

RECLAIMING THE DIVINE TONGUE: THE PLACE OF THE BOOK OF ENOCH
IN THE SEARCH FOR ANGELIC LANGUAGES

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Scholars think John Dee's Enochian language is the product of invention, but his work is actually the apotheosis in a tradition of scholarship. The legend of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch and what it contained became a self-fulfilling prophesy in the tradition of angelic languages as the searchers looked for this key to what they thought was the divine language. The similarities of the unique angelic languages of Trithemius, Agrippa, Pantheus, and Dee imply a shared desire to reclaim the divine language; these unique scripts and languages were borne out of the legends of the Book of Enoch and other apocrypha specifically related to the angelic revelations of the great men of old. The core idea of what the legendary Ethiopic Book of Enoch contained was very influential in the creation of these angelical languages—as they produced the idea for their own interpretive Books of Enoch.

Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were still extant in Bibles during the renaissance, an expectation was established that historically humans are communicated God's plan through revelations with the angels. Angels were present in many cultures as celestial intelligences that influenced the movement of the heavenly bodies—they were the power that fuelled the music of the spheres, understanding and communicating in the divine language, and communicating the will of God to man. Angels were the catchall for phenomena that was mysterious in the universe—further illustrating that God's will works through angels in mysterious ways. This was a particularly dangerous philosophy, as it was a common concern that it is not possible to determine if one is communicating with a demon or an angel.

Those interested in reclaiming the Book of Life persisted in finding a way to communicate with the angels. One of Dee's contemporaries, Francesco Giorgi, said of the angelic communication in his *De harmonia mundi* that just as God descended to the world by

emanation through the angels, so humans might use the angels as a ladder to ascend to God, all those in the tradition of angelic languages shared this ideology.¹

Agrippa influenced others in the angelic language tradition that certain angels governed certain professions, similar to Trithemius's understanding that the wise men of old called upon certain angels for specific needs and requirements.²

Far away from Europe in the land of Abyssinia, the Ethiopians enjoyed a history rich in documented history since 1000 B.C., the time of Makeda, the Queen of Sheba. These legends inspired generations of European exploration and description. Accounts such as Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* and Pomponius Mela's *Geography*, both popular books with the intelligencia of Europe, mention Ethiopia.³ According to the *Bibliotheca Historica* by Diodorus Siculus, Ethiopians believed they were the oldest civilized country on earth, and laid the foundations for all later civilisations, including Egypt. For the European Christian scholar, Ethiopia was significant as having the unique distinction of being the second oldest continuously Christian nation on earth, having converted a decade after Rome declared Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire in 333.⁴ In 1270, a new dynasty usurped the Ethiopic throne claiming direct blood relation to Makeda and King Solomon, and began a five-century long effort to produce original Ethiopian literature and to translate foreign literature into Ethiopian.

In 1366, *The Travels of John Mandeville*⁵ was published, giving Europe its first cursory and inaccurate look at Ethiopia, followed by Bradenbach's travel account in 1486 with the first vaguely copied Ethiopic characters.⁶ In 1655, Giacomo Baretti returned to Europe from Ethiopia with stories of vast libraries filled with more than ten thousand volumes of the oldest works in

1 Harkbess, 109

2 Trithemius, *passim*.

3 Brooks 211, Roberts and Watson, #305 and #1777 respectively

4 Brooks p. 212

5 Mandeville, *passim*

6 Bradenbach, *passim*

the world written by sages during the days of Moses.⁷ Rumours began to invade Europe that the Ethiopian bible contained the apocryphal Book of Enoch that had been lost to the rest of Christendom since the Council of Laodicea in 364.

Angelic language and revelations were an ancient concept for the men that sought to speak with the angels. Most were familiar with the biblical revelations of the prophets—almost all of which included an angelic guide. The apocryphal book with the largest number of angels by far is the Book of Enoch.

The Book of Enoch is the story of the antediluvian patriarch that “walked with God and was seen no more, because God took him,” in Genesis. God gave Enoch special revelations directly about the coming apocalypse using angels as messengers. This established a legend that Enoch had heard the divine language from God, and had gone to heaven without dying; which in turn inspired literature in his name.

Enoch influenced not only the Jewish apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, but also had an impact upon the New Testament. The impact of Enoch upon the bible is significant: The canonical epistle of Saint Jude quotes The Book of Enoch explicitly in verses 14 and 15.⁸ The Epistle of Barbabas cites Enoch twice as Scripture. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and even St. Augustine recognise the Book of Enoch to be an authentic work of the Patriarch.

