

CHRISTOPHORUS PARISENSIS, *Opera* (in Italian), including *Lucidarium artis transmutationis metallorum*; extracts from the *Sommeta* and *Violetta*; and *Epistola*
In Italian, with some Latin rubrics, manuscript on paper
Italy, Palermo, 1557

ii (modern paper) + i (i, original thick paper cover, ii, paper flyleaf) + 85 + i (original thick paper cover) + ii (modern paper) folios on paper, watermark, undetermined type (a balance within a circle accompanied by letters?), early foliation in ink, Arabic numerals top outer corner recto, [73], 74-152 [153-157], modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto [cited], texts are complete, but now missing 72 leaves at the beginning (collation, i⁷ [structure uncertain] ii-v¹⁶ vi¹⁶ [-15, 16, final text is complete, probably cancelled with no loss]), vertical catchwords almost completely hidden in the gutter, no leaf of quire signatures, apparently frame-ruled in lead or crayon, rarely visible, with full-length vertical bounding lines only (justification, 170-155 x 85-80 mm.), written in a vigorous formal Italian cursive script in 28-31 long lines, blanks for two-line initials, all headings, etc. in text ink, paper darkened, some stains throughout without affecting legibility, ff. 18, 30, early paper repairs, several leaves now glued to paper stubs, some worming in the gutter at the very bottom. Previously bound in plain paper covers (bound in); now bound in nineteenth-century half red leather, covers tooled with simple gilt triple fillets, spine with four raised bands forming compartments with elaborate gilt filigree, and title, "Transmutation De' Mettalli./MS.", marbled endpapers, back cover damaged in the outer corner, both covers scuffed, hinges partially separated, but in good condition. Dimensions 201 x 153 mm.

A collection of alchemical texts by Christophorus (or sometimes in this manuscript "Christofalus") Parisiensis, a late fifteenth-century follower of the pseudo-Lullian school of alchemy, and the author of the earliest alchemical works composed in Italian. Only one of the texts included here has been printed, and scholarly study of his works and their manuscript tradition is needed. This copy, dated by the scribe, is particularly valuable for the copious notes and annotations that crowd its margins.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript (or perhaps the first text, the *Lucidario*) was copied in Palermo on the 24th of November in 1557, as noted by the scribe on f. 57v at the bottom of the page, "Scriptum panhommi die xxiiii nouembris prime indictione 1557," apparently from an exemplar that was copied in Venice in 1516.
2. Includes marginal notes and additions in Italian and Latin, often very substantial, by many readers, and some scoring and marginal finger-pointers in reddish-brown crayon. These annotations would almost certainly repay further study; the short comments here represent only a fraction of the contents of the annotations. One annotator, contemporary with the hand of the main text, added notes in Italian to the contents possibly including alternate theories (f. 11, passage on mercury, "argentum vivum," alongside a section in the main text which has been crossed out); the notes in this hand are extensive on ff. 18-22v, 23v-27 (at the end of book one), completely filling most of the margins, and continue throughout the manuscript (for example, see ff. 68-78, also heavily annotated); another closely contemporary hand added cross references in Latin to other works and to passages "in my book" (for example ff. 8v, 12v). A later hand has added references to the *Theatrum Chemicum*, proving the manuscript was still in active use

in the seventeenth century (see for example f. 27, noting that "many things are missing here"). Another later hand added extensive notes to the two alphabets on ff. 78v-79.

3. In Venice in 1626, ex libris note f. 1 (overwritten and difficult to interpret), and lower margin, and original front flyleaf, f. ii: G<?> B<?> Cappulamo.
4. Signs of earlier ownership or sales include, front flyleaf, f. iii (original paper cover), "500"; "1020" in red, and "22."
5. These texts were presumably removed from a larger work at the time of its nineteenth-century rebinding; traces of earlier foliation remains indicating that the first seventy-two folios are now lacking. Note that since all the texts included here are complete, and since the major works by Christopher of Paris are represented, the texts removed were likely by a different author.
6. Belonged to Joost R. Ritman (b. 1941), the Dutch businessman and distinguished collector of art and books; acquired in Venice c. 2001 according to the library's cataloguing notes, although the brief description in *Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections* records its acquisition in 1990; *Bibliotheca Philosophia Hermetica* MS 209 (bookplate, inside front cover).

