed them again and spoke kind words to them: 'Tell me, indeed, you old pair, what it is of note and importance that you promise me that I can see there?' Then one of them answered me and said 'King, you will see, if you get there, the trees of the Sun and Moon speaking in Indian and Greek. The tree of the Sun is male, and the tree of the Moon is female, and they say to the people who ask what good or ill shall befall them'.

§ 33. Then I did not believe them, but thought that they spoke to me in ridicule and mockery. And I said to my companions: 'My might extends from the East of the world to the West, and these aged foreigners are now mocking me'. I intended to have them punished, but they swore fervently that they spoke the truth and were not lying about those things. Then I wanted to find out whether they were telling me the truth, and my companions asked that they should not be deprived of such an honour, and that we should go and find out if it were so, since it was not a long journey. I took three thousand with me, and let the rest of the army remain in Fasiacen under King Porus and my companions. Then we set out and the guides led us through a place bereft of water and through lands unbearable with wild beasts and serpents called by marvellous Indian names.

§ 34. When we approached the land we saw both women and men dressed in the skins of panthers and the hides of the beasts called tigers, and wearing nothing else. When I asked them and inquired what kind of people they were they answered me and said that they were Indians. The place was spacious and pleasant, and balsam and incense were there in abundance, and welled out from the boughs of the trees, and the people of that land ate them and lived thereby. Then we took a closer look at that place, and went through the groves, and I was amazed at the loveliness and beauty of the land.

§ 35. Then the bishop of the place came to meet us. The bishop was ten feet tall and his entire body was black, except his teeth were white. And his ears were pierced through, and ear-rings hung down made of many kinds of jewels, and he was dressed in the skins of wild-animals. When the bishop approached me, he greeted me immediately, and welcomed me according to the custom of that people. He asked me why I had come, and what I wanted. I answered that I wished to see the sacred trees of the Sun and Moon. Then he answered: 'If your companions are pure of the touch of women, they can enter the holy grove'. There were three hundred of my companions with me. Then the bishop ordered my companions that they take off their shoes and all their clothing. And I ordered them to do as he asked us. It was then the eleventh hour of the day. Then the priest waited for the setting of the sun, for the tree of the Sun gave its answer at the rising and setting of the Sun, and the tree of the Moon did so likewise at night.

§ 36. Then I began to take a closer look at the place, and to pass through the groves and trees. I saw plenty of balsam of the finest perfume welling out from the trees. My companions and I gathered the balsam from the bark of the trees. The holy trees of the Sun and the Moon were in the midst of the other trees; they might have been a hundred feet tall, and there were other trees of a remarkable height which the Indians call Bebronas. I was amazed at the height of the trees, and said that I supposed that they grew so high on account of much moisture and rainfall. Then the bishop said that no drop of rain ever came in that land, nor bird, nor wild beast, nor did any poisonous serpent dare to seek out the holy precincts of the Sun and the Moon. The bishop also said that during an eclipse, that is a waning of the Sun or Moon, the holy trees wept greatly, and were stirred with great sorrow, for they feared that their divine power would be taken. Then I thought that I would make a sacrifice, but the bishop forbade me, and said that it was not permitted to any man to kill any animal there or cause bloodshed, but he ordered me pray at the foot of the trees, that the Sun and Moon would give a truthful answer to those things I should ask after this was done. Then we saw the Sun's ray set, and the ray touched the tops of the trees. Then the priest said: 'Look up, all of you, and think secretly in your heart what you want to know, and let no one openly reveal his thought in words'.

§ 37. As we stood very close to the grove and the oracles, I thought in my heart whether I would be able to force the whole world under my power, and then, honoured by those victories, be able to return to Macedonia, to Olympias my mother, and to my sisters. Then the tree answered me in Indian words and said: 'Alexander, unconquered in battle, you shall become king and lord of all the world, but you shall never return to your homeland whence you came, since your fate has so decided it on your head, and so decreed it'. Since I could not understand the language of the Indian words the tree spoke to me, the bishop translated it and told me. When my companions heard that I would not return to my homeland alive, they were greatly sad because of it. Then I wished to ask more that evening, but the moon was not yet up. When we returned to the holy grove, and stood beside the trees, we immediately prayed to the trees as we had done before. And I took with me my three most trusted friends, who were especially loyal; first Perticas, and Clitomus, and Pilotas, for I had no fear that any of these would betray me, and because it was not right to kill anyone there on account of the reverence due to the place.

§ 38. Then I thought in my heart and in my thoughts in which place I should die. When the Moon first rose it touched with its beam the tops of the trees, and the tree answered my thought and said: 'Alexander, you have lived the full course of your life, and in the next year you shall die in Babylon, in the month of May, from a source by which you least expect to be betrayed'. Then I was extremely sick at heart, as were my friends that were with me. And they wept greatly, since my safety was dearer to them than their own health. Then we went back to our companions, and they wanted to sit down to eat, but because of the cares of my heart I wanted to rest. But my companions asked me in such distress and anxiety of heart not to vex myself with fasting. I ate very little food, against my heart's will, and then went early to bed, since I wanted to be ready to go in again at sunrise.

§ 39. In the morning, when day came, I awoke and woke up my truest friends, since I wanted to enter the holy place. But the bishop was still resting, wrapped and covered with the skins of wild animals. And the people of that place are poor in iron and lead, but rich in gold. And the people of that place live on balsam, and from a neighbouring mountain there wells up clear and beautiful water, of great sweetness. The people drink it and live thereby. And when they rest, they rest without any bed or bolster, but the skins of wild beasts are their bedding. Then I woke the bishop. The bishop was three hundred years old.

§ 40. When the bishop arose, I went into the holy place and for the third time I began to ask the tree of the Sun through which man's hand my end was decreed, and what kind of death my mother or my sisters could now expect. Then the tree answered me in Greek and said: 'If I tell you about your life you will easily turn aside your fate and stay its hand. But it is true what I tell you; in the space of one year and eight months you will die in Babylon, killed not, as you expect, with iron, but with poison. Your mother will leave the world by a shameful and lowly death, and she will lie unburied in the street as food for birds and wild beasts. Your sisters will have long and happy lives. And as for you, though you live but a short time you shall be sole king and lord of the whole world. But do not question or ask the pair of us any more, for we have spoken beyond the limit of our light, but turn back to Fasiacen and King Porus'. And because of that my companions wept, because I had so little time to live. But the bishop forbade them to weep, in case the holy trees should be angered by their weeping and tears.

§ 41. And no one else heard the answers of the holy trees except my most trusted friends, and no one was allowed to make it known, in case the foreign kings that I had forcibly brought under my command should be glad that I had so little time to live. Nor was anyone allowed to reveal it further to the army, in case they became dispirited, and more indolent concerning my will and my honour, for which they had to carry me to success. And to me the swift ending of my life was not so much pain as the fact that I had achieved less glory than I would have wished. I write these things to you, my beloved teacher, that you first can rejoice in the success of my life, and exult in the honours. And also my memory shall forever stand and tower as an example for other earthly kings, so that they know the more readily that my power and my honour were greater than those of all the other kings who have ever lived in the world. *Finit.*