

## Lussy · Reißbuch gen Hierusalem · 1590

First Edition · Freiburg im Üchtland · Abraham Gemperlin · Capuchin Provenance Stamp · Exceptional Condition



Melchior Lussy (1529–1606)

Engraving · F.X. Triner · Altorf 1790

ZB Zürich · e-manuscripta-55229

Lussy shown with letter (diplomat) and sword  
(knight);

arms of Lussy von Stans: azure, Agnus Dei argent,  
flag gules charged with cross argent.

<b>Author</b>	Lussy (Lussi), Melchior · b. 14 October 1529, Stans · d. 14 November 1606, Stans
<b>Short title</b>	Reißbuch gen Hierusalem
<b>Place</b>	Freyburg in Üchtland (= Fribourg / Freiburg i.Ü., Switzerland)
<b>Printer</b>	Abraham Gemperlin
<b>Year</b>	1590 (journey 1583/84; text composed 1584; printed 1590)
<b>Edition</b>	First and only edition — «zum erstenmal ... im Druck außgängen»
<b>Format</b>	Quarto (4°) — c. 113 pages
<b>Language</b>	Early New High German (Alemannic dialect)
<b>Digital copy</b>	e-rara.ch · BCU Fribourg · DOI 10.3931/e-rara-23093
<b>Authority</b>	VIAF: 32927076 · ISNI: 0000 0000 5122 3766

### THE AUTHOR

Melchior Lussy (1529–1606) was, in the words of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, «one of the most important Swiss political leaders in the latter half of the 16th century» — representative of the Catholic cantons at the courts of four popes (Paul IV, Pius IV, Gregory XIII, Gregory XIV). He was one of the most prominent Catholic statesmen of the Swiss Confederacy in the sixteenth century. Born in Stans (Nidwalden), he served eleven times as Landammann (chief magistrate) of Nidwalden between 1561 and 1595, and was the first holder of the newly created office of Landeshauptmann of both halves of the canton. He represented the Seven Catholic Cantons at the Council of Trent (1562–63) and signed the Tridentine decrees on their behalf in March 1564. As a diplomat he undertook missions to five popes and to the courts of Spain, France, Savoy, Burgundy, Florence and Venice. A close friend of Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, he was a driving force of the Counter-Reformation in Switzerland. In 1582/83 he founded the Capuchin convent of Stans, the second Capuchin house in Switzerland.

Lussy was a personal friend of St. Charles Borromeo, with whom he maintained extensive correspondence; Borromeo visited Stans in person in 1570. Lussy also arranged the establishment of the papal nunciature in Switzerland (1579) and vigorously supported each successive nuncio. After 1596 he retired from active office and, in the words of the Catholic Encyclopedia, «piously prepared himself for death».

In 1583 Lussy undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with fellow pilgrims from Uri and Lucerne, travelling via Venice. He returned in early 1584 as a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre and composed his account of the journey that same year. In 1590

— the year of his second major pilgrimage, to Santiago de Compostela — the text was published. It is his only sustained literary work; the rest of his output consists of diplomatic correspondence and official records.

*Melchior Lussy / Knight of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church / Minister of the VII Catholic Cantons at the Council of Trent / Highest representative of Pope Paul and the Republic of Venice / Ambassador to 5 Popes and to Spain, France, Savoy, Burgundy and Florence / Founder of the 2nd Capuchin Monastery in Switzerland / Eleven times Landammann of Unterwalden below the Forest / Born 1529, 14 October / Died 1606.*

*Inscription on the cartouche of the engraving by F.X. Triner (Altorf 1790), Zentralbibliothek Zürich, e-manuscripta-55229.*

*Primary references: Hodel, Fabian: «Lussy, Melchior». Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS), 20.10.2009.*

*https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/023178/2009-10-20/ · Encyclopaedia Britannica: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Melchior-Lussy · VIAF: 32927076 · ISNI: 0000 0000 5122 3766*

*Mayer, J.G.: «Melchior Lussy». The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 9. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09437c.htm*

## CONTENT OF THE WORK

The account unfolds in 14 chapters, tracing the journey from the Swiss Confederacy via Venice and Tripoli to Jerusalem and back via Cyprus. Key chapters describe the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the most holy sites in and around Jerusalem (Golgotha, the house of Pontius Pilate, the Temple), Bethlehem and the birthplace of Christ, and the knighting ceremony of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. Lussy writes in a vivid, personal style and includes observations on pilgrimage practices and devotional objects — among them a rosary bead carved from the wood of a terebinth tree under which, according to tradition, the Virgin Mary had rested on the road to Jerusalem.

