

## Foreword

Scholars consider the Egyptian alchemist Zosimos of Panopolis as the first historical figure of Greek alchemy.<sup>1</sup> He most probably lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Other authors praised him as one of the great authorities, referring to him as e.g. «the crown of the sages», «the one whose language has the depth of the ocean», «the old one», «the one inspired by the gods», «the divine Zosimos», «the friend of the truth».<sup>3</sup> Later on, in Arabic alchemy, he was praised by Ibn Arfa<sup>ʿ</sup> Ra's as «the universal sage and the shining flame» or «the head of the philosophers and the collector of the dispersed».<sup>4</sup>

Little is known about his outer life, except that he came from the town Panopolis,<sup>5</sup> as it was called in Greek. Panopolis is situated in Upper Egypt on the East bank of the Nile, 200 km north of Luxor and about 70 km north of Nağ Ḥammādī where the famous Gnostic library was discovered. Today the town is called Aḥmīm. The holy site of Abydos, also mentioned in the writings of Zosimos, with its enigmatic Osiris resurrection-chapel, is only some 30 km south of Aḥmīm.<sup>6</sup> Newly discovered Coptic papyri give evidence that Aḥmīm was in very early Islamic times a place

<sup>1</sup> He must not be confused with personalities of the same name that lived around that time in Egypt. See M. Mertens, *Les Alchimistes Grecs*, Tome IV.1, Zosime de Panopolis, Mémoires authentiques, Collection des Universités de France, Paris 1995, p. XII f.

<sup>2</sup> Zosimos quotes the encyclopaedist Julius Africanus, whose death is dated after 240, and speaks in one of his authentic texts of the Serapeion that was destroyed in 391. Zosimos must have lived in between these two dates. M. Mertens: Zosime de Panopolis, Mémoires authentiques, I. c., p. XVI f. Mertens is trying to date his life even more precisely and suggests on p. LVII, note 148: «Selon moi c'est plutôt vers 300 qu'il faut situer l'époque de l'activité de Zosimos». The mentioned dating of Zosimos' life gets confirmed by a statement in the *Muṣḥaf aṣ-ṣuwar*, quoted in the introduction on p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> See Mertens, I. c., p. XI, who is quoting M. Berthelot and Ch.-E. Ruelle, *Collection des Anciens Alchimistes Grecs*, 3 tomes. Paris 1888; reprint Osnabrück 1967, Vol. II. p. 83, line 21, then line 20, p. 140, line 17, p. 199, line 14, and p. 401, line 5.

<sup>4</sup> M. Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam*, Leiden 1972, p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> In most of the extant Greek works, we find that Zosimos is called «the one from Panopolis». See Mertens, p. XIII f.

<sup>6</sup> Apido = Abydos; see M. Berthelot, R. Duval and O. Houdas, *La Chimie au Moyen Age*, 3 tomes, Paris, 1893. Reprints Osnabrück 1967 and Frankfurt am Main 2002, p. 226.

where alchemy was practiced, not only theoretically but also with experiments.<sup>7</sup> The Pharonic temple of Aḥmīm was famous for the symbolic images that were painted on the temple walls. Over this ancient temple «all the Arab writers have enthused ... which was particularly famed owing to its traditional association with Hermes Trismegistus».<sup>8</sup> Ibn Ġubair, who visited Aḥmīm in the year 579/1183 even called the huge temple «one of the wonders of the world, beyond description or defining».<sup>9</sup> In Arabic Alchemy when the knowledge of the hieroglyphs was lost, these images were understood as descriptions of the opus alchemicum. Muḥammad ibn Umail (10<sup>th</sup> century) recommends in his *ad-Durra an-naqīya* that one has to go to the temple of Aḥmīm to study the relief on the walls,<sup>10</sup> and his commentary to his *al-Qaṣīda an-nūnīya* is an alchemical interpretation of Pharaonic images on temple walls. According to the *Suda*, the Byzantine lexicon from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Zosimos is from Alexandria, where he probably moved at a later time.<sup>11</sup> According to an Arabic text he lived for 70 years as a learning child, and for 40 years as a teacher.<sup>12</sup> The age of 110 years was considered in Pharaonic times to be the ideal lifespan. It is remarkable to find this Ancient Egyptian ideal preserved into the Middle Ages.

