

THE FIGURES FROM
HOW
THE BOOK OF MORMON
CAME TO PASS



THE SECOND GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

LARS NIELSEN



Figure 1. An engraving of Athanasius Kircher (age 62) taken from *China Illustrata*.

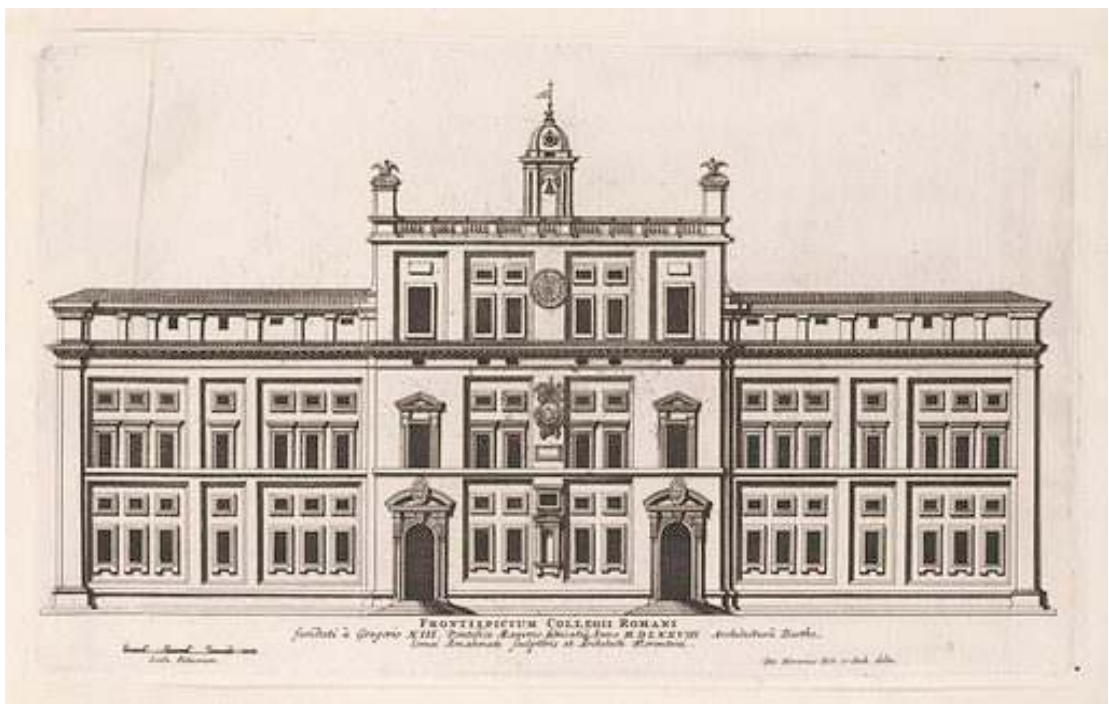


Figure 2. Collegio Romano, where Kircher received the title of Professor of Oriental Languages. The central edifice, above, was literally built atop the cavernous ruins of an ancient Temple of Isis.

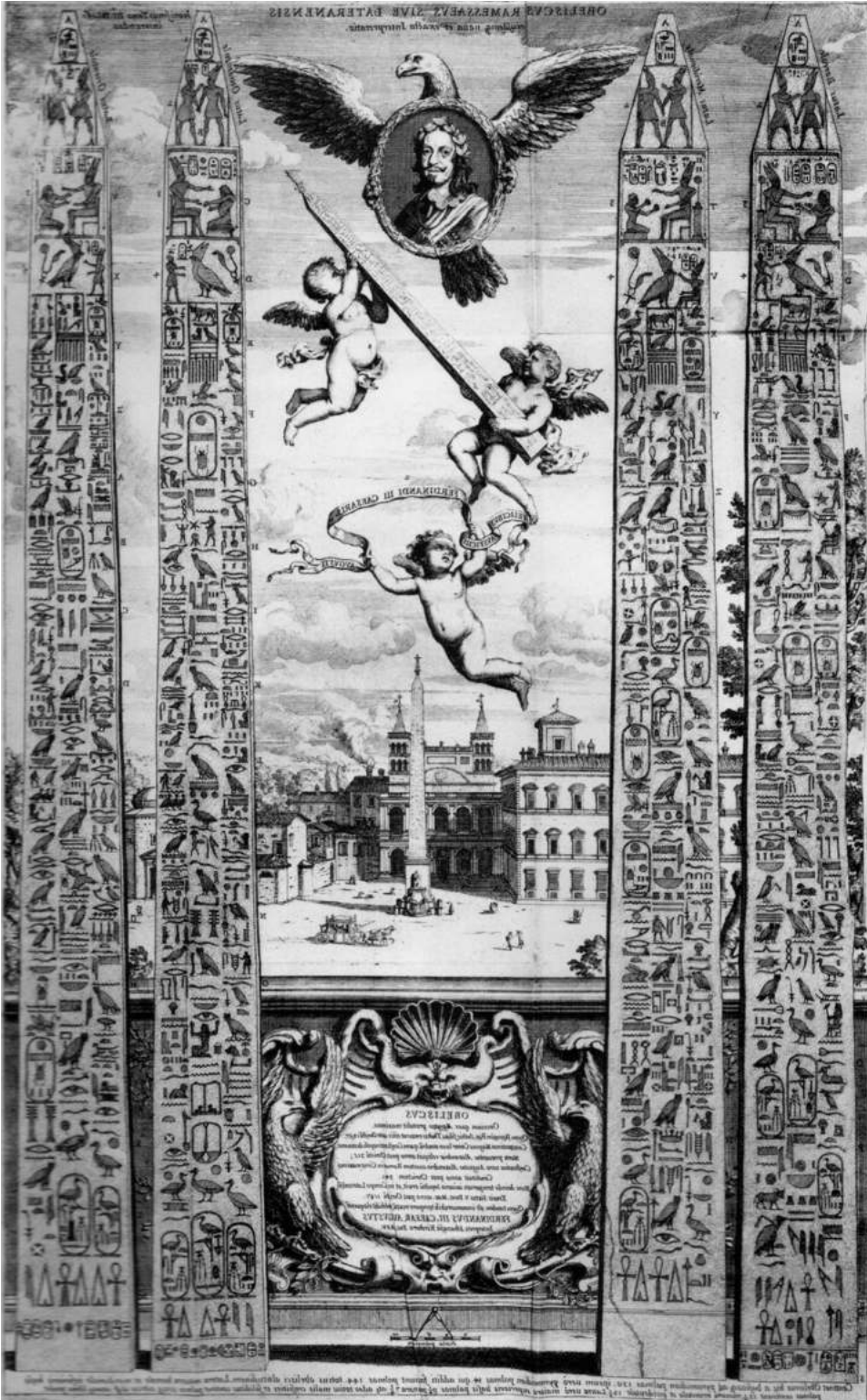


Figure 3. The Lateran Obelisk. The oldest and largest obelisk in Rome (height: 32 m, weight: 455 metric tons). *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, Tomus III, pages 160–161.














