

what is god in aramaic

what is god in aramaic is a question that sparks curiosity about ancient languages, religious history, and the cultural significance of divine terminology. This article provides a comprehensive exploration of the meaning and usage of the word "God" in Aramaic, an influential Semitic language spoken during biblical times. Readers will discover the linguistic roots, various forms, and historical contexts in which the Aramaic word for God appears. The article also covers how different Aramaic dialects and religious texts employ the term, and examines its impact on later languages and religious practices. By understanding what "God" means in Aramaic, readers gain insight into the language's role in shaping spiritual concepts and its lasting influence. Whether you're interested in theology, linguistics, or biblical studies, this guide will offer valuable knowledge and clarity. Continue reading for an in-depth look at the origins, meanings, and significance of "God" in Aramaic.

- Historical Background of Aramaic Language
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Historical Background of Aramaic Language

Aramaic is a prominent Semitic language that originated in the ancient Near East. Its history dates back over three thousand years, making it one of the oldest surviving languages in human civilization. Aramaic became the lingua franca of several empires, including the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Achaemenid Empires. Its widespread use facilitated communication across diverse cultures and regions.

By the time of the first millennium BCE, Aramaic had not only become a common spoken language but was also adopted for administrative and religious purposes. It is closely related to Hebrew and Arabic, sharing many grammatical structures and vocabulary. Aramaic is most famously known as the language spoken by Jesus Christ and the apostles, and it played a crucial role in early Jewish and Christian traditions.

Aramaic Word for God: Origins and Pronunciation

The Primary Term: "Elaha"

In Aramaic, the word most commonly used for "God" is **Elaha** (pronounced [el-uh-ha] or [elaha]). This term derives from the Semitic root "El," which is broadly associated with divinity across related languages. "Elaha" appears in various ancient texts, including the biblical books of Daniel and Ezra that contain Aramaic passages.

Alternative Forms and Spelling

- **Alaha:** Used primarily in Syriac Aramaic, a later dialect, "Alaha" remains the standard term for God among Syriac Christians.
- **El:** The root word "El" is present in Hebrew and other Semitic languages, signifying "God" or "deity."
- **Elah:** Sometimes written without the final "a," especially in older texts.

These variations reflect the evolution of Aramaic and its spread across different regions and communities. The pronunciation and spelling may differ, but the underlying meaning remains the same.

Variations of "God" in Aramaic Dialects

Western and Eastern Aramaic

Aramaic developed into several distinct dialects over centuries. The two primary branches are Western Aramaic and Eastern Aramaic. Western Aramaic was spoken in regions such as Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, while Eastern Aramaic prevailed in Mesopotamia and beyond.

The term for God in Western Aramaic is typically "Elaha," whereas Eastern Aramaic, especially in the Syriac tradition, uses "Alaha." Both terms are semantically equivalent and reflect the shared cultural and religious heritage of Aramaic-speaking peoples.

Influence of Local Traditions

Local religious beliefs and traditions sometimes impacted the terminology and attributes associated with the Aramaic word for God. In Jewish texts, the term often refers to the singular, monotheistic God of Israel. In Christian Aramaic traditions, especially the Syriac

church, "Alaha" is used to denote the Christian God, highlighting the continuity and adaptation of the term across faiths.

Usage in Ancient Religious Texts

Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible

Significant portions of the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the books of Daniel and Ezra, are written in Aramaic. In these texts, "Elaha" is frequently used to refer to the God of Israel. The use of Aramaic in these passages reflects the linguistic realities of the Jewish people during the Babylonian exile and their interactions with neighboring cultures.

New Testament and Christian Writings

Many scholars believe that Jesus and his disciples spoke Aramaic. Several phrases attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, such as "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?), are preserved in Aramaic. In Syriac Christian texts, which constitute a significant body of early Christian literature, "Alaha" is consistently used for God, emphasizing the language's continuing religious relevance.

Significance of the Aramaic Term for God

Theological Implications

The Aramaic word for God carries deep theological significance. In Jewish tradition, it denotes the singular, omnipotent creator. For Christians, especially those in the Syriac tradition, "Alaha" represents the Triune God of Christian doctrine. The term encapsulates centuries of spiritual meaning and embodies the faith of millions who communicated with the divine through Aramaic prayers and scriptures.

