CAMBRIDGE MANUSCRIPT · 12TH CENTURY

The Power of Stones

and the Meaning of Dreams

A Medieval Secret Book of Gems and Dreams



60 stones · 143 dreams

MARBOD «LIBER LAPIDUM» · «SOMNIALE DANIELIS»

BOOKS OF WISDOM

The Power of Stones and the Meaning of Dreams

A Medieval Secret Book of Gems and Dreams

Marbod's «Book of Stones» — 60 gems and their power to protect, win love, bring victory and wealth — together with the «Dream Book of Daniel» and its 143 dream meanings. Cambridge manuscript, 12th century; complete translation with notes, a foreword and commentary, including nine words the scribe wrote in cipher

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Modern English text, notes, foreword and commentary © 2026 SIA "Blusa Entertainment".

Source: Marbod of Rennes, «Book of Stones» (Liber lapidum, c. 1100), and the «Dream Book of Daniel» (Somniale Danielis), after the Cambridge manuscript, Corpus Christi College MS 466 (12th century, St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury); text in the public domain. Translated from the manuscript pages; no manuscript images are reproduced. A historical source: statements on health or other matters reflect medieval belief, not medical or any other advice.

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CONTENTS

Preface 6

The Book of Stones 8

- Adamant 9
- Agate 9
- Alectorius 10
- Jasper 11
- Sapphire 11
- Chalcedony 12
- Emerald 12
- Sardonyx 13
- Onyx 13
- Sardius 13
- Chrysolite 14
- Beryl 14
- Topaz 14
- Chrysoprase 15
- Hyacinth 15
- Amethyst 16
- Chelidonius 16
- Jet 17
- Magnet 17
- Coral 18
- Alabandine 19
- Carnelian 19
- Carbuncle 19
- Ligurium 19
- Eagle-stone 20
- Silens 21
- Gagatomeus 21
- Ceraunius 21
- Heliotrope 22
- Hieratite 22
- Epistrite 23
- Abestos 23
- Peanite 23
- Sadda 24
- Haematite 24

The Medic Stone 25
Gelatia 25
Exacontalite 25
Chelonite 26
Prasius 26
Crystal 26
Galactite 27
Orites 27
Hyenia 28
Liparea 28
Enhydros 28
Iris 29
Andromadama 29
Obtallius 29
Pearls 29
Panteros 30
Absictos 30
Calcophanos 30
Malachite 31
Cegolitus 31
Pyrites 31
Diacodos 31
Dionysia 32
Chryselectus 32
Chrysopation 32

The Dream Book of Daniel 33

A 33 B 34 C 34 D 35 E 35 F 35 G 36 E 36 H 36 I 36 G 36
O 37 H 37 I 37 C 37 L 37 M 38 N 38 O 38 P 39 Q 39
R 39 S 39 T 40 V 40 T 40 V 40 S 40 Y 41 I 41 Z 41

Commentary 42

codex the text was begun twice. The first time, immediately after the Book of Stones, the scribe wrote only the introduction and stopped. The second time, some pages later, he copied the full list of 143 dreams.

A secret script. Near the end of the Book of Stones, the scribe chose not to leave certain words open to every eye. He wrote them in a simple cipher in which every vowel is replaced by the next letter of the alphabet: a by b, e by f, i by k, o by p, u by x. The words hidden this way are "abortion," "woman," "pregnant," "thieves," "to plunder," "robbers," "answers" and "demon." A later reader wrote the solutions in the margin. Our translation gives these words decoded, and a note marks each place where the manuscript hides them.

How this translation was made. The English and Latvian translations were made directly from the pages of this manuscript. The pages were first transcribed in Latin with the abbreviations expanded, and only then translated. Marbod's verses are rendered in prose, but line by line, with nothing left out. The dream list follows the order the scribe gave it. Where the scribe erred or the ink has faded, the reading has been restored from the context. Where a word could not be read at all, the text shows an ellipsis ("..."). Our explanations appear only in the footnotes. The text itself is left as it stands, with its medieval beliefs, demons and wonders.

Please note. Everything Marbod says about the power of stones against illness, poison and fever is a medieval belief, not medical advice. The dream interpretations reflect the hopes and fears of their own world and guarantee nothing. Yet it was with books like these that people, for centuries, tried to glimpse their future.

husband. That it may bestow so many good things, it is carried enclosed in the mouth.

Jasper

Of jasper[1] they say there are seventeen kinds. It is known to be of many colours, and is said to be born in many parts of the world. The best is green and translucent, and the one proved to be wont to have more power. Worn chastely, it puts to flight both fevers and dropsy, and, laid on, it helps a woman in labour, and is believed to be a protection for the one who carries it. For when consecrated it makes one agreeable and powerful and, as they tell, drives away harmful phantoms. Set in silver, this stone is thought to have the stronger power.