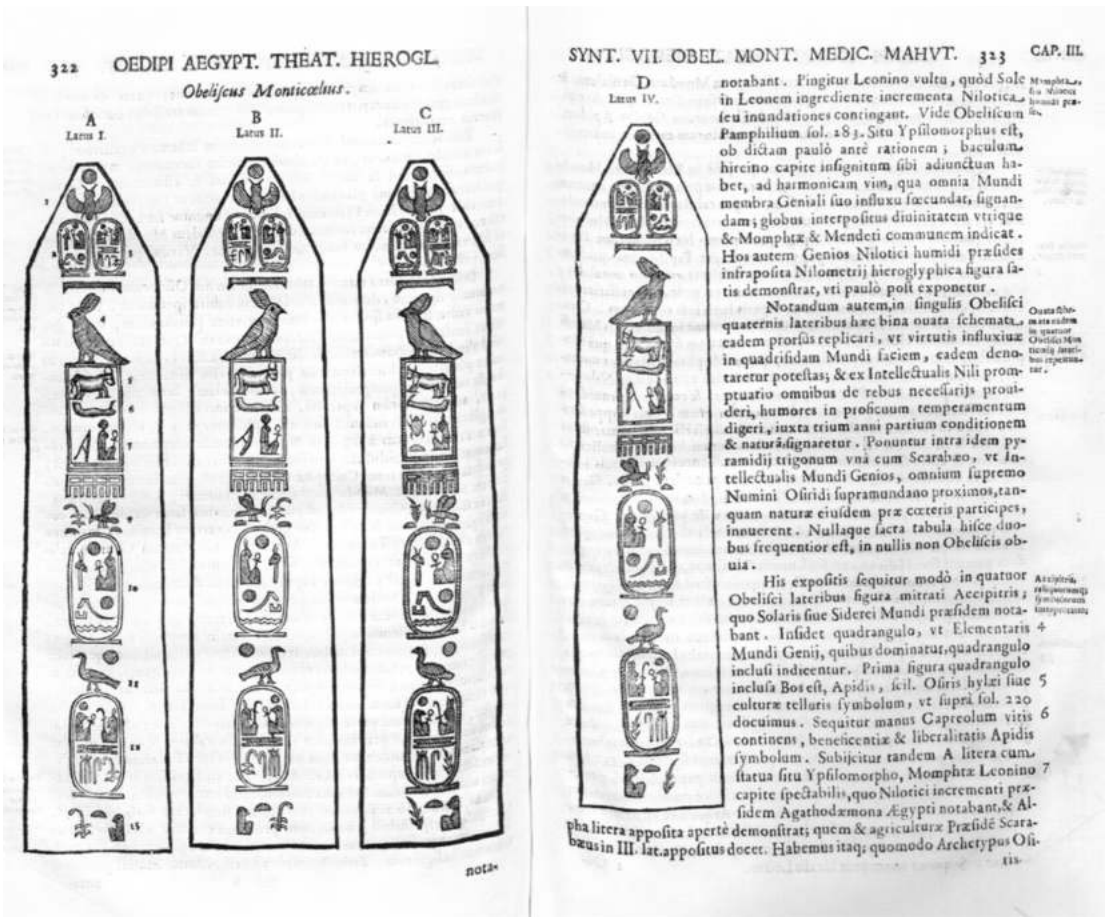
	Charaſter Zoogra- phus.	Figura literarum Vulgaris.	Græcorum ad eas affinitas.
I.		Α α γ ε θ ο κ λ ε ε ο η dicitur, id eſt, Bonus Dæmon.	Α
II.		Υ ν α λ λ α κ dicitur, id eſt, Norma.	Γ
III.		Δ δ α λ γ α κ ε dicitur, id eſt Bonus ager.	Δ
IV.		Υ Proceſſus inferiorum ad ſuperiora. Sym bolum eſt.	Υ
V.		Ο ο φ ς dicitur, id eſt, Mundi Dominus.	Ο
VI.		Λ λ α β γ α dicitur Proceſſus ſuperiorum ad inferiora.	Λ
VII.		Χ Proceſſus animæ mundi ſui eſt ſym.	Χ
VIII. IX.		Σ Lunæ ſymbolum. □ α O magnum.	Σ Ω
X.		Θ θ ς α λ λ α dicitur, id eſt, Viſio.	Θ Σ
XI.		Β β α α α α α dicitur, id eſt, Fœcunditas.	Β
XII.		Ζ ζ η α α α dicitur, id eſt, Vita.	Ζ
XIII.		Θ θ α α ς dicitur, id eſt, Litera Thoth.	Θ ° Thita.
XIV.		Φ φ ε λ ο dicitur, id eſt, Amor.	Φ °

Figure 4. An “intermediate” or “reformed” Egyptian alphabet. Kircher presented it as between ancient Egyptian and Coptic (*Obeliscus Pamphilius*, pages 130–132).



Figure 5. Kircher commissioned an engraving of himself solving the Sphinx's riddle.



Kircher’s translation: “Supramundane Osiris, concealed in the center of eternity, flows down into the world of the genii that is most near, similar, and immediately subject to him. This into the Osirian spirit of the sensible world, and its soul, which is the sun. This into Osiris Apis, the benefic Agathodaemon of the elementary world, who distributes the participated virtue of Osiris into all the members of the lower world. His minister and faithful assistant, the polymorphous daemon, shows by the variety which he causes and controls an abundance and plenty of all necessary things. But the benefic energy of the polymorphic daemon can be variously impeded by adverse virtues; hence, the sacred tablet of Mophta and Mendes must be employed, through whom it acquires the humid strength and fertility of the Nile, so that it can make the good influences flow unimpeded. Because the polymorphous daemon is unable to complete this unaided, the cooperation of Isis is needed, whose humidity tempers Mendes’s dryness; for obtaining which the following sacred Osirian tablet is ordained, by which sacrifices may be conducted as prescribed in the Comasian rites. Through this tablet, then, and through the sight of it, supramundane Osiris shows the wished-for bounty of necessary things.”

Figure 6. The Celian Obelisk. The actual translation is “Horus, powerful bull, beloved of Maat, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, son of the Sun, Ramses II.”

TURRIS BABEL LIB. III. 157

TABULA COMBINATORIA

In qua ex probatissimis Authoribus primævorum Characterum formæ eorumque Originem, qui ab ijs Originem duxerunt successiva temporum propagatione exhibentur; Ex quibus luculenter deducitur Omnia linguarum Alphabeta, nonnulla in scripturarum literarum vestigia tenere.

