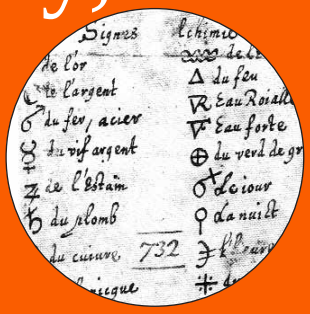
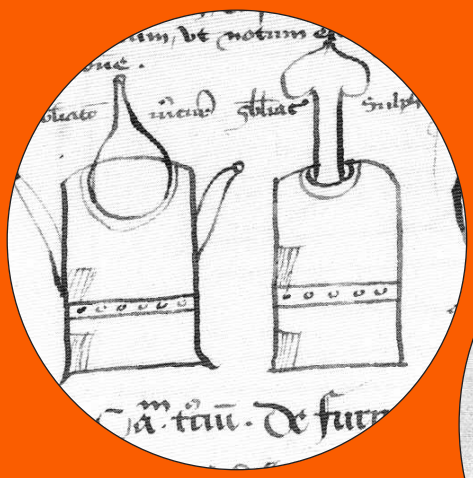
The History of Science & Technology

Alchemy, Chemistry & Magic

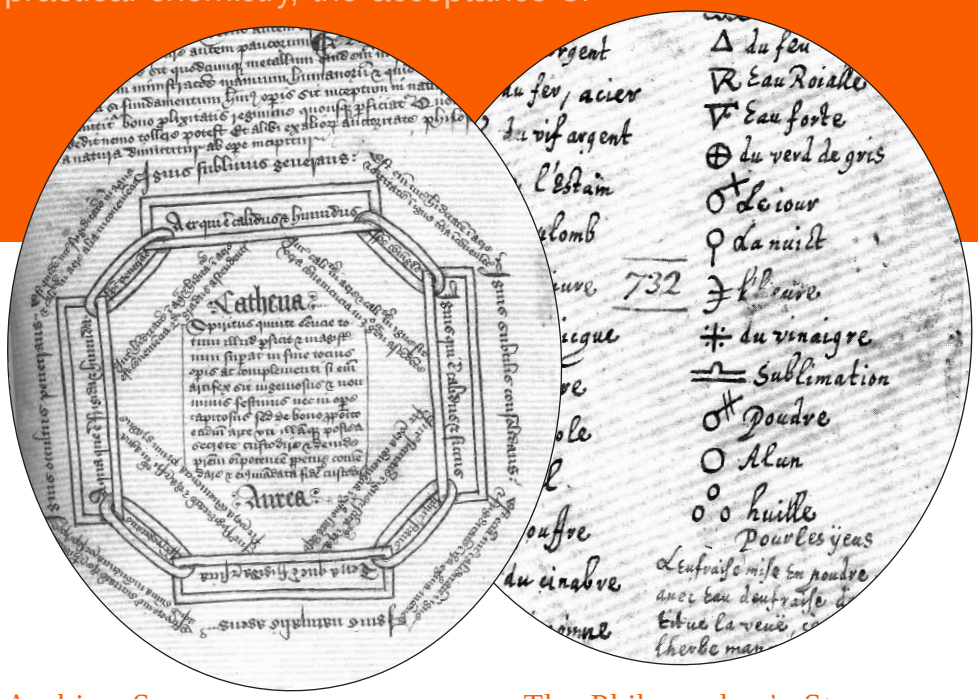




Series One: The Papers of Hans Sloane, 1660-1753, from the British Library
Parts 4 & 5

Adam Matthew Publications

This collection, spanning the entire history of alchemy, will enable us to better understand the developments of theoretical and practical chemistry, the acceptance of physics, and the emergence of pharmaceutical medicine.



Sir Hans Sloane's collection of alchemical manuscripts is one of the finest in the world. For Parts 4 and 5 we have selected 204 of these sources, offering a narrative of the history of alchemy from 1900BC to 1600AD. Original manuscripts chart alchemy's developments and setbacks, featuring key writers from Europe and Arabia.

Sir Hans Sloane was known as the greatest collector in an age of great collectors. Fascinated by medicine, astrology, theology, chemistry, astronomy, magic, natural history and mathematics, Sloane was a fanatical hoarder of all things scientific. The result is an awe-inspiring and carefully-preserved collection that formed the basis for the British Museum after Sloane's death in 1753. Parts 4 and 5 in our series on Sloane bring together a broad selection of 204 original sources on alchemy, chemistry and magic.

Above: *White elixir*
Top left: *The Catana Aurea (golden chain) of the elements*
Top right: *'Signes d'Alchemie', 17th century*

Arabian Sources

The great Arabic authorities of the 8th-11th centuries are well-represented. **Geber**'s *Summa Perfectionis* (c760AD) has been described as 'the main chemical textbook of medieval Christendom'. We include 10 more of Geber's works, including *De Inventione Veritatis* ('finding out the truth'). Arabian experts **Rasis** (c825-925) and **Avicenna** (c980-1036) also feature strongly.

European Experts

Translators **Robert of Chester** (writing c1144) and **Gerard of Cremona** (writing c1150) were both instrumental in introducing alchemical writers like **Morienus**, Avicenna and Rasis to Britain and Spain. Thirteenth century alchemy was dominated by three Europeans, whose works make up a total of 108 texts in the collection: **Albertus Magnus** (c1200-80, whose treatises included *Semita Rectia* - 'the right path'), **Roger Bacon** (c1220-92, who examined the properties of alcohol, nitric acid and mineral salts), and **Ramon Lull** (c1220-92, a Majorcan known as Doctor Luminatus). Later work includes 8 texts by the self-publicist and pharmaceutical scientist **Paracelsus** (c1493-1541) and 4 texts from **Thomas Charnock** (1526-1581).

The Philosopher's Stone

Lull was to figure significantly in the quest for transmutation. He worked with **Arnald of Villanova** (c1240-1311), a Catalan physicist who was said to have discovered the secret of transmuting metal into gold. Lull apparently used the method to produce £50,000 of gold for the crusades and was later imprisoned. **Nicholas Flamel** (1330-1418), a name inseparable from the legend of the Stone, is featured in the collection; as are **George Ripley** (c1400-90) and **Thomas Norton** (c1433-1513), both of whom pursued the alchemical secrets of immortality and wealth.

The collection contains original texts by many more influential writers, including **Nostradamus**, **Merlin**, **Miriam the prophetess**, **King Solomon of Israel** and more.

The History of Science & Technology, Series One

Part 4: Alchemy, Chemistry and Magic
18 reels • **Available**
Part 5: Alchemy, Chemistry and Magic
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