

HARTMANN SCHOPPER (?), *Ars artium sive ars magna cabalistica*

In Latin, with Hebrew characters, illustrated manuscript on paper

Italy (?), c. 1690-1750 (?)

80 leaves (collation: i-viii<sup>6</sup> + ix<sup>4</sup> + x<sup>2</sup> + xi-xiii<sup>6</sup> + xiv<sup>8</sup>), in folio, using a very heavy paper impressed with the watermark of a fleur-de-lis inside a circle consisting of a single line, above which a much smaller circle, of the type Heawood, Watermarks, nos. 1566-73 (1690-1752), most similar to no. 1573 (1752), but without the indentation in the smaller circle, foliated in the same hand as the main text, top, outer corner, recto, as 1-34 in the first of two volumes (leaves 2-35) and 1-42 in the second (leaves 37-79), written in a cursive script, in one hand, and in black ink, with title pages (unfoliated, leaves 1 and 36) in Roman square capitals, imitating the form of a printed book, with the title and author in red ink and the place and original date in black ink, unruled (justification 295 x 190 mm.), with penwork diagrams in vol. 1, ff. 12v, 13, 14, 14v, 16v, 17v, 19, 20, 21v, 22, 22v, 23, 23v, 29, and vol. 2, ff. 3v, 4v, 6, 6v, 7v, 16, 19v, 35v, 36v, 37, 38, 39v, 40, 41, 41v, and 42, with a bifolium, 195 x 295 mm., enclosed between vol. 2, ff. 36-37, in a late eighteenth- or nineteenth-century cursive hand, in Italian. The quires were once sewn, but no evidence that the book block was ever bound; kept in a contemporary leather folder, embossed with a geometric design, and now very worn and marked. Dimensions 345 x 245 mm. (folder), 305 x 225 mm. (paper).

The *Ars artium* (Art of Arts) is a gematric treatise, derived from kabbalistic practices of scriptural interpretation. This is one of a small number of early modern works to produce a science of gematria which works in Latin, the European vernaculars, and in Hebrew. Ascribed, perhaps falsely, to the German poet Hartmann Schopper (d. after 1595), the *Ars artium* may instead be an Italian work of the later seventeenth century. There are only six known manuscripts, and the work was never printed; nor is there a critical edition.

#### PROVENANCE

1. The original provenance of the manuscript is unknown. There are, however, three indicators which suggest that the manuscript was kept, if not indeed produced, in Italy. First, the name VACHINI, stamped in ink on the title pages of both volumes. This name, potentially that of a former owner, could not be identified. Second, the preservation of a bifolium enclosed between ff. 36-37 of vol. 2, which relates directly to the content of the work, in Italian (see physical description above). Third, the leather folder, stated in the entry in the Tajan catalogue (see below) to be probably Venetian, although on what grounds is unclear.

2. Paris, Tajan, their sale, 14 May 2004, lot 90 (see their catalogue at <http://www.tajan.com/pdf/2004/4431.pdf>, with image).

3. European Private Collection.

#### TEXT

ff. 1-36, Hartmann Schopper (?), "*Ars artium sive ars magna cabalistica*," pars prima, title [leaf 1, unfoliated], ARS ARTIVM SIVE ARS MAGNA CABALISTICA AVCTHORE HARTMAN

*SCOPPERO NOVOFORENSI NORICO IN DVAS PARTES DIVISA | FRANCOFVRTI APVD MCENAM MDLXIV*, dedicatory letter, incipit [f. 1 (leaf 2)], "Illustri et potentissimo Principi ac Domino, Dn: Mauritio Hassiê Landgrauio Comiti in Catzenelnbogen, Dietz, Zitgen-hain, et Nidda. Domino, ac Principi suo clementissimo. Causarum genera duo sunt (Illustrissime, ac potentissime Princeps, ac Domine, Domine clementissime), quê Homines ad bonarum Artium studia amplectenda impellunt, ad eaque ardentèr inuestiganda quasi inflammant: quorum primum est innatus ille nobis omnibus Amor,...," address to the reader, incipit [f. 2v (leaf 3v)], "Benevolo, et Amico Lectori. Cum ego jam essem ètate affecta, et feliciter plusquam satis uersatus, (ut multi de me iudicauerunt) in Mathesi, ac præcipue in Arte Cabalistica, facturum me pretium opere putauit, si hanc Artem tam utilem, et præclaram alijs quoque communicarem..." text, incipit [f. 3 (leaf 4)], "Prêfatio. Cum inter Sciencias, aut secreta tam naturalia abscondita, quam abstrusa Mentis humanê Arcana Cabala primum locum obtineat, non immerito Nomen Divinum sibi uindicat, unde Scientia Divina quasi ab uno Deo procedens, uocatur. Et primum cum de ejus Nomine, et origine disserere opportunum sit..."

