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## *Les vrais Clavicules du Roy Salomon par Armadel* (The True Keys of Solomon)

In French, manuscript on paper

France, c.1775-1776(?)

*i + 86 + ii folios on paper, no watermark visible, modern foliation in pencil, 1-85 (preceded by one unnumbered leaf), the manuscript was copied on a bound printed book on the pages of which were pasted sheets of paper (one is loose on f. 43v), several pages of the printed book were removed before the text was copied presumably to ease the opening of the volume, complete, no catchwords or signatures, no ruling, written in brown and red inks by several different individuals or in a variety of handwritings on c. 28-32 long lines, HUNDREDS OF DRAWINGS AND DIAGRAMS, including a mermaid (f. 23v), water damage in the margins, stains and signs of frequent use, but no loss of text or diagrams and in overall good condition. Bound in the eighteenth century in France in dark reddish brown morocco over pasteboards, both covers gold-tooled with a frame of double fillets and corner fleurons, spine with five raised bands, gold-tooled with fleurs-de-lys, leather worn especially in the corners, but in overall good condition. Dimensions 186 x 123 mm.*

Rain for your garden? Snow for good skiing? Do you want to gild your magic wand, listen to lovely music, or open that box for which you lost the key? All this and more is found in a Spellbook or "grimoire" (literally a "grammar" of magic). The text of this pseudoepigraphical grimoire (falsely attributed to the biblical Solomon) exists in only four other post-medieval manuscripts, which likely reflect a lost medieval version. Included on the List of Prohibited Books, early examples were systematically destroyed. Our copy is extensively illustrated with figures and diagrams.

### PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript was copied in the eighteenth century in France, either in 1775-1776, or in the years leading to 1775-1776, as demonstrated by several inscriptions. The date 1775 is given in the ex libris on the verso of the blank leaf that precedes f. 1: "Ex Libris B4329 / 1775. prix. 24." The date "douze avril 1776" is also included within the text on the verso of the first back flyleaf, written in a handwriting very similar to one of the main scribes of the manuscript (the manuscript appears to have been copied by a number of individuals, although it is possible that it copied by one person, who changed his handwriting over the course of the text). Additionally, the person who wrote the manuscript, or large parts of it, also wrote what appears to be a list of expenses on the first back flyleaf. The list on this leaf is upside down (written from the bottom to the top of the page): "Les S<sup>r</sup> Bourbon et Loiseau ont commencé au douze avril 1776 a acheté [sic] pour metre le lut deriere les Glaces une chopine de la composition de trente sols ...."

The text was copied on blank leaves pasted onto the pages of a printed book (perhaps for reasons of secrecy), apparently a copy of the *Almanac royal*, a French administrative directory founded in 1683 and printed from 1700 until 1919.

2. Private Collection, France.

TEXT

Front flyleaf; blank on recto; ex libris on the verso (see Provenance above);

ff. 1-3v, [Instructions for ironwork and for gilding utensils used in ritual magic], incipit, "A Commencer le 31 Nouvelle lune de Janvier 1775 a faire un moule de terre de pottier le quel a couté 4. pour mouler la premier operation."; [f. 1v], "Pour Dorer acier ou fer ...; ... Pour faire le fer mol et l'acier ...";

ff. 4-77, [Title page], *Les vrais Clavicules du Roy Salomon Par Armadel. Pentacle de Salomon* with the figure of the Pentacle of Salomon below; [f. 4v], incipit, "Livre Ie. Chapitre Ie. De l'amour divin qui doit opérer et précède la Science. Salomon, fils de David, Roy d'Israel, a dit que le commencement de notre clef est de craindre Dieu ... [two circles with text on this opening ff. 76v-77, with the following text below], ... Ces deux cercles et caracterres doivent remfermez les pentacles"; [ff. 77v-85v, blank];

*Clavicula Salomonis* in French, Armadel version; the text is divided into five books as follows: Book I, ff. 4v-26v; Book II, ff. 27-45; Book III, ff. 45-47v; Book IV, ff. 48-49; Book V, ff. 49-77. While the Oldest Text ersion is divided into two books of about twenty chapters each, the Armadel version in our manuscript has five books. Book I contains eight chapters. Book II has twenty chapters and ends on f. 45 with the following rubric in red, *Ici finis notre Clavicule que si tu te l'imprime dans ta memoire, tu pourras s'il te plait faire tout ce que tu voudras, et venir à bout des experiences ou operations de l'Art Magique*. The final three books contain supplementary material and figures, including the chapter on pentacles.