Valor Literarum.	Character duplex mysticus ab Angelis traditus dicitur.	Character tempore transitus sumus Authore R. Abrahamo Balmis.	Characterum veterum Samaritanorum formæ variæ ex nummis extractæ aliisque Authoribus.	Floridus Character Samaritanorum ex Vilalpando nummisque extractus.	Character Mosaicus quo legem in tabulis scripsit ex variis Rabbidorum monumentis depromptus.	Character Syriacus.	Character verus Hebræus sive Assyrius.
A	N 33	⌘	F F	⌘ F F F	⌘ I	⌘	⌘
B	3 33	⌘	9 9	J	⌘ ⌘	⌘	⌘
C	⌘ 2	⌘	7 7	7 7	⌘	⌘	⌘
D	7 3	⌘	4 4	⌘ ⌘ ⌘	⌘	e	7
H	⌘ 33	⌘	E E	E E E	⌘	⌘	⌘
V	i i	⌘	3 3	⌘ ⌘ ⌘	9	0	i
Z	T 2	⌘	⌘ 5		J	J	i
Ch	⌘ 33	⌘	⌘ ⌘	⌘ ⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘
T	⌘ 33	⌘	⌘ 5		⌘	⌘	⌘
I	Δ 3	⌘	3 3 N	⌘ ⌘	⌘ ⌘	⌘	⌘
C	⌘ 33	⌘	⌘ 3 3		⌘	⌘	⌘
L	Σ 3	⌘	⌘ ⌘	< ⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘
M	⌘ 33	⌘	⌘ 3	⌘ ⌘	⌘ ⌘	⌘	⌘

Figure 7. Kircher’s attempt to demonstrate that all languages have a common origin, which he called proto-Hebrew or the Adamic language. The headers for the columns read: “Letter Value,” “A double mystical character said to have been delivered by the angels,” “Intermediate character according to Abraham de Balmes,” “Characteristics of ancient Samaritan in various forms drawn from coins and authors,” “Lively Samaritan characters from coins extracted from Vilalpando,” “The Mosaic character, in which he wrote the law on tablets drawn from the tombs of various rabbis,” “Syriac character,” “True Hebrew or Assyrian character.”



Figure 8. Museo Kircheriano. The image above was produced by Georgius de Sepibus (1678). Although the proportions are not correct, the contents are accurate. Kircher, in his ferraiolo, stands in the foreground, greeting two visitors.

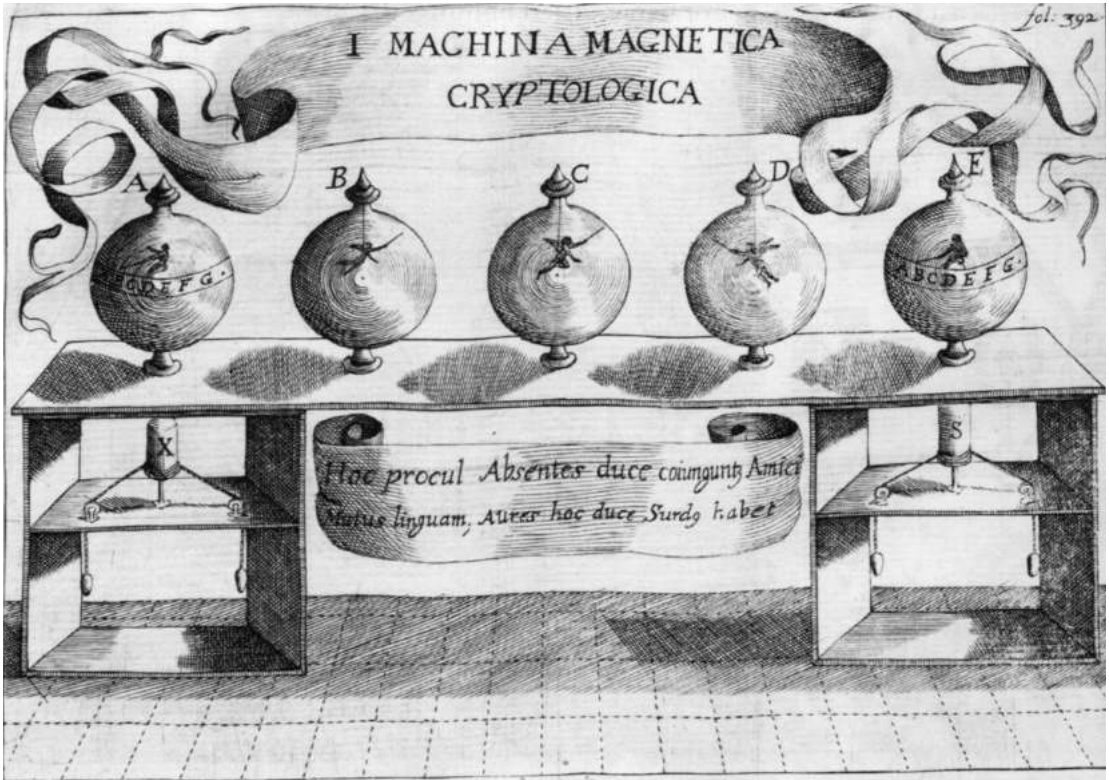


Figure 9. Kircher’s “Cryptologic Magnetic Machine” featured five transparent balls in a row, all of which contained pointing figurines holding a spindle, as a means to “translate” letters, one at a time, from a person on one side of the exhibit to someone on the opposite end—what we might call a magnetic telegraph today—except that it had hidden controls only visible to the steward of the exhibit. The patron would turn the top of the leftmost ball (A) to a desired letter. Then, hidden magnets, weights, and pulleys would cause the pointer and spindle of ball E to rotate to the same letter. The magnetic pointers in balls B, C, and D (who are angels, not humans) would also rotate but in a manner less constrained, giving the impression to the onlooker that spiritual magnetism would cause the information to be passed ethereally from globe to globe, and thus, from one end of the exhibit to the other. The inscription beneath the machine said: *Through this distant and absent guide, mute friends are united in their language, and the deaf have ears.*

