

Recommended Reading for SHWEP Episode 217: East Roman Magic Books

Earl Fontainelle

22nd July 2026

1 Primary Access

1.1 *Kyranides/Cyranides/Κυρανίδες*

Dimitris Kamakis, editor. *Die Kyraniden*. Number 76 in Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie. Anton Hain, Meisenheim, 1976 [Great edition; does not, however, take into account the Latin version from the twelfth century, which preserves some things which have become corrupt in the Greek MS tradition, and knows nothing of the acrostic poems. An online, unattributed version of Kaimakis' Greek text, minus the apparatus and with a few errors, can be found [here](#)].

The older edition of the Greek, cited by authors like Festugière, is Ruelle: Charles-Émile Ruelle. *Les Cyranides*. In F. de Mély, editor, *Les lapidaires de l'antiquité et du moyen âge*. Ernest Leroux, Paris, 1898-1899. Ruelle knows only four books, as opposed to Kaimakis' theorised six.

An edition of the twelfth-century Latin translation can be found at: Armand Delatte. *Textes latins et vieux français relatifs aux Cyranides*. Number 93 in Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège. E. Droz, Liège/Paris, 1942.

Hot off the presses! Richard Greenfield of Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario and Alexander Alexakis of the University of Ioannina are working on a new critical edition with English translation. Entitled *The Kyranides: A Handbook of Traditional Medicine from Byzantium*, it should be out with Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library in 2028.

1.2 The *Book of Wisdom* of Apollonios of Tyana, a.k.a *Apotelesmata*

The Greek fragments still lack a comprehensive edition; editions based on a selection of MSS can be found in the following publications [As for the *Kitāb al-ṭalāsīm al-akbar* (the Arabic text whose filiation remains unclear, but which is in part based on the *Book of Wisdom*), it hasn't even been *printed* as far as I can tell, much less edited]:

Armand Delatte. *Anecdota Atheniensia. Tome I: Textes grecs inédits relatifs à l'histoire des religions*. Number 36 in Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège. Vaillant-Carmanne & Édouard Champion, Liège and Paris, 1927, 601–03 [from 15th-cen. MS Bononiensis 3632].

F. N. Nau, editor. *Patrologia Syriaca* (Paris) II, 1362—92 [from manuscripts including the 15th-cen. *Parisinus gr.* 2419 and *Parisinus gr.* 2316. An online English translation of Nau's text by Anthony Alcock can be found [here](#).].

Franciscus Boll, editor. *Codices Germanici*, volume VII of *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*. Bruxellis, 1908, 175–81 [from MS *Berolinensis* 173].

Ioannis Marathakis. *The Book of Wisdom of Apollonius of Tyana / Apotelesmata Apollonii. Translated with a commentary by Ioannis Marathakis. Including a Translation of The Great Book of Talismans by Nasser b. Ayash*. Independently-published, 2020 [A fantastic introduction to this text: features a tentative *stemma codicum*, English translation of the shorter and longer versions of the *Book* identified by Marathakis, a survey of scholarship and print-history of the text, reproductions of the various *kharaktēres* in different MSS, and more. Ayash's translation of the Arabic version is the only one of its kind, and also hugely useful. I disagree here and there with points in the introduction, and no Greek or Arabic, but highly recommended withal].

1.3 The Solomonic Magical Treatise, a.k.a. *Hygromanteia*, a.k.a *Letter to Rehoboam*, a.k.a. *Apotelesmatikē Pragmateia* (not to be confused with Stephanos of Alexandria's astrological work of the same title), &c.

The Greek of the *Hygromanteia*-text in MS *Monacensis gr.* 70 can be found at Franciscus Boll, editor. *Codicum Parisinorum partem secundam*, volume VIII.8 of *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*. Bruxellis, 1911, 143–65, edited by Heeg. We like him, but he omits the *kharaktēres*, which is just bad form. BL MS *Harleianus* 5596 should be available online in digital form, as soon as they re-launch their digitised MSS after the hacking-attack; watch this space for updates.

Several English translations may be consulted:

Ioannis Marathakis, editor. *The Magical Treatise of Solomon or Hygromanteia, also called the Apotelesmatikē Pragmateia, Epistle to Rehoboam, Solomōnikē*. Number 8 in Sourceworks of Ceremonial Magic Series. Golden Hoard Press, Singapore, 2011 [English translations, MS by MS, with introductory essay].

An English translation can be found in Appendix 1 of

Pablo A. Torijano. *Solomon the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition*, volume 73. Brill, Leiden, 2002.

or more recently

Pablo A. Torijano. The Hygromancy of Solomon: A New Translation and Introduction. In Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov, editors, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, volume 1, pages 305–25. William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 2013.

2 General Secondary Literature, Various

Richard Greenfield. *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology*. Hakkert, Amsterdam, 1988 [Despite its title, this book looks into the roots of things and is not wholly demon-focused, such that it remains one of the best introductions out there to our magical books].

Richard P. H. Greenfield. Magic and the Occult Sciences. In Anthony Kaldellis and Niketas Siniossoglou, editors, *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, pages 215–33. The University Press, Cambridge, 2017.

Paul Magdalino. Occult Science and Imperial Power in Byzantine History and Historiography (9th-12th Centuries). In Paul Magdalino and Maria Mavroudi, editors, *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium*, pages 119–62. La Pomme d'Or, Geneva, 2006.

Paul Magdalino and Maria Mavroudi, editors. *The Occult Sciences in Byzantium*. La Pomme d'Or, Geneva, 2006 [the whole book is worth reading; selected chapters are more or less relevant to the present discussion of magic books].

Henry Maguire, editor. *Byzantine Magic*. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, 1995 [a collection of essays by various authors. Excellent].

