

# Secretum secretorum

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Walter de Milemete made two grand illuminated works for the young king Edward III 1326/27. The first is a Mirror for the King, De Nobilitatibus, we have studied before. The second is a work, named Secretum Secretorum. The first he has compiled and written, the second is a copy in latin. Obviously he made the calligraphy by himself, but have had several illuminators in his service.

Secretum Scretorum begins with a big vignette with a king listening to a lecture by a man in the academic cap, holding his hand in a speeching gesture. The picture is in a rather bad condition; for some time the opus had no protecting cover. There is a pulpit with lecture notes and a scriber makes notes. Over the illumination two angels are holding the shield of England. It is easy to think that the king is Edward, but he is Alexander the Greate. And he who lectures is the philosopher Aristotel. The text below explains: Hic incipiunt Rubricae capitulorum libri de Secretis Secretorum summi philosophi Aristotilis ad peticionem et usum illustrissimi regis Alexandri editi.

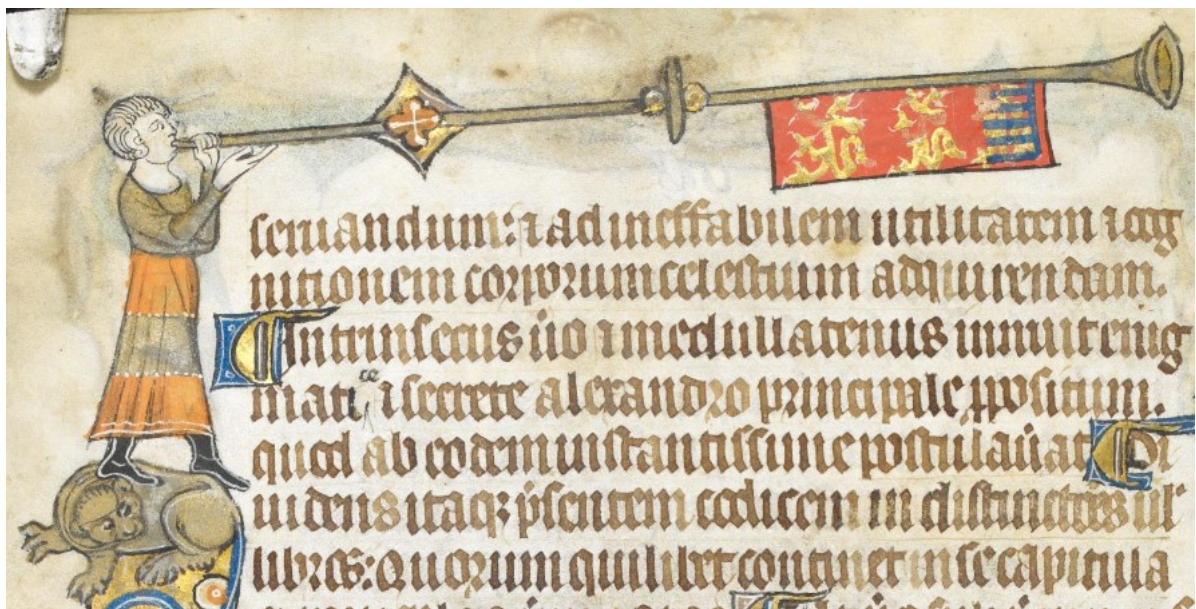


We know, that Aristotel in 348 BC was summond by Philp II of Macedonia to be private teacher for the son Alexander. The whole opus is ment to be Aristotels teaching of Alexander. In about one hundred short chapters are a lot of subjects diskussed in the book. A big vignette with the king (Alexander) introduces each chapter. In most of the pictures he is lectured by Aristotel, in others he is sitting with his council surrounding him. Anacronistic there are both bishops and secular noblemen.

The book tells us by itself of the way to the presnet text. It is translated to latin from arabic by a Philip, with dedication to a Guide de Valentis, bishop of Tripoli. It is ment that this translation was done in the beginning of the 13th century. The arabic text is said to be from the 8-9th century. A Johannes had then found the greek text, translated it to chaldeian and then to arabic. On the picture Philip receives the opus from Aristotel. Bishop Guido is supervising the event.



The dotted striped cloth we are interested in, they appear very rare in this opus. Som reminds of the illuminations in De Nobilitatibus. The likeness can depend on that some of the illuminators have worked with both the opus. The margin figures, wearing dresses of dot striped cloth, I have found, are musicians.







There is still more a picture with dot striped dresses, it is a vignette where three knights with dot striped surcots are standing before Alexander. He hold his hand in a speaking gesture, as do Aristotel in the background in the margin. Obviously Alexander gives orders or instructions to the knights, supported by Aristotel.





At the bottom of the same side there is a knight in a surcot with dotted line. He is standing between two shields, belonging to the King of England and the Heir.



There are some more pictures, where the mantels have an edge with dotted line. They are all in vignettes, introducing new chapters, where Alexander is seated, surrounded by his court. Aristotel on the third picture has not such an edge on his garment.





Aristotel is found in a margin picture with a kneeling pupil (?) before him. Here both of the persons have overcloth with dot striped edges.



These are all the dresses with dot striped cloth I have found in Secretum Secretorum. The main figures do not have dresses with dots and lines as the secondary figures have. Persons with a higher rank can wear at dotted edge on their mantels, but the cross-banded dresses will be found on the musicians and on some knights. Is this an expression for social differences?

Now we have noted the dresses. But there are two more pictures I will allow me to include. Because they are so interesting, most perhaps for knights and fighters. The first is a cannon of the same shape as in De Nobilitatibus, a **pot de fer**. The cannon in that opus is said to be the first known representation. Thus this one must be the second oldest.



If we were lucky to see an unice picture in De Nobilitatibus of Walter de Milemete, here duplicated, so will he give us another unice picture in Secretum Secretorum. The picture I choose for the final is not an oven with a chimney. The several men are not using their bellows to maintain a fire. This must in fact be a **Cornu Alexander Magni**, a enormous horn or trumpet, an instrument for war. Probably is this the first representation of a cornu. In the text on this page is read: Et est instrumentum terribile quod dicitur multis modis. The sound of this terrible instrument could be heard up to 60 miles (aprox 100 km).



To better understand Secretum Secretorum, especially with the latin, I have had a good use of James, Montague Rhodes: The Treatise of Walter de Milemete, Oxford 1913.