Cultural and Linguistic Importance

The enduring use of the Aramaic term for God in liturgy, scripture, and daily speech underscores its cultural importance. Aramaic-speaking communities, both ancient and modern, continue to preserve this linguistic heritage. The word "Elaha" or "Alaha" is not just a label but a symbol of identity, faith, and continuity across generations.

Influence on Other Languages and Religions

Related Semitic Languages

Aramaic's influence extends to other Semitic languages, including Hebrew and Arabic. The root "El" appears in Hebrew names and titles for God, such as "Elohim" and "El Shaddai." In Arabic, "Allah" is the term for God, showing a clear linguistic and conceptual connection to the Aramaic "Alaha." These parallels illustrate the shared heritage of Semitic-speaking peoples and their monotheistic traditions.

Legacy in Worship and Prayer

- Jewish liturgical traditions incorporate Aramaic prayers, such as the Kaddish, which refer to God with the term "Elaha."
- Christian communities, especially in the Middle East, use "Alaha" in worship and scripture.
- The Lord's Prayer and other foundational texts are preserved in Aramaic, keeping the term for God alive in modern practice.

This linguistic legacy highlights the enduring power of the Aramaic word for God in shaping spiritual expression across centuries.

Frequently Asked Questions about "God" in Aramaic

Q: What is the primary word for "God" in Aramaic?

A: The primary Aramaic word for God is "Elaha," with "Alaha" used in Syriac Aramaic.

Q: How is "Elaha" pronounced in Aramaic?

A: "Elaha" is pronounced as [el-uh-ha] or [elaha], depending on dialect and tradition.

Q: Is the Aramaic word for God related to the Hebrew and Arabic words?

A: Yes, "Elaha" in Aramaic shares roots with Hebrew "Elohim" and Arabic "Allah," all

deriving from the Semitic root "El."

Q: Did Jesus use the Aramaic word for God?

A: Jesus spoke Aramaic, and several phrases in the New Testament, such as "Eloi," are direct references to the Aramaic word for God.

Q: Are there different words for God in various Aramaic dialects?

A: While "Elaha" and "Alaha" are the most common, minor variations exist depending on region and dialect.

Q: Where can the Aramaic term for God be found in religious texts?

A: The term appears in the Aramaic sections of the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and early Christian Syriac literature.

Q: What is the significance of the Aramaic word for God in worship?

A: The word is central to prayers, hymns, and liturgy in both Jewish and Christian Aramaic-speaking communities.

Q: How did Aramaic influence other languages' words for God?

A: Aramaic influenced Hebrew and Arabic terminology for God, contributing to the development of names like "Elohim" and "Allah."

Q: Is Aramaic still used in religious contexts today?

A: Yes, Aramaic remains in liturgical use among certain Jewish and Christian communities, especially in the Middle East.

Q: What is the cultural importance of "Elaha" and "Alaha"?

A: These terms represent centuries of faith, identity, and linguistic continuity among Aramaic-speaking peoples.

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What is God in Aramaic? Unraveling the Divine in an Ancient Language

Delving into the linguistic roots of religious terminology can offer profound insights into the evolution of faith and its cultural context. For those interested in the historical and linguistic aspects of Christianity and Judaism, understanding how God was (and is) referred to in Aramaic is crucial. This post will explore the various terms used for "God" in Aramaic, their historical significance, and how they contribute to a richer understanding of the religious landscape of ancient Mesopotamia and beyond. We'll unpack the nuances of these terms, providing a comprehensive and accurate exploration of this fascinating topic.

Aramaic: The Language of God and Empire

Before we delve into specific words for "God," it's essential to understand Aramaic's historical importance. Aramaic wasn't a single, monolithic language, but rather a family of closely related dialects. However, it became a lingua franca across a vast swathe of the Near East during the Achaemenid (Persian) Empire, and later under the Seleucid and Parthian empires. Its widespread use meant it became the everyday language of many Jewish communities in Judea and beyond, even influencing Hebrew itself. This widespread usage makes understanding Aramaic terminology crucial for interpreting ancient texts.