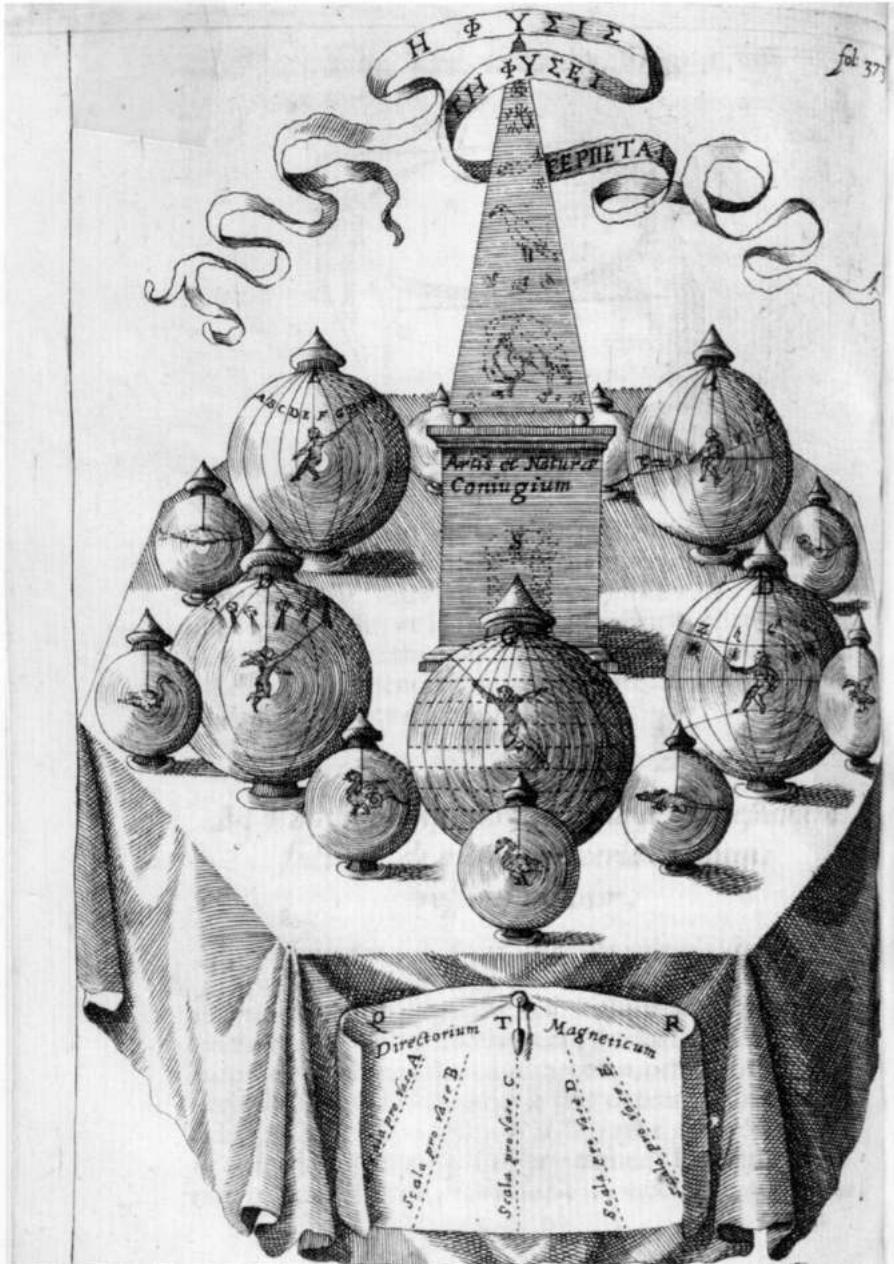


Figure 10. The Magnetic Oracle. This exhibit showcased a collection of fortune-telling, spiritually magnetic compasses. Some pointers were human and held spindles. Others were animals, with the spindle being the point of a beak or the tail of a crocodile. Needles sometimes pointed to emotions, astrological signs, or runes. The instructions read: “The visitor is invited to ask some questions about signs of the zodiac, planets, winds, or the system by which the date of Easter is calculated. The operator then moves the pointer T to cause the magnet S to revolve, in turn causing the figures in the globes to point to the answer.” A large, spinnable bar magnet was concealed within the obelisk, which Kircher said was a “spiritual needle” pointing to heaven.

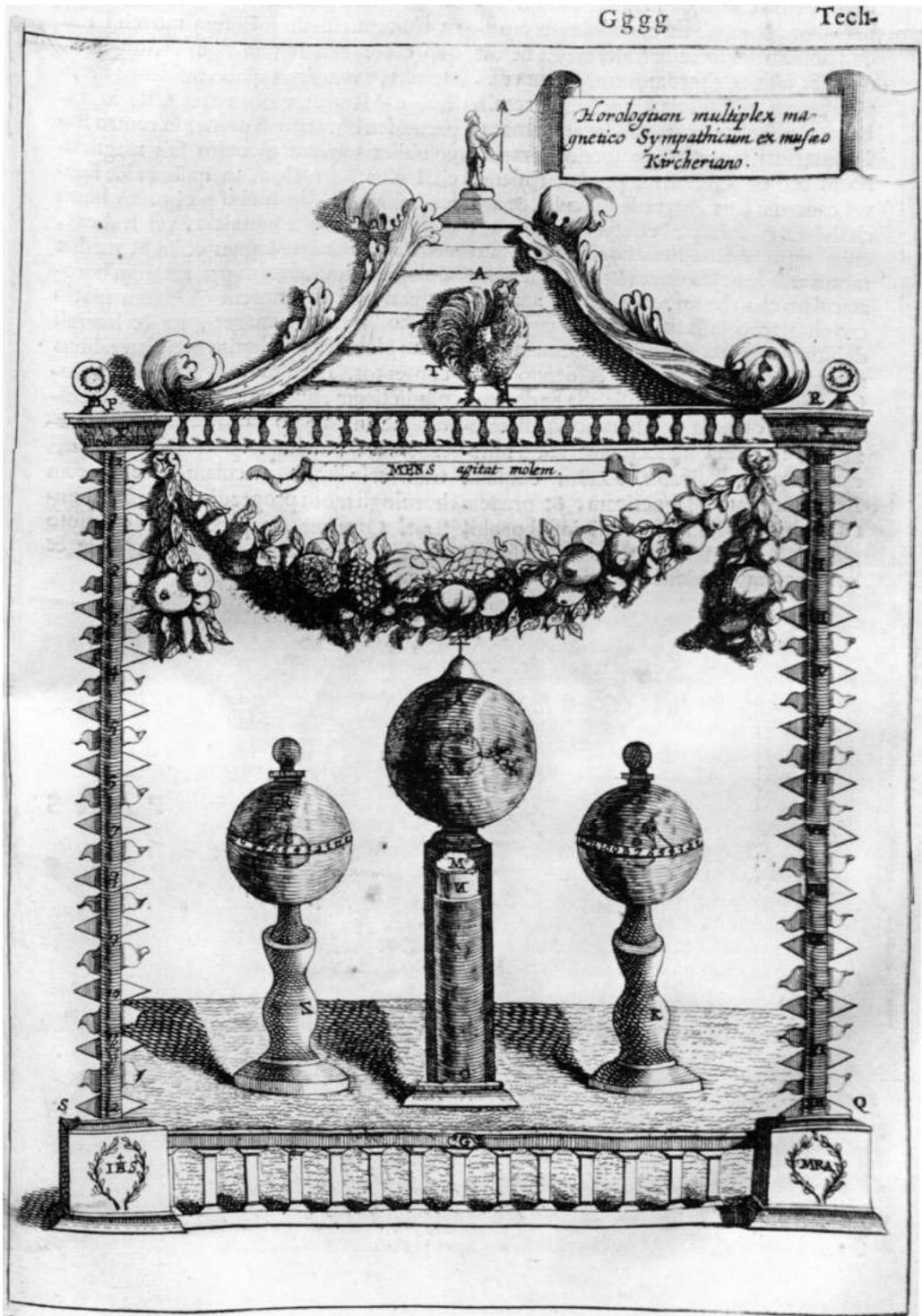


Figure 11. A stage on which Kircher presented an exhibit of three glass and metallic balls. Each contained an internal pointer of some kind and writings or depictions on the surfaces of the spheres. Magnets, hydraulics, gears, pumps, and pulleys were hidden from view.



Figure 12. An Illustration showing some of the behind-the-scene functionality of a particular “magnetic epicyclic disk.” Each sphere was filled with clear oil and water, which would not mix, allowing for objects therein to appear suspended, when they were actually floating. Magnets, thin silk threads, and a hidden pulley system rotated the balls, suggesting certain arrangements of planets and constellations, which was not entirely accurate. The combination of orientations would also be taken as a horoscope—with the same fun attitude that one has when interacting with a magic 8 ball, a Ouija board, or a mood ring. Here the objects “seem to move of their own accord but are in fact controlled by concealed magnets.”