## THE PRINTER — ABRAHAM GEMPERLIN AND HIS PRESS

Abraham Gemperlin (b. c. 1550, Rottenburg am Neckar, Württemberg; d. after 1616, Freiburg, Switzerland) was the first printer ever to work in the city of Freiburg im Üchtland. After years of journeyman work across southwest Germany and Alsace, and a period as a bookseller in Freiburg im Breisgau, he was invited in 1585 to Freiburg (Switzerland) at the instigation of the Jesuit Petrus Canisius. The city council granted him citizenship, free housing, and financial support for setting up the first press of the city.

The Freiburg government wrote to Pope Sixtus V on 14 October 1585 that they had established a press «on the advice of the Reverend Father Petrus Canisius». This explains the significance of Gemperlin as Lussy's printer: Gemperlin, Canisius and Lussy all moved within the same Counter-Reformation network of the Catholic Swiss cantons. Lussy knew Canisius personally — the choice of Gemperlin was deliberate, not incidental.

<b>Active</b>	1585–1597 as printer in Freiburg i.Ü.; c. 60 documented imprints
<b>Key imprints</b>	Cysat: Von den Japanischen Inseln und Königreichen (1586) — the first printed European book on Japan; Canisius: Notae in evangelicas lectiones (1591/93/95); Lussy: Reißbuch gen Hierusalem (1590)
<b>Focus</b>	Counter-Reformation literature; prayer and devotional books; humanist works (Sebastian Werro)
<b>Succession</b>	Stepson Joh. Strasser (interim 1593/94); Wilhelm Mäss (from 1595; full ownership 1597)
<b>Later life</b>	1597: imprisoned for debt; 1611: destitute and half-paralysed, admitted to the Bürgerspital (poorhouse); died before 1639
<b>Legacy</b>	«He introduced printing to Freiburg (Switzerland) and shaped the typography of books printed there for over a century.» (NDB 6, 1964)

*References: Birchler, Ursula: «Gemperlin, Abraham». HLS, 19.08.2005 · Horodisch, Abraham: «Gemperlin, Abraham». NDB 6 (1964), p. 180 · Horodisch, Abraham: Die Offizin von Abraham Gemperlin, dem ersten Drucker von Freiburg (Schweiz). Freiburg: Paulusdruckerei, 1945 (edition of 500) · GND: 119683555 · VIAF: 39285481*

## CONDITION

**Title page** Present and firm; ownership stamp and manuscript entry; minimal browning; no tears in the text area

<b>Text block</b>	Complete (c. 113 pages); paper unusually firm and bright for its age; no worm damage visible; quires intact
<b>Binding</b>	Present; early; comparable to the Nidwaldner Museum copy (green-floral card binding)
<b>Paper</b>	Laid paper (verg�); barely browned; no mould; no moisture damage — outstanding for a 1590 imprint
<b>Overall</b>	4–5 / 5 — very good to excellent. Exceptional for a 435-year-old document; significantly better than trade-standard copies of this period

## PROVENANCE — STAMP ANALYSIS

The title page bears a rectangular ex-libris stamp applied at 90° to the text block, in black printer's ink. The stamp was analysed through digital image processing (rotation, contrast enhancement, channel separation) and palaeographic examination of a detailed close-up photograph. Script type: upright majuscules with abbreviation points. Dating of the script: 18th century.

<b>Line 1</b>	FRANC. IACOB	Franciscus Jacobus — two baptismal names (Latin)
<b>Line 2</b>	IOS. V.	Josephus von — third baptismal name + particle
<b>Line 3</b>	RTZ	Ritz — family name; confirmed by detailed image analysis (diagonal descender of R clearly distinct from P or B)

Identification: Pater Franciscus Jacobus Josephus von Ritz  
Capuchin friar, 18th century

Ritz is a documented Walliser family name (Goms / Niederwald region). The Capuchin convent of Stans — founded by Melchior Lussy in 1583 — contains a Ritzaltar (Ritz family altar), attesting to a relationship between the Ritz family and this convent. The stamp most likely identifies a Capuchin friar of the Ritz family who owned this copy personally. Archival verification is pending via the Profess-Book of the Capuchin Province of Helvetia (Staatsarchiv Nidwalden, Stans).

