

MERLIN

Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., Vol. XVIII, 170

Ferd. Lot, in an examination of the sources of the Vita Merlini (Annales de Bretagne, vol. xv), has pointed out the more original character of the "Lailoken" fragments, and decides that Geoffrey (the inventor of Merlin) knew the Scottish tradition and utilized it for his Vita . . . . So far the researches of scholars appear to point to the result that the legend of Merlin, as we know it, is of complex growth, combined from traditions of independent and widely differing origin . . . . The probability is that anything more told of the character and career of Merlin rests upon the imaginative powers and faculty of combination of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

1956 ed., Vol.XV, p. 282

Later on a Vita Merlini, long attributed to Geoffrey - an attribution on which modern scholarship has thrown doubts - incorporated features from the Scotch tradition of a certain Lailoken . . . . This led to the idea that there had been two Merlins, Merlin-Ambrosius and Merlin-Sylvestris, a view now very generally rejected. (Eleventh ed. also said the idea of two Merlins was a view now discarded by leading scholars.)

The second part of Robert de Borron's trilogy, which was the starting point of the Arthurian cyclic development, dealt with the birth of the seer and his relations with Uther Pendragon. This, originally in verse form, was later worked over in prose, and expanded, first with additions dealing with the wars incident to the opening of Arthur's reign, then with a medley of romantic incidents connected with Arthur's court. The two elements are combined in a unique ms., No. 337(Fonds Francais) of the Bibliotheque Nationale. Finally, a fantastic romance, entitled Les Prophecies de Merlin, belonging to a late period of Arthurian evolution, completed the cycle.