

Alchemical Miscellany, including an extract from JOHANNES DE RUPESCISSA, *De confectionis veri lapidis*; RUDIANUS [?], *Practica artis alkimie*; *Opus magistri hospitalis* by HOSPITALINUS IEROSIMILITANUS corrected by RAINALDS [ARNALDUS] DE VILLA NOVA; extract from JOHN DASTIN (?), *Rosarius*; JOHANNES DE TESCHEN, Alchemical antiphon; numerous Alchemical Procedures and recipes  
In Latin and Italian, decorated manuscript on parchment with an alchemical illustration  
Northern Italy, c. 1450-1475

*i* (parchment) + 89 folios on parchment, some leaves palimpsest with discernible traces of an earlier cursive gothic script in Latin, probably from fourteenth-century Italy, see ff. 49v-52v, 60, 66, 67, 73v-74, modern foliation top outer corner in pencil, and incomplete early-modern foliation in ink, appears to be complete (collation, i<sup>10</sup> ii<sup>14</sup> iii<sup>12</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> (-6, cancelled with no loss of text) v<sup>12</sup> vi<sup>14</sup> vii<sup>12</sup> viii<sup>12</sup> (-11 and 12, probably cancelled with no loss of text), vertical catchword in quire five, no leaf or quire signatures, ruled in ink with single full-length vertical bounding lines ruled in lead (often indiscernible), (justification 107-106 x 50-55 mm.), written on the top line probably by two scribes in a good cursive humanistic script in nineteen to twenty long lines, red rubrics and paragraph marks, three- to one-line red or blue initials, f. 41, in pen with colored wash, FULL-PAGE DRAWING of sublimation vessels ("Sublimatoria vasa") and a furnace ("Furnus sublimatorum"), outer margin f. 38 trimmed away, front flyleaf stained, f. 9rv, stained partially obscuring text, ff. 42 to end soiled, with ff. 48-69 particularly dirty occasionally obscuring part of the text, ff. 79v-80, stained with part of the text difficult to read, f. 89, holes in lower margin from binding fittings. Bound in its original fifteenth-century leather (now very dark, possibly originally red), over thick wooden boards, cut flush with the book block, three raised bands, five brass bosses front and back covers, corner-studs on fore-edge, four metal roundels stamped with a star, front cover, along the spine, one remains back cover, fastens front to back with a clasp and catch brass and leather fastener, rebaked early, backing now loose and split, back board mostly detached, some wear to covers (with repairs), housed in custom modern folder and slip case. Dimensions 145 x 81 mm.

This is an important miscellany of practical and theoretical alchemical texts with a full-page drawing of alchemical instruments. The selection of texts and their organization deserve further study as an important reflection of the activities of a fifteenth-century alchemist. The manuscript's format suggests it was designed for easy consultation – small and quite narrow, it was well-protected by a stout binding of leather-covered wooden boards with metal fittings. It bears many signs of active use and is remarkably soiled in the section containing practical recipes.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in Italy, probably Northern Italy, most likely in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, c. 1450-1475, based on the evidence of the script. It is a carefully written manuscript and on parchment, preserved in a contemporary binding; it bears signs of being heavily used, especially on folios with practical recipes, which are remarkably soiled.

At least part of the manuscript is a palimpsest (copied on previously used parchment, with the original script scraped and/or washed away); under-script visible ff. 49v-52v, 60, 66, 67, 73v-74, copied in an Italian fourteenth-century gothic cursive script, evidently in Latin; the uncompressed layout suggests a document, but further study is necessary to verify this.

2. Belonged to Fr. Francesco Melvino of the Convent of San Primo in Pavia in 1519; inside front cover, "1519. Fratrisc Meluini Conuentus Sancti Primi," added: "Papiae"; there is evidence of a church of San Primo in Pavia since the eleventh century. In 1354 it became a house of Servite canons (ordine dei Servi de Maria); the parish was suppressed in 1810, and reestablished as part of the diocesan clergy in 1828.
3. Owned by Franciscus Pere[tt]oli (or Peressoli?), inscribed inside front cover; the manuscript certainly continued to be actively used; for example, note marginal annotations about subject (s. xvi-xvii?), ff. 22v and 23.
4. Belonged to Roger Watson Barrett of Kenilworth, Illinois, his manuscript no. 35 (described by Wilson, 1939, no. 3, pp. 30-39; and De Ricci, 1935-40, p. 678, no. 35); his sale, Park-Bernet, New York, 29 January 1952, lot 387.
5. Subsequent modern sales at Swann's, New York, 5 April 1979, lot 586; Laurence Witten, *Cat. 12* (1980), no. 1; *Interlib.*, 1984, plate 9. Dealers' and owners' notes, inside front cover, in ink, "12 II"; in pencil, "LB 10.009," in pencil, "4258/ N. 158"; note in German in pencil dated 1951"; front flyleaf, recto, note in pencil, "Jacob de Rupezissa. Book on Alchemy";
6. Belonged to Joost R. Ritman (b. 1941), the Dutch businessman and distinguished collector of art and books; acquired from Interlib in 1984; *Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 14* (bookplate, inside front cover); briefly described in *Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections* (Online Resources), and in Gumbert, 1987, no. 116.

