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MARBOD OF RENNES, *Liber lapidum* (The Book of Stones); *De sculpturis lapidum* (On Engraved Stones)

In Latin, manuscript on parchment
France (Southern?), c. 1280-1320

ii (parchment) + 52 + ii (parchment) folios on parchment, medieval (fifteenth-century) foliation in Roman numerals in ink, top outer corner recto, 1-45 45bis 46-48, beginning with '1' on f. 4 (with the first three folios unnumbered), modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto, complete (collation i-vi^s vii^t), horizontal catchwords, no signatures, ruled in lead, sometimes with the top ruled line (or other lines) full across, single bounding lines, usually full length, prickings top, bottom, and sometimes outer margins (justification, measuring ruled space, c. 85 x 50 mm.), written in a mature rounded gothic book hand in sixteen lines, majuscules stroked with red, red and blue paragraph marks, 2-line alternately blue and red initials with contrasting red or purple pen decoration, water stains outer margins, severely cockled. Modern brown leather binding blindstamped with fleur-de-lys and lions rampant, title on front and back covers in gold, "Marbodei/ De Lapidibus," spine with three raised bands, also decorated with stamps, gilt edges, in good condition, boards slightly bowed, rear hinge partially separated with bookblock partially detached from spine. Dimensions 120 x 85 mm.

Lapidaries, which discuss the names, origins, color and other properties, and actions or "virtues" (medical, religious, or magical) of gems and other minerals, were well-loved during the Middle Ages and deserve to be more widely read today, offering insights for scholars studying medieval science, medicine, and art. Here is one of the most important lapidaries from the Middle Ages, copied in an engaging, small-format manuscript. Written in verse, this very influential text, surviving in a large number of copies, is exceptionally rare on the market (only three copies recorded in the Schoenberg Database in the 20th-21st centuries).

PROVENANCE

1. Written in France, most likely somewhere in Southern France, at the end of the thirteenth or opening decades of the fourteenth century, based on the evidence of the script and the style of the penwork initials.
2. Back flyleaf, f. i, one line note in Latin (s. xv-xvi?), in ink, beginning "una pars" (perhaps a recipe?).
3. Front flyleaf, f. ii, note on author in French.
4. Inside front cover in pencil, "G M Inv. Nr. 1947."
5. European private collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-47v, [ff. 1-2v, table of contents, with folio references added later in Roman numerals], *De libro lapidum*, incipit, "De adamante, fo. i, ... De crisolito, fo. xliiii"; ff. 2v-4, incipit, [prologue], "Evax rex Arabum legitur scripsisse Neroni/ ... data maxima gemmis"; f. 4, *De adamante*, incipit,

"Ultima primum genus ydia [sic] fert adamantis/ ... [f. 47], *De crisolito*, Emulus ut gemmam ... Sed veras species fuerint si rite probate, *Explicit de uirtutibus lapidum* [added below the line in another hand, *Marbodus*], *Deo gracias*"; ...

Marbod of Rennes (*Marbodus Redonensis*), *Liber lapidum* or *De lapidus*; edited in Herrera, 2005 and Riddle, 2007 (with English translation). Herrera, 2005, pp. ci-cxvi, lists 160 manuscripts (including 19 fragmentary copies); Riddle, 1977, listed 125 (pp. 131-135, but cf. Herrera, 2005, pp. cxvi-cxviii, with corrections). Translated often into French, as well as Italian, Spanish, Irish, and Hebrew, and printed three times in the sixteenth century, *Libellus de lapidibus preciosis*, Vienna, J. Cuspinianus, 1511; Lübeck, 1575; Leipzig, 1585; also printed in Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. 171, col. 1735-1770.

The edition concludes with *De dionisia*; *De criselectro*; and *De Crisopatio*; followed by two epilogues (Herrera, 2005, pp. 173-183); the text in our manuscript, f. 47rv, with the heading *De crisolito*, is the second epilogue, although our scribe has transformed "annulus" (a finger-ring) to "Emulus," ("rivaling" or "jealous" but pretty much nonsense here); the edition of this epilogue begins, *De anulo et gemma*, incipit, "Anulus ut gemmam digitis aptandus haberet ..." (To adorn the finger-ring with inlaid stone ...) and concludes with an additional line lacking in our manuscript).

Marbod's text, containing c. 730 verses (hexameters), describes 60 gems; the chapter headings in our manuscript are as follows: *De adamante*; *De achate*; *De alectorio*; f. 8v, *De genatice* [sic], incipit, "At genaticem vetus ..."; *De iaspide*; *De saphiro*; *De calcedone*; *De smaragdo*; f. 14, *De crisopazio*, incipit, "Ethiopium tellus ..."; f. 14, *De sardonice*, incipit, "Sardius a sardis est a quibus ante repertus ..." [ed. p. 47, *De Sardio*]; *De onice*, incipit, "Sardonice faciunt duo nomina sardus et onix ..." [cf. ed. p. 43]; *De onice* [ed. p. 45]; *De crisolito*, incipit, "Porro igitur ..."; *De Berillo*, *De topacio*; *De Crisopasso* (rubric lacking, f. 17v); *De iacincto*; f. 19v, *De crisolito*, incipit, "Est crisoletus silis describitur auro ..."; *De celodonio*, incipit, "Navi cito ..."; *De ametisco*; *De celidonio*; *De gigate*; *De magnete*; *De corallo* [sic]; *De alapanda*; *De corneolo*; *De carbunculo*; *De ligorio*; *De chite* [sic, for *echite*]; *De siletute* [sic, for *silente*]; *De gogothomeo* [sic]; *De ceravnio* [copied here without a rubric, as part of the previous chapter]; *De eliotropia*; *De epistice* [as ed. p. 109, which in the ed. is preceded by *De gerachite*, here see ch. 3]; *De emaitite*; *De abestone* [sic]; *De peanite*; *De sabda* [sic]; *De medo*; *De galacia*; *De exacolintos* [sic]; *De celonite*; *Prasius*; *De cristallo*; *De galatida*; *De orite*; *De hyema*; *De liparea*; *De enidro*; *De drivi* [sic, for *De iri*]; *De andromanda*; *De obtalimo*; *De unio*; *De pantero*; *De ascito* [sic]; *De calcafone*; *De melochite*; *De cecolito* [sic]; *De porite*; *De dyadoco*; *De dionisia*; *De crisolito*.