The Preeminence of 'Ēlāh' (ܐܠܗܐ)

The most common Aramaic word for God is 'Ēlāh' (ܐܠܗܐ). This word is strikingly similar to the Hebrew El (אֱל), a term widely used in the Hebrew Bible. Both words likely share a common Proto-Semitic root, indicating a deep historical connection in the understanding of the divine. 'Ēlāh' frequently appears in Aramaic biblical texts and inscriptions, establishing its central role in expressing the concept of God within the Aramaic-speaking world. The plural form, 'Ēlāhē (ܐܠܗܐܝܐ), meaning "gods," also appears, though its usage typically refers to God in a majestic plural (a grammatical form found also in Hebrew and other Semitic languages, conveying both power and unity).

Beyond 'Ēlāh': Exploring Other Terms for God

While 'Ēlāh' reigns supreme, other terms enrich our understanding of how Aramaic speakers conceived of the divine.

Yāhāb (ܝܗܐܒ): The Giver

Yāhāb (ܝܗܐܒ) isn't a direct equivalent to "God" in the same way as 'Ēlāh'. Instead, it highlights a specific attribute of God: giving. It emphasizes God's benevolent nature and provision for humanity. While not used as frequently as 'Ēlāh', Yāhāb offers a valuable insight into the theological emphasis on God's generosity and grace.

Mar (ܡܪ): Lord or Master

The word Mar (ܡܪ) translates to "lord" or "master." In context, it can refer to God, acknowledging his sovereignty and authority. This term reflects a more personal relationship with the divine, highlighting God's lordship over creation and humankind. It's often used in conjunction with other terms for God, adding a layer of meaning to the expression.

Context Matters: Understanding Usage

It's vital to remember that the meaning and nuance of these Aramaic terms for God depend heavily on the context. The choice of word often reflects the specific theological emphasis of the author or speaker, highlighting certain attributes of God over others. Studying the surrounding text is crucial for a proper interpretation.

Aramaic's Influence on Religious Terminology

The use of Aramaic in religious contexts had a lasting impact, leaving its mark on later religious traditions. The influence of Aramaic vocabulary can be traced in various religious texts and practices, demonstrating the linguistic and cultural connections across different faiths and historical periods. Understanding the nuances of these Aramaic terms contributes to a richer understanding of the cultural and linguistic landscape in which early Christianity and later Judaism developed.

Conclusion

Exploring the Aramaic words for "God" offers a unique window into the religious beliefs and practices of ancient communities. From the prevalent 'Ēlāh' to the more nuanced Yāhāb and Mar, each term adds a layer of complexity to our understanding of how the divine was conceived and expressed. Studying these words helps us appreciate the richness and diversity of religious language and its ongoing influence on our understanding of faith.

FAQs

1. Is there a single perfect Aramaic translation for "God" in English? No, the ideal translation depends heavily on the context. While 'Ēlāh' is the most common equivalent, using just "God" might overlook the nuances of the original Aramaic word.
2. How did Aramaic influence the development of Hebrew? Aramaic's widespread use led to lexical borrowing and grammatical influences within Hebrew, particularly during the Second Temple period.
3. Are these Aramaic terms still used today? While not in common everyday usage, these terms are still studied and used within academic and religious circles that focus on ancient languages and texts.
4. Where can I find more information about Aramaic language and its history? Academic databases, linguistic textbooks, and specialized websites dedicated to Semitic languages offer extensive resources on Aramaic.
5. What is the significance of studying Aramaic for biblical studies? Understanding Aramaic is crucial for interpreting biblical texts and understanding the cultural context in which they were written, particularly the intertestamental period and early Christian writings.