Sapphire

The kind of sapphire[2] is the most fitting for the fingers of kings — excellent, shining and most like the heavens; none is better in powers and beauty. Many also call it the sirtites stone, because it was first found near the Libyan Syrtes, in the sands, cast out by the waves of the boiling sea. But the best is the one that the Median land bears; yet of it it is claimed that it nowhere lets the sight pass through. Therefore, born mighty, let it be called with such great honour, and let it be rightly named the gem of gems, and holy. For it quickens the body and keeps the limbs whole, and one who carries it cannot be harmed by any fraud. It overcomes envy; no terror moves it. This stone, as they tell, leads prisoners out of jail, opens barred doors and looses the bonds that have been laid. It makes the Lord appeased, gentle and favouring; it is said to be good also for reconciling to peace. And more than the rest, this gem, the stone of riddles, is loved by those who seek by its help to earn divine answers. This stone also heals bodily diseases: namely, it cools the inner heat, checks sweat flowing in an excessive torrent, ground and smeared on with milk it heals sores, takes the filth from the eyes and

1 Latin "iaspis": a very hard, usually green stone; today, jasper.
2 Latin "saphirus": in the Middle Ages often a blue stone, including what we today call lapis lazuli; not always the modern sapphire.

Alabandine

There is a land of Asia whose name is Alabanda; it yields the alabandine[1], whose lustre rivals the sardius. It deceives the sharp eye of the judge, leaving him in doubt about its name.

Carnelian

And it will not weary me to recall the carnelian stones[2], which, though they seem to be of a dark colour, yet — not to be despised — a power is believed to be inborn in them. For this stone, clinging to the finger or neck of the wearer, soothes rising wrath in disputes. It looks like the water in which meat is washed. It stops the flow of blood from a limb, wherever it comes from, especially if a woman suffers such a flux.

Carbuncle

The carbuncle surpasses all burning gems, for like a kindled coal it casts rays on every side; from this it seems to have drawn the cause of its name[3]. But in the Greek tongue the same stone is called anthrax. Darkness cannot put out its light; rather, quivering with flames, it gleams in the eyes of those who look. It is born in Libya, in the land of the Trogodytes, and its kinds are reported to be thrice three and three besides.

Ligurium

What drips from the groin of the lynx[4] turns into stone; they call it ligurium, and it is a precious pebble. For they believe that the lynxes themselves sense this, and as

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1 Latin alabandina — a reddish stone named for the city of Alabanda in Caria (Asia Minor); usually identified with almandine, a red garnet. Sardius — a red-brown chalcedony.
2 Latin cornelius — a reddish chalcedony, today's carnelian.
3 Latin carbunculus — «little coal»; a red, glowing stone, usually garnet or ruby.
4 Latin ligurium (lyncurium) — a legendary stone linked with the urine of lynxes; not securely identified today.

Iris

The Arabs give the iris, but the Red Sea brings it forth — like crystal, with a six-angled form.[1] Bright, gleaming with light, it carries the reason for its name. For if it is set under a roof in the path of the sun's ray, it stains the nearest walls, and with varied colours paints on both sides the figure of the heavenly arch.

Andromadama

The andromadama is a stone in the shape of a square die, white, able to reflect the gleam of silver; its hardness is like the hardness of adamant. It is itself found mixed in the sands of the Red Sea. The more it is affirmed to be of such great power that, when present, it can calm burning spirits.

Obtallius

The obtallius turns away all diseases from the eyes. It is asserted to be the safest patron of thieves[2]: for it keeps the sight of those who wear it sharp, but dazzles the bystanders, drawing a cloud over them, so that robbers[3] may plunder[4] houses with impunity.

Pearls

From the shells is taken a notable thing of the sea.[5] It is called "unio" because only one is taken from the depths: never are two or several found together. Its white form is praised when it adorns; as it suits garments, so it suits gold no less. The shells at fixed seasons are brought up gaping, to drink in the dew, turned upward to the broad sky; from this they conceive glistening little orbs. The pearl of the

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1 Latin iris — a six-sided crystal; understood as rock crystal, which splits light into the colours of the rainbow.
2 In the manuscript, in cipher («fxrxm»).
3 In the manuscript, in cipher («lbtrpnfs»).
4 In the manuscript, in cipher («spplkbrf»).
5 Latin unio, "one" — the name given to a single large pearl; margarita is its other name.

To hear an organ sounding — a heavy obstacle.

To gather olives — gain.

To shear sheep — loss.

To receive an osclin[1] — gain.

P

To see rains — abundance.

To receive a palm — honour.

To handle pepper — lamentation from enemies.

A gate or a firm ... — security.

To see a harbour — anxiety.

To keep a pig and handle lead — weakness.

Q

To mount a four-horse chariot — honour.

To descend from a chariot and fall from it — to lose honour.

R

To see a net and a trident — mourning.

To climb a bank — toil.

To fall from a bank — good follows.

S

To see several suns — joy.

To see the sun shining — stability.

To see a dark sun — danger.

1 The word osclin is not securely legible in the manuscript; its sense is not known.