The time of Zosimos was characterized by great transitions, transforming people's perception of the invisible world. The Bible was translated into Upper Egyptian Coptic in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. To become a Christian required a person to renounce all gods and goddesses previously revered. Those became demons, hostile spirits «contending against the One God of goodness and justice ... »<sup>13</sup> This increasing polarisation and «moralisation

<sup>7</sup> These Coptic papyri are being prepared for publication by Tonio Sebastian Richter, University of Leipzig.

<sup>8</sup> See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. Akhmīm; contrary to this quoted article which states that of this temple 'no trace now remains', it has always been there in ruins. Recent new excavations have exposed, among other things, a huge statue of Meritamun, the daughter and later wife of Ramses II. The temple was destroyed in the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century. See also M.T. Derchain-Urtel, Thot at Akhmim, in *Hommages à François Daumas*, Montpellier 1986, p. 173-180.

<sup>9</sup> *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, translated from the original Arabic by R.J.C. Broadhurst, London 1951, p 55. See also the two Arabic Hermetica connected to the temple of Akhmim mentioned in M. Ullmann, *Natur- und Geheimwiss.*, I. c., p. 167 f.

<sup>10</sup> Ms Āṣafiya library Hyderabad, 1410, fol. 17.

<sup>11</sup> The *Suda* calls him: «Zosimos, the Alexandrian, the philosopher» (s.v. Ζώσιμος).

<sup>12</sup> Gotha, 85.14, fol.105b 3 ff. See for that M. Ullmann, *Natur- und Geheimwiss.*, I. c., p. 160.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted from E. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan*, New York 1996, p. XVI.

of the universe» (Martin Buber) led also to the growing popularity of the anchorites (S. Antonius Eremita passed away in 356). At the same time Gnostic-Hermetic thoughts were spreading in Egypt becoming, like Christianity, a serious rival to ancient Pharaonic temple-knowledge. Christianity became the state-religion of Rome in 313 with the emperor Constantine.

It is evident from his teachings that Zosimos was close to the Gnostic-Hermetic worldview, which worshipped the inner God-man.<sup>14</sup> In a Syriac text translated by R. Duval we read: «One could even say that it is the principle of the principles, the son of God, the word, that one whose thoughts and feelings come also from the Holy Spirit. This, my lady, is the explanation of the mirror. When a man looks at it, and sees himself, he will turn away from all that is called gods and demons, and by relating to the Holy Spirit, he becomes the perfect man; he sees God who is inside him thanks to the mediating Holy Spirit.»<sup>15</sup> As we will see later, this statement also expressed the essence of the teaching in the *Muṣḥaf aṣ-ṣuwar*, wherein the author Zosimos collected the teachings of past alchemists, connecting it with his own experience. He thus consolidated the knowledge of this art in his time, its theoretical and its experimental side.

The realisation of this facsimile of the *Muṣḥaf aṣ-ṣuwar* goes back to 1988 when—while returning from India with a collection of Arabic alchemy manuscripts from Indian libraries—a stopover in Frankfurt gave me the opportunity to meet Professor Fuat Sezgin for the first time. I showed him my collection and expressed the intention of Marie-Louise von Franz and myself to further deepen our study of Arabic alchemy. After a long discussion he showed me this *Muṣḥaf aṣ-ṣuwar*, and before I left Frankfurt he allowed me to make a copy of the entire manuscript. Of course, I was most excited, especially about the pictures. The art of picture inter-

<sup>14</sup> *Coll. Alch. Grecs*, l.c., p. 262 f. See also R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, Leipzig 1904, p. 8 f., and Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes; A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*, Princeton 1993<sup>2</sup>, p. 120 f.

<sup>15</sup> «A moins qu'on ne dise que c'est le principe des principes, le fils de Dieu, le Verbe, celui dont les pensées et les sentiments procèdent aussi de l'Esprit-Saint. Telle est, o femme! l'explication du miroir. Lorsqu'un homme y regarde et s'y voit, il détourne sa face de tout ce qui est appelé dieux et demons, et, s'attachant à l'Esprit-Saint, il devient un homme parfait; il voit Dieu qui est en lui, par l'intermédiaire de l'Esprit-Saint.» *La Chimie au Moyen Age*, l. c., Vol. II, p. 263 (Editor's translation from French into English).

pretation has been one of my special fields of interest since 1977, when for the first time I lectured on the interpretation of a series of alchemical pictures at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich. Ever since then I have continued my research in this field.