TEXT

ff. 1-26v, *In nomine domini nostri ihesu christi fili dei uiui. Incipimus presentis lucidarium artis transmutacionis metallorum formaliter et substantialiter. Misericordia domini in eternum cantabo in generacione et generacionem annunciabo ueritatem tuam in ore meo*, incipit, "A poy multa consideracione lucidissima mete ho compositio et senza . . . molti secreti ti habiamo manifestati in questo capitolo. Si del glorioso signor nostro Ihesu chrsito benedetto te serra concesso," *Explicit liber primus lucidarii eximii christofali [sic] parisiensis*;

ff. 27-48, *Liber secundus lucidarii christofali [sic] parisiensis, Del modo di cognoscer il loco, doue se troua el nostro mercurio et dela sua preparamone et <pa?>putrefactione capitolo primo*, incipit, "[S]econdo la uniuersale uerita amato figlolo significamo per chaos . . . date ongni obscurita," *Finis secundi libri deo gratias*;

ff. 48- 57v, *Qui comencia il terzo libro nel quale tercio libro doue comenzamo el praticare dele medecine et primo lo introyto de quelli cum la reprobacione dele sophisticarie scandalose di gieber ch'lui chama medecine al suo modo del primo ordine*, incipit, "Et hauendo nela virtu de dio uiuo expedite le parte dilo arboro dilarte transmutatoria. . . largamente nel nostro trattato grande, il quale si a dio piachero telo manderemo. Laus deo optimo et uirgini matri MARIE." *Veneciis iii^o Ianuarii dominica natalis 1516. Ihesus Christus maria uirgo ueneciis 12 decembris 1516 dominica natalis in uigilis dute lucie uirginis et martiris sicilie decus. Copia del lucidario dilo <excellentissimo?> doctor maestro christofalo parisiense philosoph dilarte transmutatoria mandato per lui ad andrea ongnibene citatino dignissimo dela indita cita di uenecia expertissimo in simile arte, quale in simile[?] lauoraro del 1468 et fecero opera perfecta, dela quale yo bertucio leredan ne uidi piu uolte la pietrone che una parte sopreo 500 di mercurio uulgi faceua optima luna in ongni examinacione del quale yo ho tratto questa copia deo gratias. Amen. [below:] Scriptum panhommi die xxiiii nouembris prime indictione 1557.*

Christophorus Parisiensis's *Lucidarium artis transmutationis metallorum* (An Elucidation of the art of the transmutation of metals) is often identified simply as the *Elucidarius* or *Lucidario*. There is no modern critical edition, and there has been no modern scholarly survey of the surviving manuscripts; the most comprehensive list is found by searching the Alchemy Website (Online

resources), where twenty-six manuscripts containing texts (not necessarily the *Lucidarium*) by Christopher of Paris are listed; see also Soler and Guerrero, 2001 (Online resources, below), listing nine manuscripts of his works, six of which include the *Lucidarium*; of these all but one are sixteenth century, and Thorndike, 1963, col. 877 (inc. "Misericordias domini en eternum cantabo"), listing five additional manuscripts; printed in *Theatrum Chemicum*, Strasbourg, 1661, vol. 6, pp. 195-266. The 1931 edition, which is a reprint of the German 1608 edition, was privately printed and is not widely available (and was not consulted by this cataloguer).

Immediately preceding the scribal colophon in this copy is an unusually detailed account, at this point not identified in any other manuscript, of the composition of the text, including an "eye-witness" statement, testifying that he had seen mercury turned into silver: "A copy of the *Lucidario* by the most excellent doctor master Christopher of Paris, a philosopher of the art of transmutation, made for Andrea Ognibene, a most respectable citizen of the city called Venice, very expert in that art which he practiced in 1468, and he accomplished the complete work, of which I, Bertuccio Leredan, saw several times the great stone, and with one part upon 500 parts of mercury he made silver of the best quality withstanding every examination. I drafted this copy of it, thanks be to God. Amen" (see above for the transcription of the Italian text). An examination of all the surviving manuscripts of the *Lucidarium* to determine whether this information is found in other copies would be of interest. The text itself concludes with a note that it was completed in Venice in 1516, presumably true of this manuscript's exemplar, and the scribe, as noted above, concludes the page by noting the text was written in Palermo in 1557.