## TEXT

Front flyleaf, recto, incipit, "Veni creator sancti spiritus. Clauis tocius artis maioris ad tincturam[?] ... Et sic fac ter etc."; verso, list of symbols for the chemical ingredients used in this manuscript (added in several hands);

The symbols do not appear to correspond to any of the later lists of symbols from common printed alchemical sources, see [http://www.alchemywebsite.com/images\\_s.html](http://www.alchemywebsite.com/images_s.html).

ff. 1-2v, *Capitulum* [added or rewritten: unum?] *de recommendatione revelationis huius artis ex archani magisterii*, incipit, "Credas mihi pauper vir evangelice quod ante me nullus hominum in aperto hanc veritatem scripsit. Scito et animadverte qui philosophi magni ... sicut nunc datum est agnoscere pauperibus fidelibus facto sancte ecclesie deprimendis. A domino yhesu Christo cui est honor et gloria fortitudo et potestas per infinita secula seculorum. Amen." *Explicit liber quinte essentiae lapidis magistri Iohannis de Rupecissa viri magni et prophetici de ordine minorum* [Ends top f. 2v; remainder blank];

An introductory statement, setting forth the aims of a treatise, beginning with a passage from Johannes de Rupescissa, *De confectione veri lapidis*, at the end of the sixth operation (printed in Zetzner, 1613, vol. III, p. 185, and Magnet, II, p. 82; cf. Wilson, 1939, p. 31, with references to *Verae Alchemiae* II, 1561, p. 229, Zetzner, 1659, vol. III, p. 194). The remainder of the text included here does not appear in these printed sources. The text states that this book is a remedy for the calamities facing the church and the elect and dedicates it to Christ, warning readers that the pursuit of alchemy should not be governed by a desire for temporal things, and quoting St. Paul that the root of evil is greed ("Nam hic liber est in remedium subleuationis et calamitationis sacro sancte ecclesie et electorum.... Commendo igitur hoc reuelatum archanam

in manus crucifixi sanctissimi domini nostri yhesu christi a quo recepi hoc bonum ..." (f. 2), and notes, as Paul says, "Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas ...". *De confectione veri lapidis* ("On the Making of the True Philosopher's Stone"), as it is entitled in these printed versions, is related to the *Liber lucis* (The Book of Light). Two versions printed in Manget, 1702, vol. II, 80-83, and pp. 84-87, respectively, reproducing Zetzner. 1613, vol. III, pp. 179-188 and 278-287 (also, Zetzner III, 1659, 189-197, and pp. 284-295; see Thorndike, 1934, vol. IV, p. 368, note 67).

Johannes Rupescissa, also known as Jean de Roquetaillade or Rochetaillade was a Franciscan, born c. 1310 in Southwestern France near Aurillac, and died around 1362. His fervent belief in the coming apocalypse, and his tireless predictions of its imminent arrival, and likely his association with the Spiritual Franciscans, led to his arrest and imprisonment at Avignon for more than a decade. In two of his most well-known treatises, both written during his captivity, his apocalyptic ideas were linked with his alchemical beliefs, emphasizing that apocalyptic disaster could be combatted through alchemy. *De consideratione quintae essentiae omnium rerum* (On the Consideration of the Fifth Essence of All Things), linked alchemy with medicine, describing the process of producing "aqua vitae" by the distillation of wine, producing a substance that he said could prevent corruption and decay, and thus prevent illness and premature aging. The *Liber lucis* (Book of Light) described the search for an elixir for the transformation of metals and opens with a warning of the coming of the Antichrist and the usefulness of alchemy to combat the coming disasters (as does the passage in this manuscript). The *Liber lucis* survives in about fifty-five manuscripts (Halleux, 1981, pp. 282-284, including translations and extracts, not including this manuscript; see also DeVun, 2009, p. 158, and Singer, 1928-31, p. 276, no. 293); edition by Andrea Aromatico, 1997 (not available for consultation), based on one early manuscript with an Italian translation.