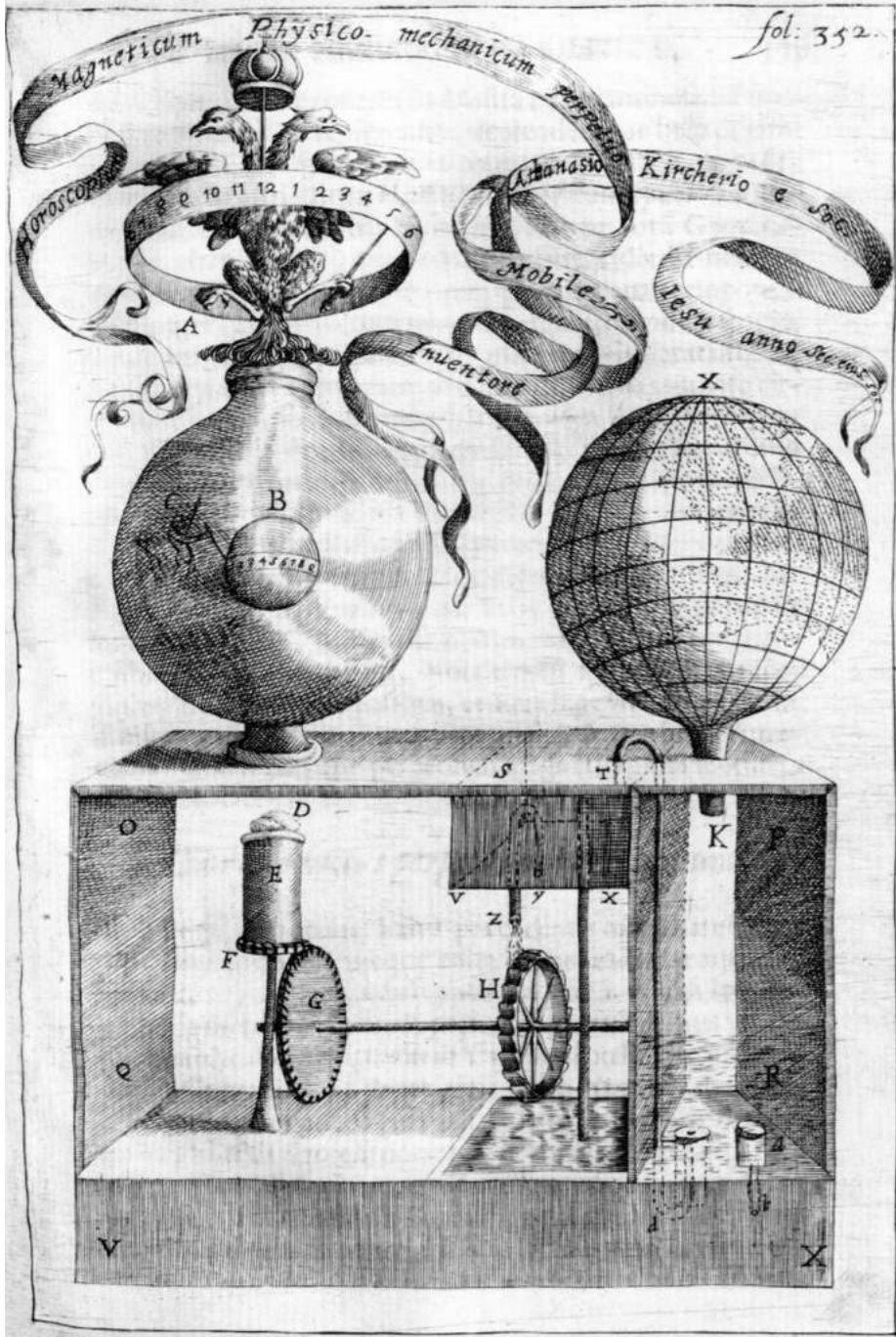


Figure 13. The Perpetual Magnetic Horoscope. The brass globe on the right would absorb body heat from a patron's hands, thus changing the pressure of the connected air chamber beneath it, which would then pump water through a thin straw to a reservoir, which would power a water wheel, drive a crank, turn a magnet, and consequently change the orientation of the inner globe on the left. In this exhibit, the pointer and spindle were stationary.