ff. 37-80, Hartmann Schopper (?), "Ars artium sive ars magna cabalistica," pars secunda, title [leaf 37, unfoliated], *ARS ARTIVM SIVE ARS MAGNA CABALISTICA AVCTORE HARTMAN SCOPPERO NOVOFORENSI NORICO PARS SECVNDA | FRANCOFVRTI APVD MOENVM MDLXIX*, dedicatory letter from Johannes Theodorus de Bry [f. 1 (leaf 38)], "Illustrissime Princeps. Si rerum humanarum statum inspiciamus, Illustrissime Princeps, uix eo quicquam occurreret miserabilis; enim uero non injuria dixere Majores, nisi de alia beatiore nobis constaret, uitam nostram deterioris esse conditionis..." dedicatory letter from the author [f. 1v (leaf 38v)], "Illustrissimo Principi Et præstantissimo Equiti, strenuoque Militi, ac Domino, Dn. Gerardo Hassiê Comiti in Catzenelnbogen, Dietz et pro Cêsarea Majestate Maximiliani secundi Prêfecto Militum in Westphalia, et Turingia Domino, ac Principi Clementissimo. Memineris jam, Magnanime ac Illustissime [sic] Princeps, quantum jam mensem transactum esse, ex quo mihi a Potentissimo tuo Genitore, et Domino, ac Principi meo Clementissimo (cujus nomine hujus mei exigui laboris Pars prima gaudet, et exilarat, ac in frontem genere superbit) jussum fuit,..." text, incipit [f. 3 (leaf 40)], "De hujus Partis Diuisione Prêfationis loco studioso lectori apposita. Cap. I. Iam satis in prima parte laboris nostri conatus sum ostendere verum Methodicum ordinem, quo in hac nostra Praxi Cabalistica procedatur, ulla pretermissa exceptione, aut casu in ipsa occurrente, exemplis, et demonstrationibus dicta illustrando..."

This unusual work instructs the reader in gematria, a method of prognostication derived from a kabbalistic practice of scriptural interpretation, by which a numerical value is accorded to each letter of a name, a phrase, or a question, a series of mathematical and/or pseudo-mathematical calculations are performed, and a final numerical figure derived, which can be interpreted to achieve an answer to the original problem or question. The first part explains the process using Hebrew characters, but the second transposes the method into Latin, and tables establish equivalents to account for linguistic difference.

Perhaps as interesting as the content of the work are the dedicatory letters and prefatory material, especially that to the first part. Here, the author situates his work in its intellectual context and discusses the origins of the Kabbalah, refuting various legendary accounts of its transmission to mankind by angels, before presenting his view of the recent kabbalistic tradition in western Europe, from Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (d. 1494) and Johannes Reuchlin (d. 1522) onwards.

There is no evidence of a printed edition of this work, which the title pages would suggest once existed, with the present manuscript then being either a maquette for a printed edition, or copied from such an edition. The circulation of the work is entirely in manuscript form, and as far as can be determined from the library catalogues, Italian. A total of five copies are known: Amsterdam, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, deposit from the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, PH337 (olim M224); Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, II, III, 323 (Magl. Cl. XX, num. 51); London, Wellcome Library, MS. 4464; Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, Ms. Codex 1201 (pars secunda only); Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, Lawrence J. Schoenberg Collection, ljs251. A sixth copy was offered for sale by the bookseller Andrea Oioli (Primigenia Studio Bibliografico, Gattico, Novara Province, Italy) in March 2011 (see *Biblioteca di via Senato, Milano*, anno III, no. 3 (March, 2011), p. 19).

The authorship of this work – its firm ascription to Hartmann Schopper – is questionable. The title page of the first part provides the date of 1564, but the letter of dedication with which the work begins, signed in Frankfurt on the tenth kalend of January 1564, is addressed to Moritz, Landgrave of Hessen, this being Moritz “the Learned,” Landgrave of Hessen-Kassel (1572-1632, r. 1592-1627), whose interest in the occult arts is well documented. Schopper died at some point after 1595, and so could indeed have addressed the first part to Moritz as Landgrave, given that the latter assumed this office in 1592, but the date of 1564 on the title page and in the dedicatory letter is much too early. The title page of the second part provides the date of 1569, and is followed by a prefatory letter from Johannes Theodorus de Bry (1561-1623), son of the famous engraver Theodor de Bry (1528-1598), presenting the second volume as a posthumous work by Hartmann Schopper. If this letter is genuine, then the date on the title page is improbable, as the letter’s author would have been no more than eight years old in 1569. The dedicatory letter from Hartmann Schopper which follows is signed in Nidda, on the eighth kalend of May 1564, but this is again problematic. This letter is addressed to one Gerardus of Hessen, count of Katzenelnbogen and Diez, *praefectus militum* for the Emperor Maximilian II in Westphalia. The author refers at the start of this letter to the addressee of the first letter (i.e. Moritz “the Learned”) as the father, or at least ancestor (*genitor*) of the addressee of the second, and yet Moritz, though the father of very many children, had no son named Gerhard (or Georg, or anything similar). It is just possible that *Gerardo* is a misreading for *Guillelmo* – Moritz’ successor was his son Wilhelm V (1602-1637, r. 1627-37), and it is conceivable that Schopper was still alive after the birth of Wilhelm in 1602; but Maximilian II, whose *praefectus militum* this Gerardus is said to be, died in 1576.

