

Remi Franckowiak, "**Athanasius Rhetor's Chemistry in the midst of several worlds**", *6th International Conference of the European Society for the History of Science*, Lisbon, 4-6 September 2014.

Abstract

Athanasius Rhetor, Greek priest educated in a Jesuit school before owing allegiance to the pope, was born in Cyprus in 1571 but lived in Constantinople up to the 1610's. Then he moved to Roma and then to Paris whose intellectual life he contributed to and where he died in March 1663. Sent by his French patrons to bring them rare manuscripts, he spent 10 more years in different places of the Greek-speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire. It was probably from 1620 to the end of 1650 that he copied, rewrote, translated, commented, exchanged chemical recipes of simple medicines as well as of the philosophical stone.

Athanasios tried all his life to join the East and the West together as far as religion, philosophy, languages and chemical knowledge too are concerned. Moreover, in the case of chemistry, he was making the past and the present join together: Alexandrian chemical recipes in his papers are mixed with contemporary French ones, Turkish with Italian, ancient with demotic Greek ones. Nevertheless Athanasios belonged to his time, interested in chemistry - a more and more fashionable science -, and not contenting himself with the old or new writings but frequenting concrete places and living with his contemporaries (scholars and craftsmen). He was in the midst of several networks of people from different social statuses and different interests. His handwritten chemical papers expressed quite well this mixture as well as the complex result of the diffusion of byzantine chemical practices and concepts until the seventeenth-century.