ff. 3-10v, incipit, "In Nomine domini Amen. Hic soluitur dictum Aristotilis Quarto methaeorum Vbi dicit sciant artifices alkimię quod species metallorum permutari non possunt. Quod quidem verum est vt subdit nisi prius reducantur in primam materiam id est in argentum vivum et vocatur aqua uite perfecta ..."; *Videlicet Sublimatio Mercurii*, incipit, "Recipe igitur vitrioli romani liber i ..."; f. 5, *De prima aqua*, incipit, "Quantum ad secundam preparationem aquae vite ...."; f. 5v, *Aqua secunda clarificata per \** [=sal armoniacum] *sive aquilam*, ...; f. 6, *Aqua tertia* ...; f. 7, *Aqua vite quarta* ...; Et sic habes explanatam quod omnes philosophantes uoluerint occultari." *Et sic explicit cum dei adiutorio*;

This text includes a series of recipes and procedures for subliming mercury, making alcohol, and so forth; Wilson, 1939, p. 32, observed that another copy, although with numerous differences in wording and content after the first paragraph, is found in Boston Medical Library, MS 18 (now Harvard Medical School, Countway Library), an extensive alchemical compendium from 1464-1468 (Wilson, 1939, no. 5, pp. 74-75, no. 208), where it is ascribed to Johannes Thecinensis. Another copy may be Real Bibl. de S. Lorenzo, MS lat. f.1.10, f. 49, s. XVI, where the manuscript's rubric cites the text as Christophorus Venetis, *Super lapide minerali* and notes it is often ascribed to Thomas Aquinas (listed in the In Principio Database).

ff. 11-41v, *Incipit Practica artis alkimie*, incipit, "Nunc in dei benedictione practicam reserabo et modum agenda philosophicum quomodo perficiatur ipsum elixir siue tinctura alba et rubea ex solo mercurio philosophorum .... Ex mercurio igitur sapientum qui non est vulgi et qui apud philosophus prima materia nominatur ... Et cum rexurexero a mortuis mutabo omnia et mutabor"; f. 24v, *De Rege rubeo*, incipit, "Si igitur hunc lapidem gloriosum Regem album et verum lunificum conuertere uolueris in lapidem rubeum ..."; f. 26, *Sequitur de gradibus*, incipit, "Nunc restat loqui ulterius quam procedatur ad gradus cum lapide philosophorum ..."; f. 33, incipit,

"Nota si libenter uelles ulterius soluere non posses nisi per m[ercuriu]m crudum ..."; f. 34, *Sequitur de regimine fimi in quo consistit ars philosophorum ut calore bene tepido et humido regatur*, incipit, "Primus ergo gradus in calore ..."; f. 34, *De regimine ignis ...*; f. 34v, *Sequitur de furnellis ...*; f. 37, *De furno atbanare ...*; f. 37v, *De instrumentis et vasis ...*; f. 38v, *De xv signis que sunt in extractione lapidis ...* f. 40v, *De probatione medicine*, incipit, "Nota probatio medicine ... tunc est signum perfectionis ipsius"; f. 41, full page illustration of *Sublimatoria uasa*, and *furnus sublimatorum*; f. 41v, [Recipe], incipit, "Recipe on. vnam Arsenici christalam ... sit lutatum cum sicut parvo foramine desuper";

Wilson, 1939, p. 33, reports that a late sixteenth-century manuscript of the same text, ending with the section *De gradibus*, is found in Vatican City, BAV, MS Barberini 273, ff. 1-38, where the text is ascribed to Rudianus (see also Thorndike, 1934, vol. III, p. 44, note 9; and Thorndike and Kibre, 1963, pp. 965, listing this manuscript, then owned by Roger Barrett, and University of Pennsylvania, Lea Library, MS 1). The text cites Aristotle, Alphidius, Rudianus, Diamed (f. 12), Albertus Magnus, and Geber (ff. 11v, 12v, etc.), and their names are copied in the margin for reference, and it includes an illustration of sublimation vessels on f. 41 (described below). Little is known about Rudianus, who probably wrote before the fourteenth century, and was the author of a text, *The Three Words*, and other works.