The order in our manuscript (listed above) departs from the edition a number of times (variations in the order of the surviving manuscripts appear to have been common; see Herrera, 2005, discussing the texts she classifies as delta, groups B and C especially, pp. xlv-xlvi). For example, following *De smaragdo* [ed. ch. 8], our manuscript includes *De crisopazio*, incipit, "Ethiopium tellus ..." [found in the ed. as ch. 60]; *De sardonice*, incipit, "Sardius a sardis ..." [ed. ch. 10, *De sardio*]; *De onice*, incipit, "Sardonice faciunt duo nomina ..." [ed. ch. 8, *De sardonice*]; *De onice*, incipit, "Collo supenso ..." [ed. ch. 9, *De onice*]; *De crisolito*, Porro igitur [cf. ed. ch. 11, *De crisoloto*, Auro chrisolitus micat ... [same heading; different text]. Compared with the manuscript families outlined by Herrera, our manuscript can probably be grouped with the delta family, which she notes most manuscripts belong to; she subdivides this large group further, and the text here shows some characteristics of her groups B and C (see pp. xlv-xlvi), but further research is needed.

ff. 48-51v, *De sculturis lapidum*, incipit, "Secuntur relaciones antiquorum scriptorum. De sculturis lapidum nec approbando multum nec peritus refutando ... Si inueneris lapidi in scultas duas ursas et in medio earum serpentem diuidentem eas. Hic reddit hominem astutum fortem et constantem et gratum hominibus [ends top f. 51v; remainder blank].

This text on the properties and powers of stones engraved with specific images (sometimes influenced by the zodiac) appears in Thomas Cantimpratensis (Thomas of Cantimpré, 1201-1272) *Liber de natura rerum*, book XIV, ed. Boese, 1973, pp. 370-371, drawing on earlier sources, and also circulated as an independent treatise; for its transmission and versions in other languages, see Messler, 2014, Milani, 2015; and Studer and Evans, 1924.

Lapidaries are texts which describe the properties of stones (that is gems, minerals, and other similar substances), describing their names, origin, color and other properties, as well as their medical, magical, and religious actions or "virtues" (in Latin, *virtus*). Medieval lapidaries unite pre-Christian lore with Christian beliefs and practice. The gemstones that were so lavishly used to decorate Gospel Books, reliquaries, and crucifixions were valued for their properties and for their allegorical significance (see Buettner, 2022, for a recent discussion of gemstones in the Middle Ages). *De Lapidus* by Marbod of Rennes, written in the late eleventh century, was a medieval bestseller, widely read and influential for centuries. The author, Marbod of Rennes (in Latin, Marbodus Redonensis), born in Angers c. 1035, was "one of the great poets of France in the second half of the eleventh century and in the early part of the twelfth century" (Bloch, 1982). He was friends with Baudry of Bourgueil and Hildebert of Lavardin, served as head of the cathedral school in Angers and became bishop of Rennes in 1096; he retired to the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Aubin, where he died in 1123. Marbod drew on both classical and Christian sources for his book on the property of stones including the Greek lapidary of Damigeron in a Latin translation, Isidore's *Etymologiae*, Solinus' *Collectanea rerum memorabiliuim*, and, perhaps, Pliny's *Nature History*.

In the first chapter on diamonds and similar stones, Marbod describes their special properties ("hardness invincible") and virtues: they guard against poisons and calm brawls and trials (and more). Lapis lazuli (Marbod uses the Latin term, *sapphiro*) protects against fraud, envy, and terror; it allows one to escape prison, prevents perspiration, and can cure skin sores, irritated eyes, and headaches. Emeralds and other green stones (*smaragdo*) make people who carry them with respect rich, and worn hanging at the neck, dispel fevers. He describes coral "like a green bush" when it is in the water, and bright red when dry, and says that it repels lightning, violent whirlwinds and storms, demonic shades and monsters. Magnetite (a mineral that is one of the main iron ores), he records, can reveal a wife's faithfulness; placed on her head while she is sleeping, if she is virtuous, she will fall into her husband's arms (still asleep); if not, she will fall violently out of bed. Lapidaries in many respects treat gemstones and other stone-like substances in the same way that Bestiaries discuss animals and other fabulous creatures, and they are equally engaging, even without images (medieval lapidaries were usually not illustrated). They deserve a wider audience among lovers of the Middle Ages.

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