Jacquelyn Tuerk-Stonberg. *Magic and Byzantine Art*. pages 85–98. Oxford University Press, New York, 2021.

Alicia Walker. *Magic in Medieval Byzantium*. In David J. Collins, editor, *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West From Antiquity to the Present*, pages 209–34. The University Press, Cambridge, 2015 [a great introduction to a lot of fascinating magical material *not* discussed in our episode, notably a host of *Christian* magical objects and practices].

3 The *Kyranides*

Klaus Alpers. Untersuchungen zum griechischen Physiologus und den Kyraniden. *Vestigia Bibliae: Jahrbuch des deutschen Bibel-Archivs*, 6:12–87, 1984.

David Bain. ΜΕΛΑΝΙΤΙΣ ΓΗ in the Cyranides and Related Texts: New Evidence for the Origins and Etymology of Alchemy? In Todd Klutz, editor, *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, number 245 in *Journal of the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*, pages 191–218. T & T Clark, London/New York, NY, 2003.

Armand Delatte. *Textes latins et vieux français relatifs aux Cyranides*. Number 93 in *Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège*. E. Droz, Liège/Paris, 1942 [for the west-European dissemination of the text].

André-Jean Festugière. *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*. Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 2014, 217–32.

Garth Fowden. *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, 161 ff.

Alberto Jori. Κυράνιδες/Kyranídes. *Der neue Pauly*, 2006.

Antonio Rigo. From Constantinople to the Library of Venice: The Hermetic Books of Late Byzantine Doctors, Astrologers and Magicians. In C. Gilly and C. van Heertum, editors, *Magia, alchimia, scienza dal '400 al '700: L'Influsso di Ermete Trismegisto*, volume 1,

pages I, 77–84. Centro Di, Venice, 2002.

Jeffrey Spier. A Revival of Antique Magical Practice in Tenth-Century Constantinople. In Charles Burnett and W. F. Ryan, editors, *Magic and the Classical Tradition*, pages 29–36. Warburg Institute, London/Turin, 2006.

Manfred Ullmann. Die arabischen Fragmente der Bücher II bis IV der Kyraniden. In Yury Arzhanov, editor, *Studies Dedicated to Rüdiger Arnzen on His Sixtieth Birthday*, number 10 in *Studia Græco-Arabica*, pages 49–57. Pacini Editore, Pisa, 2020 [a summary of the state-of-play on the Arabic *Kyranides*].

Max Wellmann. *Marcellus von Side als Arzt und die Koiraniden des Hermes Trismegistos*, volume xxvii, Heft 2 of *Philologus, Supplementband*. Dieterich, Leipzig, 1934 [a seminal work looking at the history of the *Kyranides*, with loads of useful information].

Max Wellmann. Die Stein- und Gemmenbücher der Antike. *QSGNM*, 3–4, 1933–5 [a study of the *lithika* genre in antiquity, helpful for contextualising the *Kyranides*].

4 The *Book of Wisdom* of Apollonios of Tyana, a.k.a. *Apotelesmata*

Ioannis Marathakis. *The Book of Wisdom of Apollonius of Tyana / Apotelesmata Apollonii. Translated with a commentary by Ioannis Marathakis. Including a Translation of The Great Book of Talismans by Nasser b. Ayash*. Independently-published, 2020.

David Pingree. Some of the Sources of the Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43:1–15, 1980.

S. E. Robinson. The Testament of Adam. In James H. Charlesworth, editor, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume One: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, pages 989–95. Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, 2021

5 The Solomonic Magical Text(s): *Hygromanteia*, a.k.a. *Solomonikē*, a.k.a. *Apotelesmatikē (Pragmateia) tou Solomontos*, &c.

Heeg gives an excellent introduction to five MSS at Franciscus Boll, editor. *Codicum Parisinorum partem secundam*, volume VIII.8 of *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graeco-*

rum. Bruxellis, 1911, 139–43.

Maurice E. Hirsch, I. Price, W. Bacher, M. Seligsohn, M. Montgomery, and C. Howell Toy. Solomon. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 11:436–448, 1925 [see Seligsohn's contribution, "Solomon—Apocryphal Works"].

Ioannis Marathakis. A Source of the Key of Solomon: The Magic Treatise or Hygromancy or Epistle to Rehoboam. *Primordial Traditions*, March 2009.

Ioannis Marathakis, editor. *The Magical Treatise of Solomon or Hygromanteia, also called the Apotelesmatikē Pragmateia, Epistle to Rehoboam, Solomōnikē*. Number 8 in Sourceworks of Ceremonial Magic Series. Golden Hoard Press, Singapore, 2011.

David Pingree. Some of the Sources of the Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43:1–15, 1980.

Nikolaos Politis. Παλαιογραφική σταχυλογία ἐκ τῶν μαγικῶν βιβλίων. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 1:555–71, 1892 [the article which first brought the work to the scholarly table].

Pablo A. Torijano. La Hygromanteia de Salomón. *Ilu. Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones*, 4:327–46, 1999.

Pablo A. Torijano. *Solomon the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition*, volume 73. Brill, Leiden, 2002, 151–74, 209–24.

On the *Horarium*-tradition, to which our Apollonian text and the *Hygromanteia* are related

CA: Scholars Press 1982) 105–127 S. E. Robinson, (SBLDS 52; Chico. *The Testament of Adam. An Examination of the Syriac and Greek Traditions*. Scholars Press, Chico, CA, 1982, 105–27.

S. E. Robinson. The Testament of Adam. In James H. Charlesworth, editor, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume One: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, pages 989–95. Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, 2021, I 989–95 [a good intro to the *Horarium*-text which makes up part of both the *Book of Wisdom* and the *Hygromanteia*].

Michael E. Stone. *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to the Patriarchs and Prophets*. The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1982, 39–80.