ff. 42-46v, *Elixir ad faciendum oleum de <mercurio> crudo ...*, incipit, "Accipe in nomine domini libram i alcaldir (?) ..."; f. 45v, *De Fermentatione*, incipit, "Quando uolueris fermentare et fermentum facere ..."; f. 46, *De multiplicatione lapidis*, incipit, "Nota de multiplicatione et projectione huius lapidis ... ad omne iudicium." *Explicit cum dei adiutorio cui sit laus et gloria*;

f. 46v, *Fixatio <cinabrii> vera*, incipit, "Recipe frustum <cinabrii> et pone in <crucibulo> ... ficum et magis rubicundum";

ff. 47-66, *Opus magistri hospitalini Ierosimitani correctum per magistrum Rainaldum de villa nova ad <solem [ie. aurum]>*, incipit, "Accipe <vitriolum> romanum sal petre sal armoniacum ..."; *Preparatio <mercurii> pro isto*, incipit, "Accipe in alcadatanai ..."; *Sublimatio <o> pro rubedine*, incipit, "Accipe de ipso congelato ... clara et hec est signum." *Finis*; ff. 51-66, *Vzifur episcopi cunamensis*, incipit "Accipe <uncias duo lune> foliate et amalgama cum..."; ... f. 65v, *Nunc cum dei adiutorio ad practicam procedamus*, incipit, "Recipe de croco ... verissimum transiens omnia iuditia." *Et explicit Gratiadei Minor*.

A series of thirty-one recipes (not numbered in the manuscript); another copy of the same series ascribed to "Hospitalis Transmarinis" listed in Singer, 1928-31, p. 198, no. 224; see also Thorndike, 1934, vol. III, p. 662, and two versions cited in Thorndike and Kibre, 1963, 1341, incipit, "Recipe vitriolum Romanum salis nitri alumini" (*Opus magistri Hospitalis Hierusal. In subsidium terre sancte*, in Vienna, National Bib., MS 5224, 15c); and incipit, "Recipe vitriolum Romanum salpetrum ..." (*Fac aquam fortem taliter*, Vienna, National Bib., MS5491, 15c). Thorndike suggests that there are two versions of the *Opus magistri hospitalis*; one, listed by Singer, 1928-31, and found in Vatican City, BAV, Palat. lat. MS 1332, f. 49v, and the other mentioned by him, Thorndike, 1934, vol. III, p. 662 (see Thorndike, 1936, p. 375); described in detail in Wilson, 1939, pp. 35-36. See also the recent discussion in Calvet, 2011, pp. 112-113.

The last six recipes form a small independent series, possibly from a *Practica* by Gratiadei Minor; an extensive *Practica* by a Gratiadei is found in Venice, San Marco, fondo antico MS 323, ff. 206v-215 (Thorndike, 1934, vol. IV, p. 430 note 46).

f. 66, [possibly contemporary addition], *Roxarius ferrens roxas amenas*, incipit, "Desiderabile desiderium et pretium quod a cunctis philosophia nec male ponitur ... vocamus Roxarium eo quod ex libris philosophorum tamquam roxas ex spinis evulsimus tibi ipsas. Et quid nocet veritatis si quicquid."

The beginning of John Dastin (?), *Rosarius philosophorum*, printed in 1657 (available online, see Online Resources), text here ends imperfectly, at p. 3 of the 1657 edition; Wilson, 1939, cites Zetzner, 1659, vol. III, p. 663; also printed in Manget, 1702, vol. II, pp. 309-324, and see Singer, 1928-31, p. 210, no. 231, Corbett I, 127, II, 119, Thorndike and Kibre, 1963, col. 403. John Dastin was an English alchemist, active c. 1288-c. 1334. This work also circulated as Arnaldus of Villanova's; survives in numerous manuscripts, including Yale, Mellon MS 28, London, Wellcome Library, MSS 383, 384, 385, 514, 516, 525, and 758 (in Italian).

ff. 66v-67v, *Particulare pulcrum super <rame> purum*, incipit, "Recipe on. Unam argenti ..."; "Recipe on. I lune fine ..."; "Recipe sulfur vivum citrinum ..."; "Postea recipe tartarum calcinatum ... et gaudebit cor tuum," *Finis*;

ff. 68-69, *Recepta tradita per angelicum virum dominum fratrem Robertum ordinis sancti francisci. Ad memoriam profundam et retentiuam perpetuam et velocissimam apprehensivam. Et est unguentum mirabile quo utebantur papa Urbanus V et papa Johannes primus*, incipit, "Recipe radice lingue bovis... quo vti debet corporis premissa parva vacatione uel euacuatione." *Finis*;