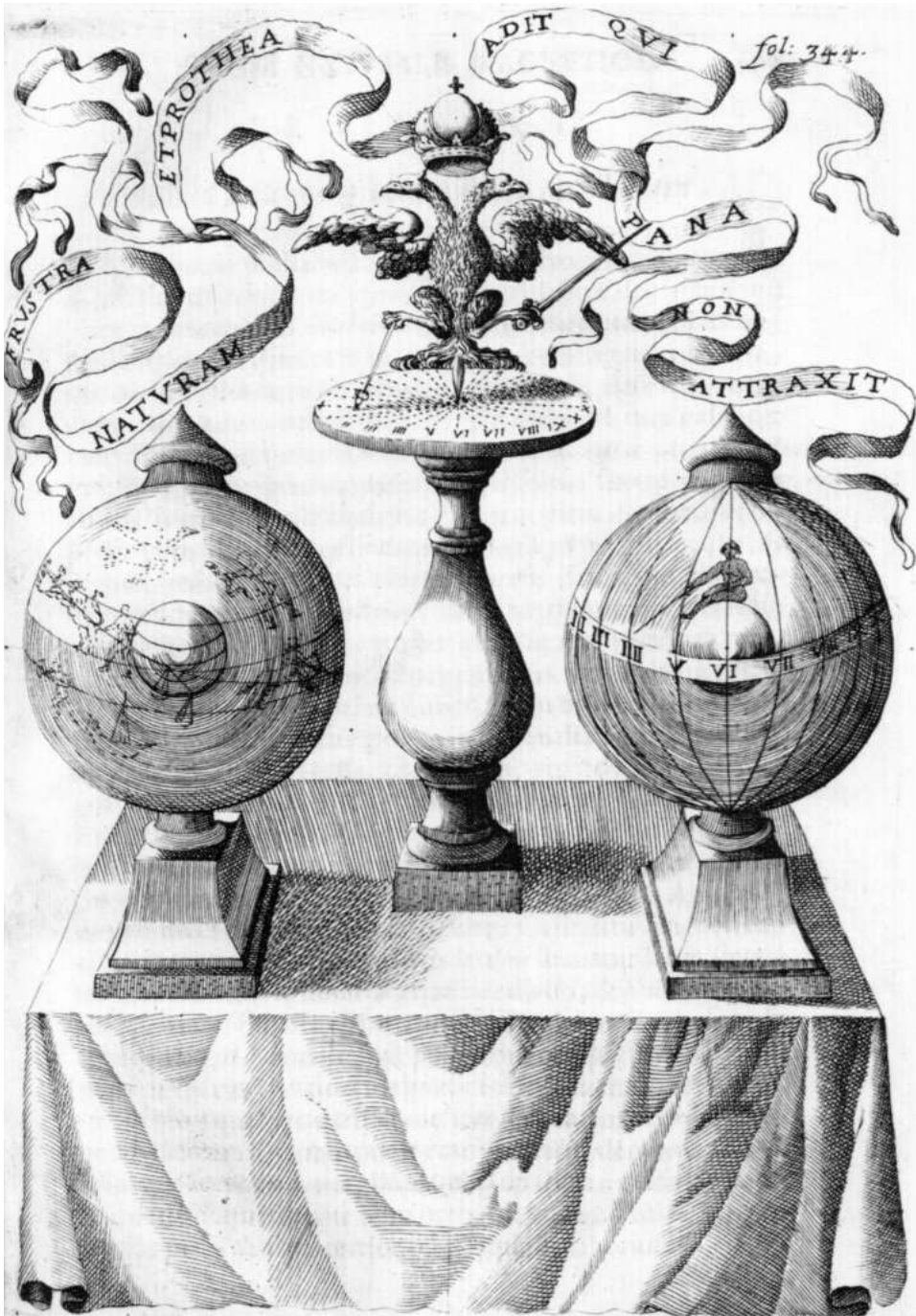


Figure 14. The Archimedes Sphere. In the glass globe on the right, the pointer, who is holding a spindle, would reveal the hours of the night in which certain constellations should appear on the ball on the left. The months of the year, which would influence the orientation of the visible constellations, was mediated by the dial between the two. By interacting with either ball, the other changes accordingly—always through hidden (and often magnetic) mechanisms.

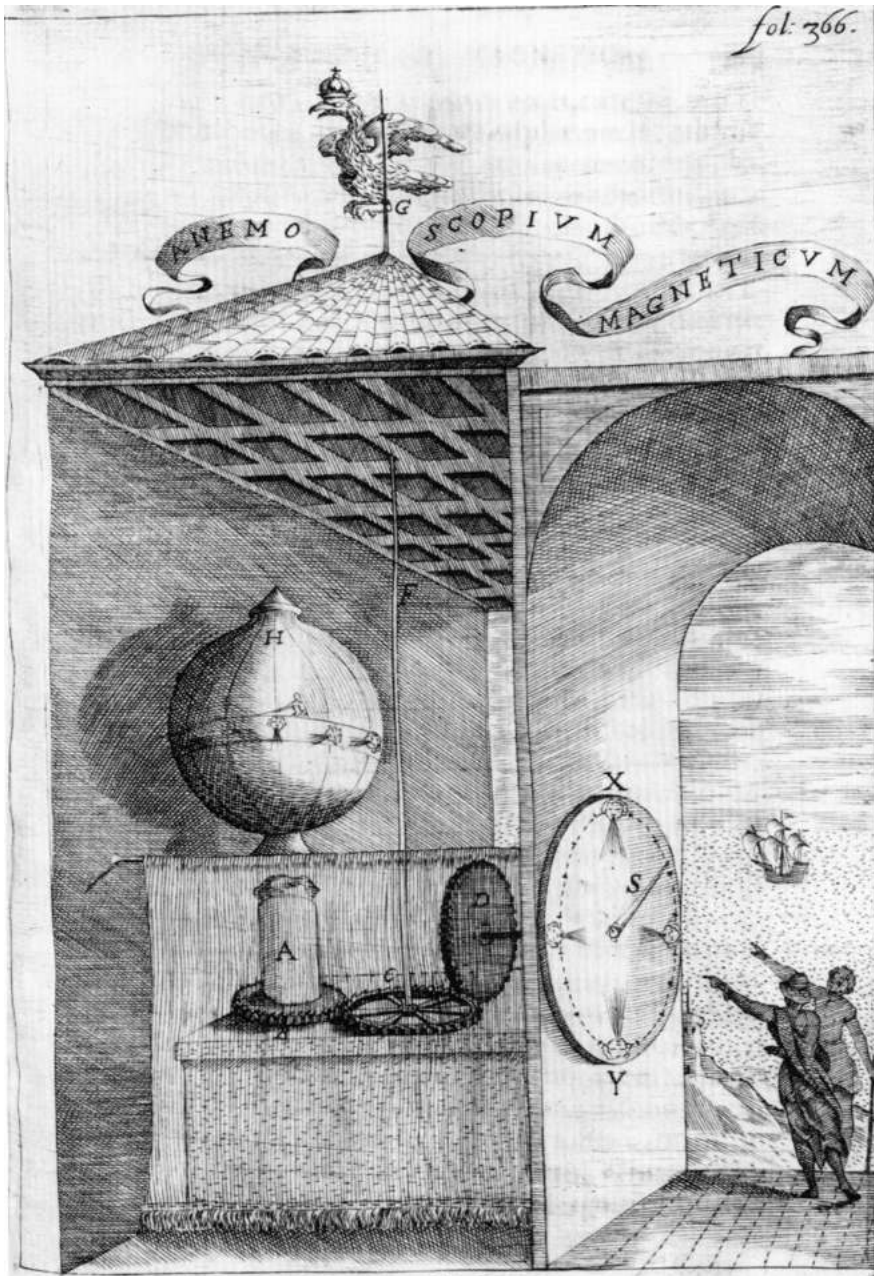


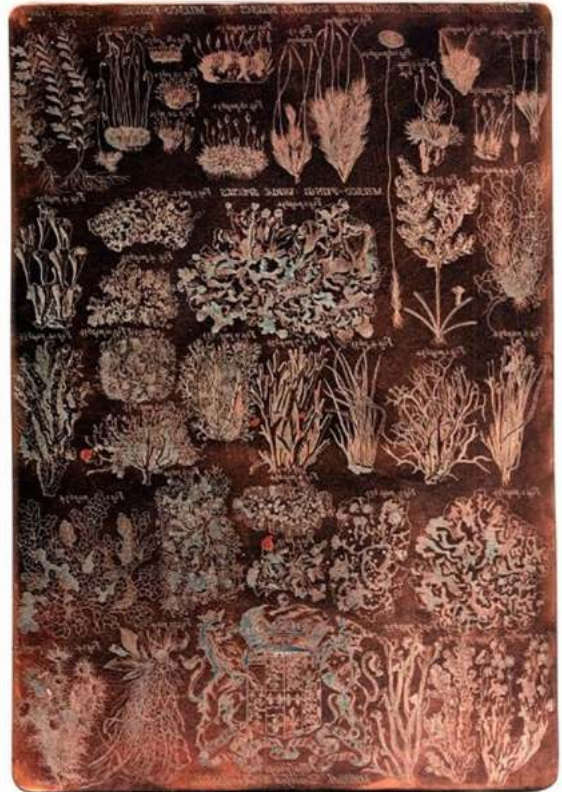
Figure 15. An allegorical, spiritually magnetic compass. The direction of the wind would turn a weather vane, which would spin an axle, thus connecting the sphere to the clockface. The script accompanying this exhibit no longer exists, but it might have said something like this: *When making a voyage across life's wind-tossed seas—signified by the literal ship in the background—one needs to consider more than just the time of day and the direction of the wind; we must also incorporate other forces that we cannot see, but feel must be there—like the spiritually magnetic force of God. If you are aligned with Him, then your internal compass will work properly and you will be guided to safe shores and to a land of promise.*



Figure 16. A portrait of Fabius Chisius engraved on metallic plate and printed in some of Kircher's works. The inscription reads: "Papal Nuncio and Mediator for the General Peace, produced with the king's privilege."