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Jesus? QUR'AN What is the Qur'an? Does Islam recognize Science and Technology? WORSHIP What is Worship in Islam? What are the Five Pillars of Islam? What is the Ka'bah? COMMUNITY What are Human Rights in Islam? What is Jihad in Islam? What is Islamic Dress Code? How does Islam view Family Life? What is the Status of Women in Islam? What is Marriage in Islam? Why is More than One Wife permitted in Islam? What does Islam say about Parents and Elderly? What does Islam say about Food? What does Islam say about Intoxicants and Gambling? What Islam say about Business Interaction? CONCEPTS What is the concept of God in Islam? What is the concept of Life in Islam? What is the concept of Life after Death in Islam? What is the concept of Sin in Islam?

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of the Cosmos offers you a heart-opening prayer book that will guide you toward an ever deepening, daily experience of the divine.

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In addition, the authors include the results of a statistical survey in which every quotation is assigned to one of six levels to determine its degree of difficulty regarding the faithfulness of the New Testament to the Old Testament quotation. Helpful introductory material, including complete cross-references to the tool in both Old and New Testament order, make the work invaluable to scholars and students alike -- BOOK JACKET from Moody Press.

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what is god in aramaic: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature Walter Bauer, 2010-11-02 Described as an invaluable reference work (Classical Philology) and a tool indispensable for the study of early Christian literature (Religious Studies Review) in its previous edition, this new updated American edition of Walter Bauer's Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments builds on its predecessor's staggering deposit of extraordinary erudition relating to Greek literature from all periods. Including entries for many more words, the new edition also lists more than 25,000 additional references to classical, intertestamental, Early Christian, and modern literature. In this edition, Frederick W. Danker's broad knowledge of Greco-Roman literature, as well as papyri and epigraphs, provides a more panoramic view of the world of Jesus and the New Testament. Danker has also introduced a more consistent mode of reference citation, and has provided a composite list of abbreviations to facilitate easy access to this wealth of information. Perhaps the single most important lexical innovation of Danker's edition is its inclusion of extended definitions for Greek terms. For instance, a key meaning of episkopos was defined in the second American edition as overseer; Danker defines it as one who

has the responsibility of safeguarding or seeing to it that something is done in the correct way, guardian. Such extended definitions give a fuller sense of the word in question, which will help avoid both anachronisms and confusion among users of the lexicon who may not be native speakers of English. Danker's edition of Bauer's Wörterbuch will be an indispensable guide for Biblical and classical scholars, ministers, seminarians, and translators.

what is god in aramaic: Jesus the Phoenician Karim El Koussa, 2015-03-02 Could it be possible that Jesus was not Jewish? What would that mean to the faithful? Jesus the Phoenician exposes, among other unprecedented certitudes, the origin of the Jewish faith and the true hidden identity of Jesus Christ. Though the author claims no theological degree, as a Christian and a writer he has read and researched extensively and compiled a sound, compelling argument that the traditionally accepted story of Jesus the Jew, though largely undisputed by the faithful in favor of the biblical version, is actually an impossibility. By investigating the etymology of the name, Jesus, other questions arise regarding the incompatibility between the Great Annunciation and traditional Jewish practices, as well as the true lineage of the family of the Messiah. Then, by examining the lives of the family, friends, and Disciples of Jesus, the circumstances of Jesus' birth are challenged, establishing which Bethlehem the child savior was born in and substantiating the origins-Galilean or Jewish-of Jesus and his Disciples. Furthermore, based on a new understanding of the true origins of Jesus and his apostles, Jesus the Phoenician reveals the truth about Jesus by showing the many holes in the traditional Jewish and biblical history that point to Jesus having been a Jew. And, finally, the reader is asked to consider the validity of the typically dismissed sources, the Apocrypha, the ex-biblical texts that suggest and support the theory of Jesus the Phoenician. By investigating and analyzing the Old and New Testaments, as well as numerous other books, Apocrypha, and scholarly sources, Jesus the Phoenician systematically debunks the traditionally accepted Jewish story of Jesus and synthesizes a groundbreaking explanation for this historical and theological blunder. By delving into the history of the Canaano-Phoenicians and disproving the accuracy of the established story of Jesus Christ, Jesus the Phoenician begs the reader to think outside of biblical tradition and to consider, as have scholars, theologians, and writers throughout history, the proof herein that denies the identity of Jesus the Jew.