The text here appears to follow the structure of the printed Latin text, without the appendices, and is seemingly shorter in book III (the text on f. 58rv, appears to be a translation of chapter IX, on pp. 265-266, *Recapitulatio. De aqua caelesti et menstruo vegetabili divinae actione*). The first book is theoretical, including definitions of the philosophers' stone or elixir, the possibility of transmutation of imperfect metals, and chapters that include common objections and responses to them, and so forth; the second two books are "practica." On f. 57v, a later hand added a key to the alphabetical symbols used in the work (the same alphabet, with explanations, appears in the printed edition, pp. 269-270, which does not include the ampersand at the end, incipit "A. chaos ... Z, igitur cineris, & Aqua <secreta>" (cf. the alphabet in Sister M. Augustina, College of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, New Jersey, Wilson, 1939, cat. no. 2, p. 5, that includes the ampersand).

f. 58rv [Added top margin, *Compositio Aquę Secretę*] *Eiusdem paruum uolumen*, incipit, "Et per dare forma et complemento di tuto questo glorioso et sancto magisterio in questo piccolo uolume ... et trouerai de uerbo al uerbo uale. [Added:] *finis*;

See above, apparently *Lucidarium*, book III, chapter nine (cf. Latin text in *Theatrum chemicum*, vol. VI, pp. 265-266).

ff. 59-78, *Liber summe intitulus latus corpus per preclarum magistrum christofalum parisiensi de lapide philosophorum*, [possibly added: Quod non debemus adhibere fidem totaliter philosophorum ditis], incipit, "E inpedimento che per sua natura inpedisse questo preciosissima scientia ... f. 69v, *Practica huius artis*, ...; f. 72v, [Added: *Ex Alfabeto à C. 151*], *Practi e calcinatio vulgaris*, ...; f. 73, *Calcinatio physica*, incipit, "Figlolo hauendoti a reuelar la secunda parte di questo ... dire in questa arte cum ydioma uulgare per che uui non sete tutto fundato in grammatica et yo amandoue como proprio figlolo, ho electo questo do uullgare per meglio satisfacere alo apeto uostro, et cussi ad honorem et gloria del celestiale patre figlio et spiritus sancto qui in eternum

benedicantur, *Finita est epistola que dicitur summetta magistri christofori parisiensis ad andream omnibonum nel 1472.*

Almost certainly excerpts from Christophorus Parisiensis, *Summeta* (The Little Summa), or a related work, although no record of another manuscript with an identical incipit, nor one using the title *Latus corpus* (which we might translate, "The Extensive Work," which certainly seems quite different from the work's usual title) has been identified. The contents of the text is generally similar to the text described in Wilson, 1939, cat. no. 70, Osler Medical Library, McGill University. Wilson's summary is enough to establish parallels in the contents of the two manuscripts, although the text of the two is clearly different – our copy is certainly a different translation, and judging from the early reader's notes, extracts. The text here includes a series of definitions on ff. 59v-62v: *Diffinico delo elixir* [added, c. viii], *Lapis sic diffinitur* [c. viiii], *Alkimie sic diffinitur* [c. x], *Menstruum sic diffinitur* [c.xi], *de diffinitione mercurii* [c. xii], *Sulfori acossi si diffinico* [c. xiii]. At the bottom f. 63, a later hand notes that chapter fourteen of the treatise is missing. The *Summeta* is briefly discussed in Thorndike, 1934, vol. IV, p. 351; there is no printed edition. For surviving manuscripts, see the discussion of the *Lucidarium*, above.

ff. 78-79, *Idem Christoforus, Capitulo*, incipit, "Yo ue ho tratta la arte declarandola tanto diffusamente et particolarmente che e impossibile ... "; *Alphabetum*, incipit, "Al presente ue mandamo lo alphabeto et ..., A. signum deum, B. aquam fortem simplicem, C. aquam fortem conpositam ... S. igne tercii gradus," *Finis*; *Aliud alphabetum*, incipit, A. Signum deum, B. aquam fortem simplicem et conpositam, C. aquam putei distillatam";

Explanation of the meaning of letters and symbols used in Christopher of Paris's works; both alphabets are quite brief, with letters and a few words of explanation; the second series also includes some alchemical symbols with explanations; the text of the *Summeta* in Wilson, 1939, cat. no. 70, is also followed by two alphabets (apparently more extensive than the text in this manuscript).

