

The Key of Solomon: Instructions Beneath a Borrowed Name

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Medieval and later scribes attributed a detailed magical handbook to Solomon. A surviving eighteenth-century copy shows how carefully its readers prepared the objects through which they hoped to command unseen powers.

STATUS	Documented medieval magical tradition; later manuscript, attributed authorship
CLASSIFICATION	STR
MATERIAL	Medieval and early modern Europe
DISPOSITION	PUBLIC / SOURCED STORY
CATEGORY	Strange Files
RECORD TYPE	Ancient stories
STORY HISTORY	Text tradition dated to the 14th-15th centuries; Penn copy 1750-1799

THE ACCOUNT

Before any spirit could be addressed, the book required preparations. Ink, parchment, implements and the practitioner's conduct all mattered. The Key of Solomon presents the invisible world as something approached through painstaking order. Its pages join invocations to diagrams and instructions for objects as ordinary as a pen or a wand. The promise of royal wisdom waits behind the unsettling possibility that one small error could matter.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

The University of Pennsylvania describes its Ms. Codex 1673 as an eighteenth-century Latin copy of a magical handbook dating to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. The manuscript was written between 1750 and 1799 and contains two books, with instructions concerning spirits, charms and ritual materials. Those dates are many centuries later than Solomon's traditional reign. The surviving volume demonstrates copying and interest in a Solomonic magical tradition; it does not authenticate either the attributed author or the powers described.

WHY IT STAYS WITH US

Its fascination lies in the extraordinary attention given to ordinary materials. A library catalogue can identify the paper, language and date, while the reader confronts a different question: what did someone hope would happen after following these pages? The object preserves an ambition to make the supernatural behave like a craft that could be learned.

WHERE THIS TELLING COMES FROM

Ms. Codex 1673: Clavicula Salomonis Regis

University of Pennsylvania Libraries

<https://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/0002/html/mscodex1673.html>

RETURN TO THE STORY

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Visit the record for its illustrations and further reading.

<https://u225x.com/record/STR-ANCIENT-002>