The Book of Enoch was considered extremely authoritative and ancient, so ancient that St. Augustine considered the work too ancient to be included as scripture. After the Council of Laodicea, the Enoch writings were discredited, discarded, and ceased to be analyzed in contemporary theological texts. After the ninth century, the Book of Enoch had disappeared completely from Europe, with only small fragments of text remaining in Greek and Latin.

⁷ Brooks, 230

⁸ Citation in the Ethiopic in verses nine and four of the first chapter

In the fifteenth century, rumours began to circulate amongst European Christian scholars about the existence of copies of bearing the name of Enoch. Many vague mentions are made of unspecific manuscripts presented as the authoritative newly found text, only to be shunned as forgeries. As Nathaniel Schmidt suggests, there is a great deal of value in exploring these traces of forgeries, to determine what the forger conceived a Book of Enoch might contain.⁹ Or perhaps, as in the case of John Dee, the Book of Enochs were not produced as forgeries in order to demand high prices by gullible collectors, but rather they were honest revelations received from angels in the name of Enoch.

Based on the commentary about the search for a book of Enoch in the sixteenth century, Books of Enoch occasionally appeared on the market, demanding huge sums of money for books written in strange unreadable languages. Occasionally, books of Enoch appeared that seemed authentic, as in the story of Pico della Mirandola's case. Fabricius recorded a conversation with Reuchlin, a contemporary of Trithemius, about a Book of Enoch that had appeared on the market. The nature of the book was not recorded, so it is unclear if it was an Ethiopic version of the Book of Enoch.¹⁰

Mirandola purchased seventy manuscripts under the assumption they were the Books of Ezra, another lost book of the Apocrypha. However, in a catalogue of his codices from 1651, there was an extract from the Book of Enoch. Whether this was in Ethiopic or another language is curious, as both Mirandola and Reuchlin both refer to the letters of the text as Chaldic. This is significant as they were both also familiar with some popular correspondence from a fictitious King of Ethiopia named Prester John, and referred to his script as Chaldic as well. This would lead one to conclude that Mirandola's book of Enoch was not in Chaldic or Hebrew, but rather

⁹ Schmidt, 45.

¹⁰ *ibid*, 47

Ethiopian, as well as the first appearance of a true Book of Enoch in Europe since the ninth century.

Reuchlin further does not question the existence of Books of Enoch in Europe, but states that many of the interested and qualified scholars could not afford to purchase them. He also tells of the serious and seemingly commonplace crime of declaring books as the Book of Enoch or the Book of Solomon, especially if the books had foreign or unreadable scripts.

Reuchlin also mentions that he had heard of another book of Enoch that had been offered for sale before 1494, but considers it a “late forgery.” This is significant because it possibly offers the opinion of the Jewish Historian Josephus as an alternative to St. Augustine’s views. St. Josephus believed that all prophesy ceased after the rebuilding of the second temple until the arrival of John the Baptist. This would include the time that Enoch was supposed to have had his revelations, therefore making all Books of Enoch forgeries, not just this particular copy. Because Reuchlin does not mention Josephus specifically, it is difficult to ascertain under what grounds he determined this mention of an earlier Book of Enoch to be a forgery.

Johann Potken published the first Ethiopic Psalter at the Vatican in 1513, his *Alphabetus su potius Syllabarius literarum Chaldaearium, Psalterius Chaldawum*, supplying Europe with the first printed editions of Ethiopic texts, while still called the language Chaldic. An infinitesimal number of Europeans would have been able to read these books, so it seems possible that editions of this book would have had a very specific audience. While Potken did not have a Book of Enoch, numerous astrological and magical texts had been translated into Ethiopic and were then brought back into Europe and disseminated, with the implication that one reading these texts would assume they were authoritative, and not a mere translation from their original European versions.

Soon after Potken’s Psalter was printed, Guillaume Postel, the most accomplished orientalist of his time, was shown a copy of the Ethiopic Enoch in Rome and had its contents explained to him by an Ethiopic Priest. Postel was also searching for the divine language in order to discover a

common truth amongst all religions, and he felt that only God had the answers to these questions. In his *De originibus* about the role of Ezra the scribe, he states that “Ezra ‘pretended to the people’ that he had rediscovered the mysteries revealed to Moses and restored the text of the Torah by transcribing it in the original ‘Adamic’ alphabet which had been corrupted by the ‘seditious Samaritans.’”¹¹

Ethiopic, also known as Ge‘ez, is an elegant script in the Proto-Canaanite family. The language uses over 181 individual letterforms, with strokes added to core consonant forms following consistent forms to indicate the associated vowel sound. The stroke of this script is always very thick and square; this is even evident in the Breydenbach rendition of them. Unlike other Proto-Canaanite languages, Ge‘ez letters are written left to right, with two dots similar to a colon indicating a separation between two words, and four dots in a square indicating full stop.