what is god in aramaic: Aramaic Peshitta New Testament Word Study Concordance Janet Magiera, 2009 The Word study concordance is designed to be used with the Vertical interlinear, Parallel translations, and the Dictionary number lexicon as part of a set of study tools--Intro.

what is god in aramaic: Old Testament Textual Criticism Ellis R. Brotzman, Eric J. Tully, 2016-07-19 A Readable, Updated Introduction to Textual Criticism This accessibly written, practical introduction to Old Testament textual criticism helps students understand the discipline and begin thinking through complex issues for themselves. The authors combine proven expertise in the classroom with cutting-edge work in Hebrew textual studies. This successful classic (nearly 25,000 copies sold) has been thoroughly expanded and updated to account for the many changes in the field over the past twenty years. It includes examples, illustrations, an updated bibliography, and a textual commentary on the book of Ruth.

what is god in aramaic: God without Religion Andrew Farley, 2011-06-01 Andrew Farley's experience as a Christian was first characterized by self-effort as he tried to please God at any cost. His ruthless religion resulted in spiritual burnout and disillusionment with church. Only then did he discover what relaxing in Jesus means and how enjoying God's intimate presence can transform everyday life. Using a unique story-driven format, God without Religion dismantles common religious misconceptions, revealing the true meaning of being filled with the Spirit the facts about judgment, rewards, and God's discipline the simple truth behind predestination and the divisions it causes the problem with the popular challenge to live radical Pulling no punches, Farley shows how the truth about these controversial issues can liberate and unify believers as we discover how to rest in the unconditional love of God.

what is god in aramaic: Ancient of Days William Blake, 2004

what is god in aramaic: Jesus Spoke Aramaic Ewan MacLeod, 2015-12-03 Jesus Spoke

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what is god in aramaic: *Is This Really Revival?* Chaim Bentorah, 2017-09-13 We prayed for a revival and all we got was a hug. No, there was no press coverage and no TV interviews, not even on a Christian channel. Most people wouldn't have called what we saw signs and wonders, and we only had one healing that I know of. Still, if the revival of the Bible is epitomized by Ezra- and Jonah-type experiences, well, we had plenty of those. You be the judge. What is a revival really meant to accomplish? Should we lower our expectations and focus on hearing the voice of God? In this book, you will see how God choreographed the lives and experiences of individuals, culminating in a moment of time when He brought it all together to heal a body of believers who had allowed pride and jealousy to destroy relationships. Maybe your revival will not land you a book deal or appearances on Christian television, but it will give you a hug from God. Take it from someone who knows, a hug from God is far more wonderful than any book deal or television appearance.

what is god in aramaic: *Setting a Trap for God* Rocco A. Errico, 1997 The title for this book comes from the Aramaic meaning of the word prayer: setting your mind like a trap so that you may catch the thoughts of God. This metaphysical look at the Lord's Prayer is expanded from Errico's *The Ancient Aramaic Prayer of Jesus*.

what is god in aramaic: *Daniel in the Lions' Den* Ronne Randall, 1996

what is god in aramaic: *Aramaic Word Study II: Discover God's Heart In The Language Of The New Testament* Chaim Bentorah, 2022-12-07 Although Jesus and His disciples spoke a dialect of Aramaic known as Old Galilean, we do not have any surviving manuscripts of the New Testament in the Old Galilean. The closest we have are a few manuscripts of the New Testament in the Syriac, a dialect of the Old Galilean Aramaic. The Syriac is the closest to the Old Galilean we have in the New Testament today, yet it is not entirely the same as the Old Galilean. It is sort of like the difference between the English spoken in Australia and the United States. Despite the differences in idioms and colloquial expressions with words totally unknown in the American English language, it is still English, only with a different dialect. Yet, there is no reason an American citizen would not be able to effectively carry on a meaningful conversation with a native-born Australian. It is pretty much the same with the various dialects of Aramaic. However, there is always the danger of error and mistranslation. Although we know very little at this time about the Old Galilean dialect of Aramaic, we do understand many other dialects of Aramaic, particularly the Syriac, which has a version of the New Testament and some ancient documents to support the present Aramaic Bible known as the Peshitta. Most Biblical scholars believe that the inspired text of the New Testament was written in the Greek and not the Aramaic, although they do agree that the language Jesus spoke was Aramaic. The Eastern church, however, believes that the inspired text of the New Testament was in Aramaic. This writer holds the position that the inspired text of the New Testament was in Koine Greek, but that the language spoken by Jesus, His disciples, and the Apostle Paul was Aramaic and that many words in the New Testament were dictated by the disciples and Paul in Aramaic to a scribe who translated these words into Greek. When you translate from Aramaic into Greek, you do have problems finding a proper Greek word to fit the Aramaic word. For instance, the Word agape is used for racham. Yet, agape does not fully express the nature of racham. When Jesus spoke with Peter, he asked Peter if he agape Him. In the Aramaic, the word racham is used, which is the best Greek word to use for racham, but it is hardly a cognate of the word racham. I write this book praying that my readers do not use the Aramaic as the final word but as a source to lead them to a deeper understanding of many of the problem passages that we have in the New Testament. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth and anything shared in this book should ultimately be considered in the words of Colossian 3:15: And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