*The provenance chain Lussy (founder 1583) → Capuchin convent Stans → Pater Franciscus Jacobus Josephus von Ritz (18th c.) is historically coherent and plausible. It awaits formal archival confirmation. No connection to the 19th-century hotelier C sar Ritz or his direct family line is claimed or implied.*

<b>Ritzaltar</b>	The Capuchin church in Stans contains a documented «Ritzaltar», evidence of a relationship between the Ritz family and the convent founded by Lussy. Source: Kulturhistorischer Rundgang Stans (stans.ch/geschichte/4290).
<b>Manuscript</b>	A diagonal cursive entry is visible on the title page alongside the stamp (17th–18th c.). Reading pending UV-light inspection and palaeographic analysis.
<b>Verification</b>	Staatsarchiv Nidwalden, Stans: Capuchin convent records, Profess-Book of the Capuchin Province of Helvetia · RBSZ Berlin: stamp repertory · Klosterarchiv Stans: Ritz family donations and altar inventory.

## RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

- Stamp verification: Staatsarchiv Nidwalden — Profess-Book, Capuchin Province Helvetia (Franciscus Jacobus Josephus Ritz, entry date and convent assignment) · Klosterarchiv Stans: Ritz family altar inventory and donation records.
- Collation: verify completeness against the table of contents (14 chapters, c. 113 pages); check colophon and final leaf.
- Manuscript entry: UV-light inspection; palaeographer; comparison with Capuchin convent records Stans.
- VD16 reference: VD16 L 3269 · collation with BCU Fribourg digitised copy (e-rara.ch, DOI 10.3931/e-rara-23093).
- Conservation: professional cleaning and title-page consolidation before any catalogue entry.
- Photo documentation: title page (including stamp enlargement); 3–5 interior pages; final page with colophon / imprint.

## BINDING — BOOK-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The present copy is bound in dark blue paper over boards. This binding does not date from the year of printing (1590) but from the 17th or 18th century — a dating supported by book-historical evidence and consistent with the Capuchin-Stans provenance.

<b>1590 (printing)</b>	No binding supplied	Printers delivered the text block in gatherings; buyers commissioned a bookbinder individually after purchase
<b>17th c.</b>	Coloured paper emerging	Simple coloured paper covers became a cheap alternative to leather and vellum, particularly for smaller formats
<b>18th c.</b>	Blue/grey paper — very typical	Broschures and covers in light blue or grey paper were widespread in the 18th century, especially for quarto volumes in monastery libraries

*Significance for provenance: The dark blue paper binding was most likely applied in the 18th century within the Capuchin convent of Stans — exactly the period of Pater Franciscus Jacobus Josephus von Ritz. The Nidwaldner Museum copy comparably bears a «green-floral light card» binding — equally a typical 18th-century monastery library style. Both copies show the same pattern: active care and rebinding within a monastic context, indicating continuous use.*

*Sources: Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Kompetenzzentrum Einbandforschung · Staatsbibliothek Bamberg: Book Bindings (18th c.)*

## PRINTER'S MARK — VIRTVTI FORTVNA COMES



The title page of this copy bears the characteristic woodcut printer mark of Abraham Gemperlin — the identical vignette that appeared four years earlier in the first printed European book about Japan (Cysat, 1586).

Iconography:

- Caduceus (staff of Mercury with two serpents) — the classic symbol of printers and merchants; Mercury as divine messenger = the printer as mediator of knowledge
- Wings at base — attribute of Mercury, emblem of dissemination
- Cross — declaration of Catholic faith; typical of Counter-Reformation printers
- Motto: VIRTVTI FORTVNA COMES — Fortune is the companion of virtue (Seneca)

*Significance as authentication: The mark proves beyond doubt that this copy originates from the Gemperlin press. No known reprint of the Lussy Reißbuch exists. The vignette is the only known identifying mark of this printing house.*

Connection to the Japan book (1586): The owner of the Lussy Reißbuch holds a piece from the same workshop that four years earlier produced the first printed European book on Japan — a collecting story of international reach.

*Colophon: «Getruckt zu Freyburg in Üchtlandt / Bey Abraham Gempers lin / Anno 1586.» (from: Cysat, Warhafftiger Bericht, 1586).*

## SELECT REFERENCES

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- Wyss, Georg von: «Lussi, Melchior». *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 19 (1884), pp. 657–660.
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- Lussy, Reissbuch gen Hierusalem — digitised copy BCU Fribourg: e-rara.ch, DOI 10.3931/e-rara-23093.
- Nidwaldner Museum Stans: object documentation, Reißbuch copy (stamp: Bibliotheca Capucinatorum Stantii).
- Kulturhistorischer Rundgang Stans (Ursula Flüeler): Ritzaltar, Capuchin convent Stans. Online: [stans.ch/geschichte/4290](https://stans.ch/geschichte/4290).