John Dee was a man searching for truth and answers directly from God. He had found in his mid-twenties, after years of intense study at the best institutions in England, that the answers to the Book of Life that he sought were not to be found among the minds of other men. He saw his angelic conversations as the most reliable and truthful access to the Book of Life and reclamation of the divine language. As was a common belief at the time, he sought to discover the language used during the time of creation, as spoken by God to Adam. Dee’s earlier attempt at a non-celestial unification of knowledge, his “Hieroglyphic Monad,” was an attempt to understand the separate aspects of a natural philosophy as a unified Book of Life.¹² John Dee discovered that the Hieroglyphic Monad was not the answer he had been seeking, and he began searching for knowledge anew—this time he was searching for answers directly from God.

Dee began to allude to his search for knowledge through the angels in 1581 when he mentioned in his personal diary that God had sent “good angels” to communicate directly with

¹¹ Hamilton, 62.

¹² Harkness, *Conversations with Angels*, 78

his prophets.¹³ As evidenced by his book collection, he had more than a casual interest in angels; he specifically sought out all past conversations between man and angels with a passion. He had a number of texts by Ficino, Agrippa and Trithemius as well as the more common biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. He studied the similarities of the angelic conversations in these works, immersing himself in angelology and the specific study of communication with angels. All of these mathematicians, cryptographers and philosophers that had revelations with angels had authoritative knowledge that divine messengers, guides on revelatory journeys and angels of the apocalypse were the most common and trustworthy sources of information for the patriarchs of old.¹⁴

Angelology was a pervasive element within Dee's library collection. He was acquainted with one of the greatest mathematicians of his time, Girolamo Cardano, a man that credited a guardian angel with inspirational "visions of power."¹⁵ Agrippa encouraged his readers to seek "a voice from Heaven, a voice that teacheth from above."¹⁶ Agrippa's teacher, Johannes Trithemius, wrote *De septem secundeis*, which discussed a method of long distance communication based on the seven planets and their guardian angels "according to the tradition of the wise men of old."¹⁷ Dee had at least 16 works by Grosseteste, with whom he shared a great synergy with their common interests in angels as well as optics, mathematics and astronomy.¹⁸

¹³ *ibid*, 99

¹⁴ *ibid*, 105

¹⁵ Roberts and Watson, p, 75.

¹⁶ Agrippa, *On the Vanitie*, p. 187v

¹⁷ Harkness, 109-111

¹⁸ *ibid*, 78

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ወአውሥኦ፡ወይቤ፡ሄኖክ፡ብእሲ፡ጻድቅ፡ዘእምኅበ፡እግዚአብሔር፡እንዘ፡
አዕይንቲሀ፡ክሠቃት፡ወይሬኢ፡ራእዮ፡ቅዱስ፡ዘበሰሣያት፡ዘአርአዩኒ፡መላእክት፡
ወሰሣዕኩ፡እምኅቤሆሙ፡ኩሎ፡ወአእመርኩ፡አነ፡ዘእሬኢ፡ወአኮ፡ለዝ፡ትውልድ፡
አላ፡ለዘይመጽእ፡ትውልድ፡ርኅቃን፡።
በእንተ፡ኅሩያን፡እቤ፡ወአውሣእኩ፡በእንቲአሆሙ፡ምስለ፡ዘይወፅእ፡ቅዱስ፡ወበቢይ፡
እሣኅደሩ፡ወአምላክ፡ዓለም፡።

Figure 1

The library holdings and common languages of the angelic language originators must be taken into account in order to best interpret the origins of their languages, and to understand the differences as they evolved. These men were voracious book collectors, all, and without doubt had collected at least script samples from most languages.

The beginning of the angelic script tradition begins with the first iteration of the script from Trithemius's *Steganographia*. His is not a language as specifically as the others in the tradition are, but it is significant as it is a way in which to communicate with angels. Trithemius was intentional with his intermixing of cryptography and angelology, but his interest in angels was sincere, and not only a disguise for the ciphers within. What is notable about Trithemius's symbol-system is the complete divergence from Greek, Hebrew and Latin letterforms, and resulting in what seems to be a fusion of both Arabic and Ethiopic. While the thickness of the script is indicative of the Ethiopic, as well as some of the punctuation notation, the curve and form of the marks and the placement of the diacritic marks also are similar to Arabic. Trithemius's symbol for Asiel is very similar to the Arabic isolated da:d letter. The Trithemius symbol for Pamersiel could also be attributed to similarities in the Hebrew Dalet or the Ethiopian G.