what is god in aramaic: *The First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*, 1999 Hailed as the most radical repackaging of the Bible since Gutenberg, these Pocket Canons give an up-close look at each book of the Bible.

what is god in aramaic: *Biblical Aramaic* Donald R. Vance, 2016 This book, put together by a

team of scholars, will help readers master Biblical Aramaic. It includes various word lists not found in the BHS Reader. The book has three basic parts. The first is the Aramaic portions of the Hebrew Bible Gen 31:47; Jer 10:11; Dan 2:4b 7:28; Ezra 4:8 6:8; 7:12 26 as they are presented in the BHS Reader, with a few modifications: (1) the biblical text has been updated to the BHL version, and (2) the grammatical and lexical apparatus includes new material and uses longer, clearer abbreviations. The second (very short) part of the book is a three-page glossary of the words that occur most frequently in Biblical Aramaic. The book's third part comprises about a dozen vocabulary and verb lists (not found in the BHS Reader) that allow readers to review and master Biblical Aramaic vocabulary and grammar.

what is god in aramaic: Biblical Aramaic for Biblical Interpreters Scott Callaham, 2021-09 This textbook, *Biblical Aramaic for Biblical Interpreters*, extends learning patterns already established through a student's study of Biblical Hebrew and cuts an efficient path toward the interpretation of Biblical Aramaic Scripture. It employs a fresh approach that significantly facilitates learning Biblical Aramaic vocabulary and grammar. The motivating goal throughout is to enable interpreting biblical passages written in Biblical Aramaic, namely, Genesis 31:47, Jeremiah 10:11, Ezra 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26, and Daniel 2:4b-7:28. Review of fundamental concepts like the alphabet, Masoretic vowel pointing, prose cantillation marks, and the use of scholarly printed editions of the biblical text is unnecessary, because this knowledge carries over directly from previous biblical language study. Instead, review of Biblical Hebrew grammar is part and parcel of the comparative method of this book. Whenever this book places Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic words and concepts side-by-side for comparison, the arrangement is generally Biblical Hebrew on the left (review material) and Biblical Aramaic on the right (new information).

what is god in aramaic: Crawford Codex of Revelation - Aramaic Interlinear with English Translation Greg Glaser, 2016-08-11 This book contains the Aramaic 'Crawford' codex of the Book of Revelation, which is the oldest known copy on earth of the Book of Revelation in the language of the Messiah Yahshua (Jesus). Part One - Interlinear Transcription and English Translation This carefully finalized typographical reproduction utilizes high resolution images of the original codex, obtained directly from the University of Manchester (Special Collections). Scribal note: the interlinear transcript does not include vowel points (because vowel points were not utilized (or even invented yet) when the Book of Revelation was originally written in Aramaic in the 1st Century AD). Part Two - Actual Crawford Codex Images These images are all 29-pages from the actual Crawford Codex of the Book of Revelation that are on file at the University of Manchester (Special Collections). The University has made these available to the public via Creative Commons license (attribution, non-commercial, share alike).

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