After the short introduction in the first chapter in Book I, the second chapter in our manuscript describes the favorable circumstances of planets for the *experimenta*, ff. 4v-8, with the table of planetary hours on ff. 6v-7. Chapter III, entitled "Des Arts," describes the circles (with figures) and spells used for luring demonic spirits, and the following five chapters in Book I provide 29 further spells and some prayers, and explain the operations and "Pentacles." While Book I is about universal conditions for ritual magic, Book II describes specific conditions. The first chapter explains at which time of the day different types of operations and exercises should be performed. The following chapters describe different actors and elements of the ritual: the Master and the companions (fasting and bathing for their purification), the place of the ritual, the instruments used in the rituals (with illustrations), including a trumpet (f. 34v), knife (f. 35), sword, lance, cutlass, needle, chisel (f. 36v), fumigations, hyssop, garments (the Master's clothes must be in linen made from a thread that was spun by a virgin girl; a text specified on f. 39v is to be embroidered in red silk on the garment), feathers of a swallow and a crow, blood from a bat, animal sacrifices, and so forth. Book III provides descriptions of demonic spirits and their powers, beginning with Lucifer, Belzebuth (Beezlebub), Elestor (Alastor), Satanachia, Agateraptor, and so forth. Book IV is entitled "La clef du L'œuvre" and begins with instructions on how to make a magic wand. The text continues with instructions on how to make it rain, snow, or to open anything that is closed, to have gold coins, and to hear lovely music. The final Book V is entitled "De la vertu des 13 Intelligences" and contains the Pentacles with numerous illustrations (ff. 50v-67), and "Les Talistmans ou Caractere des Douze Anneaux dans lesquels on enferme un esprit partout ce qu'on veut par 643S215."

Little is known about the history of the texts called the *Clavicula Salomonis* (The Key of Solomon), a title based on the medieval tradition that King Solomon, who could control demons, passed down this knowledge to his son Rehoboam in a book. Manuscripts vary considerably, even within the same version of the text. Our manuscript contains what is known as the Armadel version found in French manuscripts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the title *Les vrais clavicules du Roi Salomon, ouvrage traduit de l'hébreux en langue vulgaire par Armadel, 1220* (Mathiesen, 2007). Our manuscript gives an abbreviated form of the usual title without the allusion to a Hebrew original or the year of translation. Recent research has shown that a Hebrew original can be excluded and that the work was probably first written in Greek; the Latin text appears to date from the second half of the thirteenth century (Boudet, 2006, pp. 354-355). Pietro d'Abano refers to the work in 1310.

Robert Mathiesen provides a list of 122 manuscripts of the *Clavicula Salomonis* written in the Latin alphabet (in Latin, Dutch, English, Italian, French, German and Czech) that he has identified in libraries and mentions several others from sale catalogues and bibliography (Mathiesen, 2007). He has divided the texts in the Latin alphabet into eleven typological groups. In addition, the Greek text survives in more than a dozen manuscripts.

The Armadel version derives from the Oldest Text version, except that in the Armadel version "the chapters have been greatly rearranged to reflect the order in which they would be consulted in conducting an actual magical operation" (Mathiesen, 2007, p. 4). In addition to our manuscript, this version of the text is known from four copies: Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Fr. 554 (17th c.), London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 1202, London, Wellcome Library, MS 4660 (18th c.), and Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 2349 (18th c.) (see Mathiesen, 2007, pp. 7-9). Given the fluidity of the textual transmission of the *Clavicula*, a comparison of the text of our manuscript with these four manuscripts is a *desiderata*.

Several indications suggest that the *Clavicula Salomonis* circulated widely in the later Middle Ages. It is mentioned by authors and inquisitors, and appears in princely libraries, including those of Francesco I Gonzaga (d. 1407), Marquise of Mantua, and Filippo Maria Visconti (d. 1447), Duke of Milan (cf. Boudet 2006, pp. 28, 357). In 1508, Johannes Trithemius listed forty-three explicitly demonic books on magic that he had examined and condemned, placing the *Clavicula Salomonis* at the top of his list, suggesting that it was the best known and most important treatise on magic at the time (cf. Boudet, 2006, p 354). However, only two medieval manuscripts are now known: an Italian translation made in 1446 most likely for the Visconti family, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS ital. 1524, ff. 178v-235v, and a late-fifteenth-century copy in Latin, formerly in Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, MS 114, pp. 74-138 (Boudet, 2006, pp. 27, 353-359). The survival of the text in so few medieval copies doubtless reflects both the risk one ran by owning such a book and the fact that copies were burned because of the forbidden content of the text (Boudet, 2006, p 359). In the modern era, *Clavicula Salomonis* would enjoy renewed interest, and in France, most surviving manuscripts date from the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment (cf. Mathiesen, 2007, p. 3).

## LITERATURE

Boudet, J.-P. *Entre science et nigromance: Astrologie, divination et magie dans l'Occident médiéval (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, Paris, 2006.

*Les Clavicules de Salomon*, Paris, 1892. (A photographic facsimile of Bibliothèque nationale, MS Français 25314, of the Abograzar text group, internally dated 1634, but was probably written later).

Mathers, S. L. M. *The Key of Solomon the King (Clavicula Salomonis)*, London, 1899. (An English edition based on manuscripts of the Oldest Text version)

Mathiesen, R. "The Key of Salomon: Toward a Typology of the Manuscripts," *Societas Magica Newsletter* 17 (2007), pp. 1, 3-9. Available online:  
[https://societasmagica.org/userfiles/files/Newsletters/docs/SMN\\_Spring\\_2007\\_Issue\\_17.pdf](https://societasmagica.org/userfiles/files/Newsletters/docs/SMN_Spring_2007_Issue_17.pdf)

Summers, M. *Witchcraft and Black Magic*, London, 1946.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

Digital edition of British Library, MS Lansdowne 1203 (Abograzar text group):  
<http://www.esotericarchives.com/solomon/l1203.htm>

TM 1042