Print



Brass plate

Figure 17. A 17th-century illustration (*left*) and its corresponding red-brass copper-plate (*right*). The print and plate are mirror images of one another. The majority of plates from the time period were eventually recycled due to the high cost of mining, smelting, and refining. No plates commissioned by Kircher survive today.



Charles II



Emperor Leopold I



Pope Clement X



Pope Innocent X



Emperor Ferdinand III



Wilhelm von Habsburg

Figure 18. Selected patrons and benefactors, whose likenesses were engraved upon golden-brass plates and were subsequently included in the front matter of Kircher's publications.

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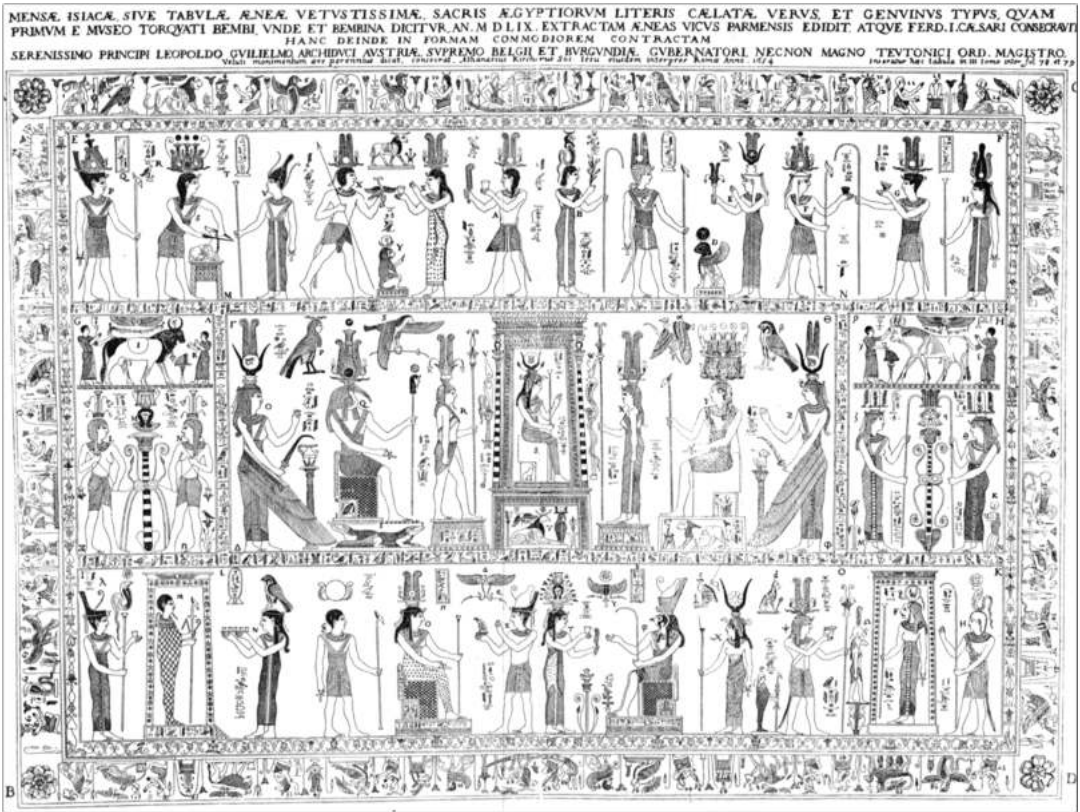


Figure 19. The Bembine Table of Isis, a bronze tablet (not a brass plate) dating to the first century CE. Kircher included a reproduction and “translation” of the tablet in *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*.

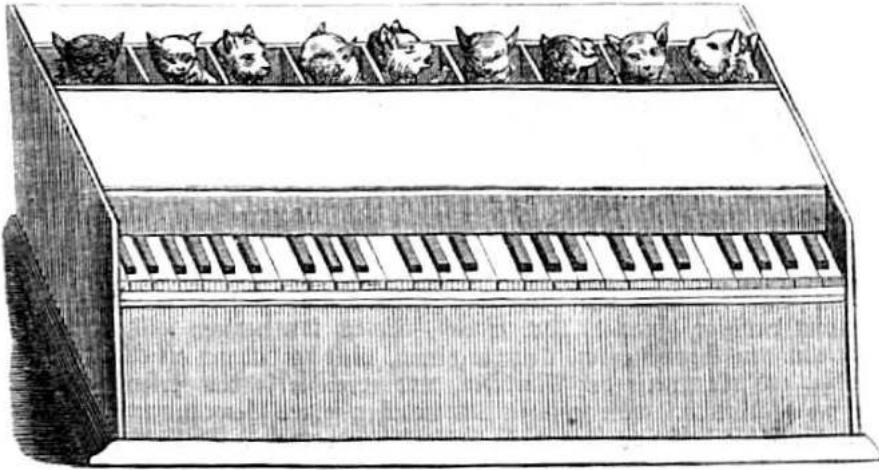


Figure 20. The cat piano. Each key is connected to a mechanism that pokes a particular cat, who (theoretically) had been trained to meow on cue—supposedly with perfect pitch. “The idea was [once] described in *Musurgia Universalis*, Kircher’s influential book of musicology, [which] has been well-known among scholars since it was first published in 1650. ... In fact, Kircher wasn’t even the first one to come up with it. ... But the idea did get new life from Kircher’s treatment.”