When making these comparisons, it is easy to see influences across the Proto-Canaanite family, which is the family from which the entirety of influence is based. It is unlikely that Sinitic or Aegean alphabets influenced the angelic alphabets, primarily out of lack of exposure and availability. It would appear that the shape, punctuation and diacritical marks of Ge'ez had an influence upon Trithemius's angelic symbol-system, but that the idea of the Book of Enoch which definitely had a role based on cultural inspiration was influential as well.

Trithemius was a mentor to a few dynamic and industrious disciples, one of them being Paracelsus, another being Agrippa. Three angelic alphabets are in his credit and one, Theban, is attributed to Trithemius and perhaps de Abano, although no connection to either has been established outside of the accreditation. The Theban alphabet is very similar to astrological signs such as Scorpio, Saturn, Jupiter, and Capricorn. This alphabet is based upon the Latin alphabet, unlike the others, which are based upon the Hebraic system.

Agrippa's three alphabets, Coelestis, Malachim, and transsitus fluuiia are all similar in terms of shape and style. All feature unusual serifs in the shape of circles, with thin script, and strong borrowing from Greek and Hebrew characters. Many of these characters are similar to those used in the angelic signs and sigils, and are displayed in the Hebraic system of sound and letter name, as well as usage of writing from right to left. Even the symbols are roughly similar to Hebrew, for example, in Coelestis, the Aleph is a very simplified version of the Hebrew Aleph. The chet letter is roughly similar to the Hebrew Shin. Greek is also equally represented. The Coelestis yod is a simple triangle, similar to the Greek Delta. However, nothing more than a superficial analysis can be made between these alphabets, as influences can arise from almost all alphabets to lay claim to some aspect of Agrippa's letter forms. It is most important to understand Agrippa as part of a lineage of angelic alphabets, each improving or modifying the one before in order to better communicate with the angels.

Pantheus provides three alphabets in *Voarchadumia*: The conventional Hebrew, a conglomeration of all three of Agrippa's alphabets, misleadingly labelled "tranfitu fluuij," and his original Enoch.

Pantheus's Enochian alphabet seems to be similar to Ge'ez only in thickness of stroke. All other similarities to shape are similar to both the contrived magical languages of the established tradition as well as the more common languages of Greek and Hebrew. The sounds, numbers of letters, and the traditional Semitic way of writing right to left are equal to Hebrew. Pantheus's language has the distinction of being very thick of stroke and with a stylised block serif that makes it uniquely identifiable. However, based on the presentation of his Enochian script next to Hebrew within the pages of *Voarchadumia* the evolution from one to the other is clear.

The influence of the Ethiopian language upon John Dee's angelic language as first postulated by Dr. Laycock seems to overlook this tradition of distillation of tradition. Dee was extremely familiar with all of the above mentioned alphabets with the possible exception of Ge'ez, but that is doubtful. Dee owned the mentioned works by Trithemius, Agrippa and Pantheus, and was very familiar with them.¹⁹ He constantly mentioned Trithemius in his diaries of angelic conversations,²⁰ and owned a number of his books. Dee also was very familiar with the work of Agrippa, and there is an obvious evolution from Agrippa's tables and sigils of occult study to Dee's angelic tables and sigils. Dee studiously mastered his copy of Pantheus's *Voarchadumia*, even calculating the gematric value of his name within its alphabet.²¹ Dee had a serious interest in linguistics; at least 10 languages are present in Dee's library, as well as books specifically on the study of language.

¹⁹ Roberts and Watson, Pantheus#D16, Agrippa #742, Trithemius ?

²⁰ Dee, True and Faithful, 12-13.

²¹ Laycock, 30-31.

At the tail of a history of angelic languages of the renaissance, Dee was building on an established and mature angelic tradition. It was completely rational that his script was building on a long lineage of other angelic scripts—each expounding, and clarifying the one previous. He was a studious scholar of all the available texts on the subject of divine language, and the legends of conversations with God in the divine language were in a great deal of the literature in his library. Dee was constantly contemplating the holy work of Pantheus as he struggled to create gold from metal in God’s glory.