When I showed this manuscript to Marie-Louise von Franz (1915-1998) she too was very excited and encouraged me to translate the entire manuscript. Salwa Fuad in Cairo and I have worked on this text over many years, because other ongoing obligations needed my attention as well. Continuous studies of the history and the meaning of symbolic alchemy have accompanied this translation work. Regular lectures on the art of picture interpretation and on alchemy—first at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich and later at the Research and Training Centre for Depth Psychology in Zurich (since 1995)—allowed for a growing understanding of the meaning of this unique text of symbolic alchemy. The translation of other still extant Arabic alchemical texts of Hermes, Zosimos, Maria, Agathodaimon, Morienus, and Ibn Umail allowed the necessary familiarisation with the vocabulary used by these authors. In this way the meaning of their symbols became more and more visible to me; *liber librum aperit*—one book opens the other—as the Latin alchemists used to say when recommending the study of alchemy in their books. The result of this procedure was a gradual improvement in the translation of the *Muṣḥaf aṣ-ṣuwar*.

The first results of this effort to understand symbolic alchemy are now available in the text edition of the *Hall ar-rumūz*, written by Muḥammad ibn Umail (CALA I, published 2003), and the first commentary to this text, written by Marie-Louise von Franz (CALA I A, published 2006). The translation of the *Muṣḥaf aṣ-ṣuwar* is now being prepared for publication as a companion volume to the CALA II.1 facsimile of the Istanbul manuscript, as CALA II.2. My psychological commentary on this text, delivered as a series of lectures at the Research and Training Centre for Depth Psychology, will follow as CALA II A.

It is the great merit of Fuat Sezgin to have discovered and copied this unique manuscript from the Arkeoloji Müzesi (Nr. 1574) in Istanbul in the year 1955.<sup>16</sup> This volume is dedicated to him. This dedication is also a

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication; see also his article «Das Problem des Ḡābir ibn Ḥayyān im Lichte neu gefundener Handschriften», *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 114, 1964, p. 266. Fuat Sezgin has done extensive research especially in libraries

tribute to Fuat Sezgin's own patient research and work on the history of Arabic and Islamic science, which he has pursued with devotion and humility for over 50 years, supported by his wife Ursula Sezgin and his co-workers at the Institute of the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. This Institute also published a reprint of a great number of relevant texts in the field of Arabic alchemy that serve as a precious tool for researchers in this field.<sup>17</sup> It will be up to future generations to appraise the value of the immense contribution of Fuat Sezgin's research work towards a better general recognition of what Western culture owes to the Arab world.

Since its early stages, Prof. Dr Fuat Sezgin has been a strong supporter of our CALA project for which I express my deep gratitude. This facsimile came to print with his generous support as well as with the help of Hava Koç, Director of the Library of the Arkeoloji Müzesi in Istanbul. Mehmet Bora Akgül from MAS Matbaacılık A.Ş. in Istanbul supervised in a most careful way the whole process of creating this facsimile, Dr Peter Starr in Ankara checked and ameliorated our English translation of the *Muşhaf aş-şuwar* making also valuable suggestions for the Introduction, and Tuğba Ünlü prepared the individual folios, for all of which I am very grateful. A thank you for ameliorations regarding the introduction to this facsimile also goes to Prof. Dr Erik Hornung and Prof. Dr Wilferd Madelung. Furthermore I express my gratitude, for logistical help during all the years of translation work to the Swiss Institute for Archaeological and Architectural Research of Ancient Egypt in Cairo (Director Dr H. Jaritz, since 2003 Dr C. von Pilgrim).

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Theodor Abt

in the Middle East and in India, the fruits of which other orientalists were and will be able to harvest.

<sup>17</sup> *Natural Sciences in Islam, Chemistry and Alchemy, Texts and Studies*. Collected and Reprinted by Fuat Sezgin (editor) in collaboration with Carl Ehring-Eggert, Eckhard Neubauer and Farid Benfeghou, Vol. 55-74, Frankfurt am Main 2001/02.