ff. 79-84, incipit, "Si lo excelo et glorioso idio benigno et piatoso ali mei desiderii hauendo yo dillectissimo figlolo uulgari zatoui questa arte ... [f. 81] Prima diuidimus in xv partes in qua opus minerale trattatis. In secundo de uegetabili agitur ... [f. 81rv, a list of chapters in these two parts, followed by selected extracts from the text] *De generatione metallorum in uisceribus terre secundum opinionem omnium filosoforum*, incipit, "Ma per uolerii dare figlolo quales fundomento theoricalis nel principio ..."; f. 83v, *De virtute mineralis*, ..., *Ad inueniendum et componendum quintam essentiam mineralem*, ... f. 84, *Via vegetabilis*, incipit, "Mai par che sacira la diuina ..., *De modo seperacionis mercurii lunaris id est eius spiritus*, incipit, "Toglase del mercurio lunare, etc.";

Appears to be brief extracts from Christophorus Parisiensis, *Violetta* (also known as the *Cithara*); see Thorndike, 1934, vol. IV, pp. 350-351; the text has never been printed; for surviving manuscripts, see the discussion of the *Lucidario*, above.

ff. 84-85, *Idem Christofalus*, incipit, "Figlolo amantissimo per la mia ultima lettera a uui diretta me doleua assai, che non havevi hauuto laurante ... unaltra uolta ue l' mandero omni ne. Vale ex parisio die x marcii 1477," *Christoforus vt que supra. Finis laus Deo et eius mater* [Ends top f. 85; remainder and f. 85v, blank].

Letter by Christophorus Parisiensis (recipient unidentified), here dated Paris, March 10, 1477; apparently not the letter to Andrea Ognibene listed in Thorndike, 1963, col. 193, but possibly

the letter that circulated with Christopher's *Alffabeto apertoriale* listed in Thorndike, 1963, col. 194.

The writings of Christophorus Parisiensis (Christopher of Paris) have not been thoroughly studied to date (see Thorndike, 1934, vol. IV, pp. 349-51; Pereira, 1989, pp. 44-45; Pereira, 1999, 339-40). Despite his name, he was almost certainly Italian, possibly from Venice, writing in the second half of the fifteenth century. One theory is that he may have been an exile from Venice, seeking to rehabilitate himself with the Venetian authorities by treatise and letters written as if "from Paris." The content of his work (insofar as it has been studied), suggests that he was an enthusiastic follower of the Pseudo-Lullian school, although he also cites other authors, including Arnald of Villanova, Ortulanus and others. The *Lucidarium* (or *Elucidarius*) is certainly heavily dependent on Pseudo-Lullian works; he quotes them often, and follows the general style and use of alphabets characteristic of these works.

The Latin text of the *Lucidarium* (*Theatrum chemicum*, ch. 7, p. 210) includes a statement warning that alchemical secrets should be guarded, and in particular, open only to those who knew Latin – a sentence that does not seem to appear in our Italian version of the text (see f. 22). Despite this, he is the author of two works, the *Sommetta* and *Violeta*, from the 1470s that may be the earliest alchemical treatises in Italian, and all his works, including the *Lucidarium*, circulated in Italian. To the extent that they have been studied, modern scholars usually list his works as including *Lucidarium* (or *Summa maggiore*), *La Somma minore* or *Sommetta*, *Medulla della Sommeta*, the *Cithara* or *Violetta*, an *Alffabeto apartoriale* (*Apertorium alphabetale*) and Letters addressed discussing alchemy to Andrea Ognibene.

LITERATURE

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[Zetzner, Lazarus]. *Theatrum Chemicum praecipuos selectorum auctorum tractatus de chemiae et lapidis philosophici antiquitate veritate praestantia et operantionibus continens*, Strasbourg, 1661.

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Ritman Library (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica)

<http://www.ritmanlibrary.com/collection/collection-profile/>

Medieval Manuscripts in Dutch Collections (as Amsterdam, BPH MS 209)

<http://www.mmdc.nl/static/site/>

Elena Castro Soler and José Rodríguez Guerrero, "Luis de Centelles y las Coplas de la Piedra Philosophal", *Azogue*, n° 4 (2001)

<http://www.revistaazogue.com>

<http://www.revistaazogue.com/centelle3.htm>

Yale, Mellon Collection, Manuscripts with works by Christophorus Parisiensis

MS 24:

<http://brbl-net.library.yale.edu/pre1600ms/docs/pre1600.mell031.htm>

MS 31:

<http://brbl-net.library.yale.edu/pre1600ms/docs/pre1600.mell024.htm>

"Alchemy," in the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*

<http://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=DicHist/uvaBook/tei/DicHist1.xml;chunk.id=dv1-04>

Alchemy Website

<http://www.alchemywebsite.com/index.html>

Bibliotheca Chymica

http://herve.delboy.perso.sfr.fr/bibliot_phil_chim.html

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