Recipe to improve memory and intellect by the Franciscan Brother Robert said to have been used by Pope Urban V, Pope from 1362-1370 and John I (for John XXII?, who was Pope from 1316-1334); apparently otherwise unrecorded.

ff. 69v-78v, *Prima comentia la preparazione del <mercurio>*, incipit, "Recipe quella parte ..."; ... *Preparation de \**, incipit, "El sal armoniaco se prepara in questo modo. Toli de epso quanto voi ... Sera lo d<esiderato?> piu nobele," *Finis*;

Unidentified alchemical tract in Italian in ten chapters on the preparation of mercury and gold, mentioning "material bianca," "material rossa," and "laqua forte"; detailed description in Wilson, 1939, pp. 37-38.

f. 79rv, Two recipes in Latin, incipit, "Recipe <o> calcinatum seu fixum ..."; *Compositio animalis*, incipit, "Recipe <calcina?>tum ... Et dissolve cito et sine salo," *Finis*;

f. 80rv, incipit, *A. F. G. E.* incipit, "Hec est antiphona Johannis tezensis. En pulcer lapis noster triplici fulcitas acie solertum... ut celi bruma possit introire";

Johannes de Teschen or Johannes Tecenensis, Alchemical antiphon, also found in Yale, Mellon MS 5 with musical notation (but without attribution), TK 499 and T III, p. 643, n. 63 (*Super lapidem philosophorum*); Singer, 1928-31, p. 957. The meaning of the letters, A.F.G.E. before this text remains a puzzle.

ff. 80v-89, *Dictum Aristotilis*, incipit, "Aristotiles <mercurius> est quasi lac ..."; f. 81, *Acetum <philosophicum?>*, incipit, "Recipe aceti vini boni ..."; ... *Ad album bovum*, Recipe auripigmenti bene triti partem .... Si posueris partes tres exhibit per sublimationem," *Finis*.

Ten alchemical recipes in Latin; described in detail in Wilson, 1939, p. 39.

Everything about this small compendium suggests it was copied to fit the needs of its original owner. The careful script, use of parchment, and the carefully drawn and colored illustration on f. 41, together suggest that this original owner was a man of some means. The selection of the texts included suggests a preference for practical recipes, but the inclusion of several more philosophical passages is of interest. The manuscript begins with a passage, probably by Johannes Rupescissa, which shares that author's apocalyptic views and his belief in alchemy to cure the ills of Christian society. The author had access to a number of other texts, in addition to the practical recipes, and copied a short passage from John Dastin's *Rosarius*, and the alchemical antiphon ascribed to Johannes Tesinenesis. Notable among the recipes included is one by Brother Robert, a Franciscan Friar, to improve memory and intellect, said to have been used by Popes Urban V (pope from 1362-1370) and John I (probably John XXII was intended, pope from 1316-1334). The symbols used here to represent various chemicals differ from some of the usual alchemical symbols, and a key to their interpretation was added on the flyleaf. As mentioned above, the manuscript now bears many signs of long and active use.

## ILLUSTRATION

Full page drawing on f. 41 of two alchemical tools, the first labeled "Sublimatoria vasa" (the vessel shown both closed and open with two parts, in ink, shaded and colored partially purple), and "furnus sublimatorum," with flames colored red showing in the openings.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

The Ritman Library (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica)  
<http://www.ritmanlibrary.com/collection/collection-profile/>

Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections (as Amsterdam, BPH MS 14)  
<http://www.mmdc.nl/static/site/>

In Principio, Incipit index of Latin texts  
<http://www.brepolis.net/>

Alchemy Sources (Workshop; On the Fringes of Alchemy, Budapest, 2010)  
[http://members.upc.hu/bobory.dora/alchemyproject/On\\_Alchemy.html](http://members.upc.hu/bobory.dora/alchemyproject/On_Alchemy.html)

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<http://archive.org/details/histoirelittra41riveuoft>

Dastin, John. *Johannis Dausteni Angli Rosarium secretissimum philosophorum arcanum comprehendens. Geismariae, Sumptibus Sebaldi Köhlers*, 1647  
<http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10252722-0>

Alchemy Website; Antiphona of Johannes de Teschen (from MS Mellon 5)  
[http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alchemical\\_music.html](http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alchemical_music.html)

Antiphona (MS Mellon 5)  
[http://www.alchemydiscussion.com/view\\_topic.php?id=514&forum\\_id=5](http://www.alchemydiscussion.com/view_topic.php?id=514&forum_id=5)

Bibliotheca Chymica  
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