The exact date of this present manuscript will depend on an identification of the watermark present in the paper stock. This mark (a fleur-de-lis of a very distinctive shape, inside a circle consisting of a single line, above which a much smaller circle [the letter O?]) could not be exactly identified in a dated example. This type of mark, namely the distinctive fleur-de-lis inside a circle, accompanied by various letters and smaller shapes above the main circle, is found in Italian papers of the later seventeenth through to mid-eighteenth century, but the watermarks of this period are only poorly documented. The evidentiary basis is formed by the small number of examples published in Heawood, *Watermarks*, nos. 1566-73 (1690-1752); the similarity to no. 1573 (1752) is not such that a mid-eighteenth century date could be asserted with confidence. No examples of this type are known to the major catalogues of earlier paper which include Italian examples (Briquet, Piccard, Piccard-Online, Woodward, Zonghi).

The extensive discussion of the mathematical content of the work in the description of the copy now in the Schoenberg collection in Philadelphia provides convincing evidence that the work, in the form preserved in that copy, must have been produced in the second half of the seventeenth century, and not before. The suggestion is made, however, that the core of the work may be of sixteenth-century origin, subsequently updated. It is conceivable that the present manuscript preserves a work produced by Hartmann Schopper in the second half of the sixteenth century, but which was subsequently revised, with changes made to the addressees of the dedicatory letters in the process, generating the inconsistencies noted above. That this is plausible is supported by the evidence of the Florence manuscript, which has the dedicatory letter with its date of 1564, but, according to the catalogue, "manca il nome del Principe a cui l'opera è dedicata." It is also conceivable, however, that the work is of seventeenth-century origin, and that the ascription to Hartmann Schopper is a device intended to equip a work of dubious content with the authority, and legitimacy, of relative antiquity. Schopper was indeed active in Frankfurt in the 1560s, and in contact with the Frankfurt printer Sigismund Feyerabend at that time, but is attested primarily as a poet and a translator of poetry, not as an author of kabbalistic or prognosticatory texts.

## LITERATURE

Heawood, Edward, *Watermarks Mainly of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Monumenta chartae papyraceae historiam illustrantia 1, Hilversum, 1950.

Mundhenk, Christine, "Schopper, Hartmann", in Wilhelm Kühlmann et al., eds., *Killy Literaturlexikon. Autoren und Werke des deutschsprachigen Kulturraumes*, vol. 10, Berlin and New York, 2011, pp. 565-66.

Woodward, David, *Catalogue of Watermarks in Italian Printed Maps ca 1540-1600*, Biblioteca di bibliografia Italiana 141, n. p., 1996.

Zonghi, Aurelio, Augusto Zonghi and A. F. Gasparinetti, *Zonghi's Watermarks*, Monumenta chartae papyraceae historiam illustrantia 3, Hilversum, 1953.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Richard Hoche, "Schopper, Hartmann," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 32 (1891), pp. 372-73: [http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/ADB:Schopper,\\_Hartmann](http://de.wikisource.org/wiki/ADB:Schopper,_Hartmann)

Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, Ms. Codex 1201 (Hartmann Schopper (?) *Ars artium sive ars magna cabalistica*, pars secunda [digitized]): [http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/medren/pageturn.html?q=1201&id=MEDREN\\_4322645&](http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/medren/pageturn.html?q=1201&id=MEDREN_4322645&)

Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library, Lawrence J. Schoenberg Collection, ljs251 (Hartmann Schopper (?), *Ars artium sive ars magna cabalistica* [description]): <http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/ljs/view.cfm?option=view&MANID=ljs251>

Published works of Hartmann Schopper (VD16/17): [https://opacplus.bib-bvb.de/TouchPoint\\_touchpoint/hitList.do?methodToCall=pos&identifier=19\\_FAST\\_773730140&curPos=1#19](https://opacplus.bib-bvb.de/TouchPoint_touchpoint/hitList.do?methodToCall=pos&identifier=19_FAST_773730140&curPos=1#19)

Genealogy of the Rulers of Hessen:

[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stammliste\\_des\\_Hauses\\_Hessen](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stammliste_des_Hauses_Hessen)

TM 623