Dee even made a study of this tradition of angelic languages on July 7th 1600, as noted in his personal diary, “as I lay in my bed, it cam into my fantasy to write a book, ‘De differentiis quibusdam corporum et spirituum.’”²² Dee also kept the books most relevant to angelic languages close at hand in the study where he scryed with the spirits, as well as when he travelled. One can conclude that Dee was consciously vigilant and diligent in his documentation of the angelic script with the intention of correcting the errors of past angelic conversations.

One immediately notices the thick and heavy stylised script of Dee, and the similarities are immediately evident that it is most similar to Pantheus’s Enochian of all the angelic scripts. It is only similar to Ge’ez in the thickness of stroke, but the immediate similarities stop there. It would be correct to say that the thickness of the script was adapted from Trithemius primarily, with a doubtful direct connection to Ge’ez. When compared to Agrippa’s and Trithemius’s magical languages and the letterforms of Greek, Coptic and Hebrew, one can easily ascertain that Dee’s language is a homogenisation of all of these languages, some in form, some in style, and others nearly identically. In 1659, Casaubon, the ill-intentioned publisher of Dee’s *True and Faithful Relations*, postulated that Dee’s angelic language was derivative of Theseus Ambrosius’s *Introductio in Chalaicam linuam, Syriacum atque Armenicam et decem alias*

²² Harkness, 104

linguas (1539). One might conjecture that Causaubon might have had a different opinion if he understood these five scripts as an angelic lineage, and not as one man's invention.

The most casual observer will notice that Dee's P sound is clearly a Greek Omega, that his O is very similar to the Hebrew Ayin but even more so to Pantheus's O, also shaped like a stylised Hebrew Ayin character. Other similarities appear when compared to Agrippa's languages, for example, the curlicue G of Dee to the Celestial Language's distinctive P.

Dee's angelic language is very similar to Pantheus's Enochian script as well as to traditional Hebrew and Greek. The words were at times nearly unpronounceable and other times with clear Latin roots. Pantheus's Enochian script has the most in common with Dee's angelic script of all the languages analysed. Dee's angelic language has some remote similarities to the Ethiopian if one were to place them side by side as in Fig. 1. Both have extremely thick strokes, and some of the letter forms have similarities as with the sound for S in Ge'ez as compared to the H and M sound in Dee's language.

It is evident though, that both Pantheus and Dee derived their alphabets from this angelic tradition of alphabets, with the hope of finding the divine language through the angels. The prophet Enoch was an obvious influence on both Pantheus and Dee, as Pantheus named his Alphabet *Enoch* and Dee actually documented an entirely new Book of Enoch directly from the angels over the duration of his actions with spirits. The tradition of angelic scripts is based upon the man that best communicated with God and the angels, Enoch. The legend of what the Book of Enoch contained and the rumours of what the script it was written in looked like, it is important when understanding external and environmental influences upon the evolution of that tradition.

These influences and the evolving tradition culminated in a large amount of work written with the direct intention of talking with the angels. John Dee's Book of Enoch and his various angelic accoutrements such as his holy table and breastplate were further developments upon a tradition that was in a frenzy of production in the sixteenth century. One can conclude that the

idea of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch had a strong impact upon the angelic script tradition and influenced how these men sought to communicate with angels, and perhaps this tradition even influenced the angelical reply.

Figure 3: Sound and shape comparison chart

Sound	Greek	Coptic	Hebrew	Ge'ez	Dee	Pantheus	Agrippa T	Agrippa C	Agrippa M	Agrippa P	Trithemius
A	Α	Ⲁ	א	ገዐ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	
B/V	β	Ⲃ/Ⲅ	ב	በ	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	
G	Γ	Ⲅ	ג	ገ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
D	Δ	Ⲅ	ד	ደ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
H	Ε	Ⲅ	ה	ሀ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
U	Υ	Ⲅ	ו		Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
Z	Ζ	Ⲅ	ז	ሀ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
CH	Χ	Ⲅ	כ	ገ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
T	Τ	Ⲅ	ט	ተ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
I	Ι	Ⲅ	י	የ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
J		Ⲅ	י		Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
L	Λ	Ⲅ	ל	ለ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
M	Μ	Ⲅ	מ	መ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
N	Ν	Ⲅ	נ	ነ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
X	Ξ	Ⲅ	ס		Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
O	Ω	Ⲅ	ע		Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
P	Π	Ⲅ	פ	ፑ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
F	Φ	Ⲅ		ፈ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
C	Κ	Ⲅ	ק	ገ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
Q		Ⲅ	ק	ገ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
R	Ρ	Ⲅ	ר	ገ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
S	Σ	Ⲅ	ש	ሠ ሰ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	
T	Θ	Ⲅ	ת	ገ ፀ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	

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