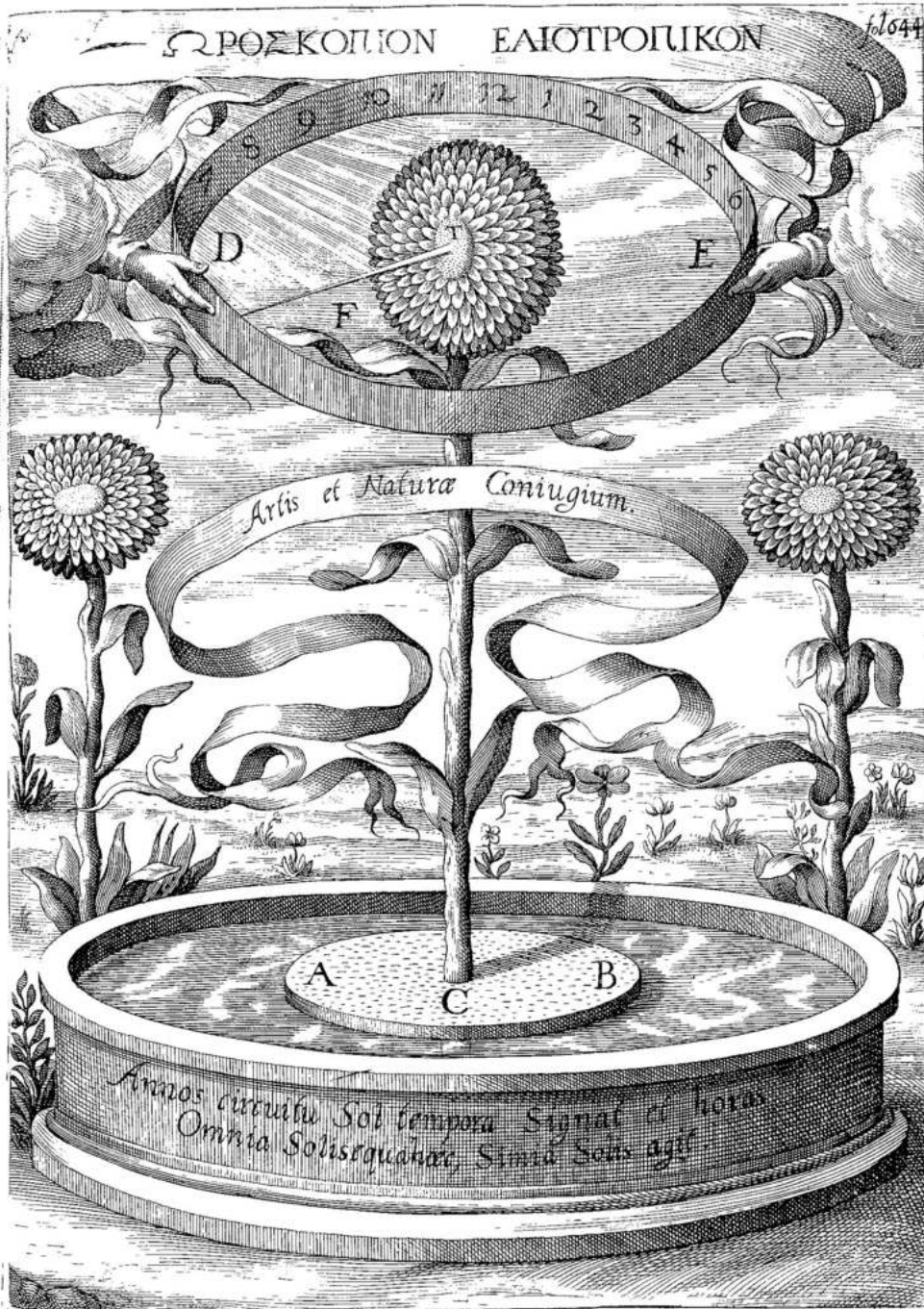


Figure 21. The sunflower clock. The flower is inserted into a cork, which both floats in a pool of water and conceals a magnet. A spindle points to the direction of the time of day, as if it were a sundial. If a museum patron were to turn the flower away from the correct time of day, it would bob and oscillate back to the true time seemingly magically. In reality, a large magnet under the table would have been turned to the exact time in which the next group of tourists would end up in front of the exhibit.



Figure 22. The second and favorite of Joseph Smith's five seer stones. For over a decade, Smith put his stones in the bottom of his hat to look (or pretend to look) for buried treasure—sometimes earnestly and sometimes only for the money. He found the above rock in 1822 when he was sixteen years old.

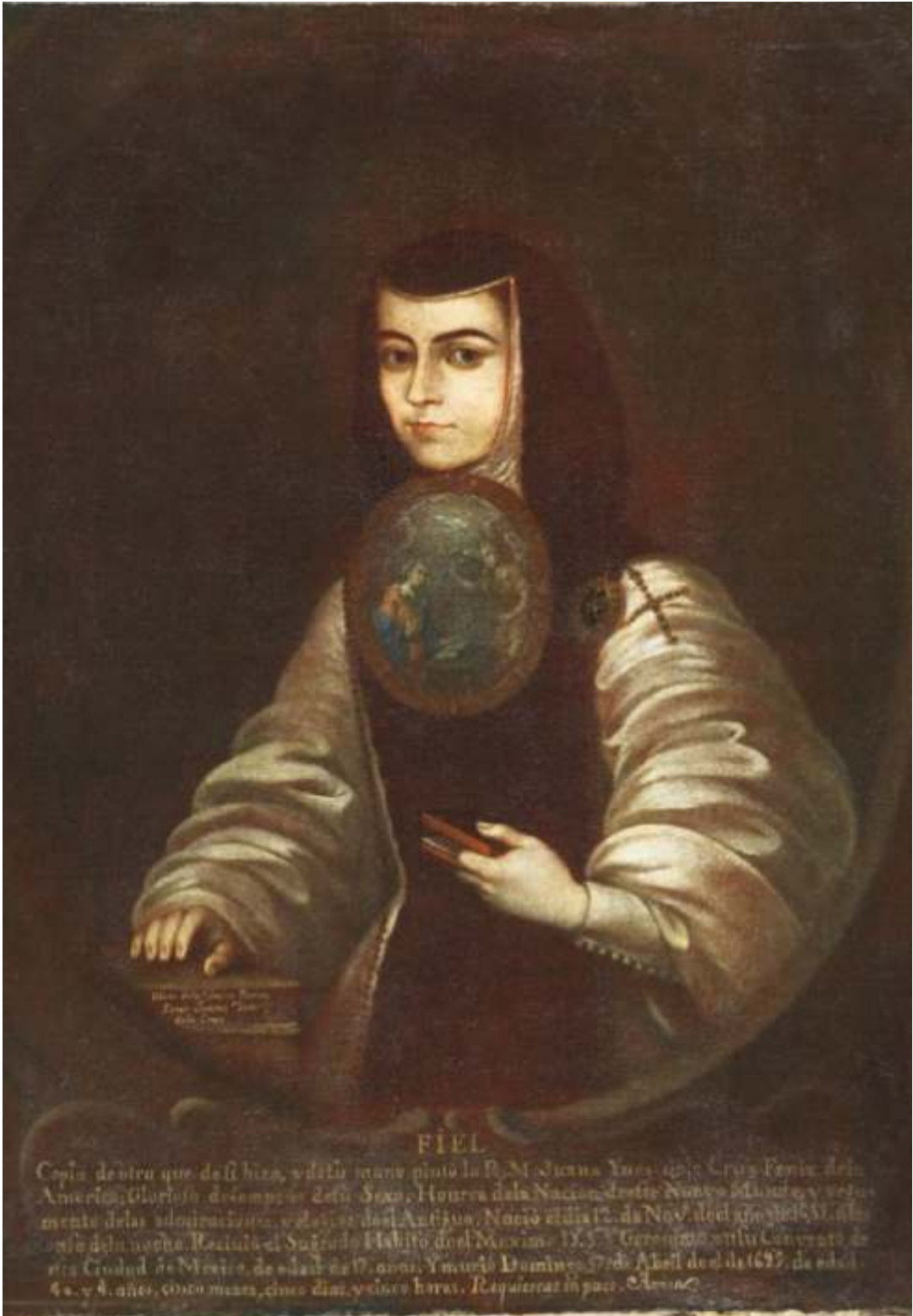


Figure 23. Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz, a Mexican Hieronymite nun, “The Phoenix of México.” The oil on canvas is attributed to Nicolás Enríquez de Vargas, 1722.

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Figure 24. The *Liahona* is the international magazine of the Mormon church. Lehi, Nephi's father in *The Book of Mormon*, is holding "the Liahona," one of Kircher's spiritually magnetic compasses. In English, the caption says "Find in Your New *Liahona* a Compass for Our Day."



Figure 25. The Barachias Nephi obelisk, engraved on a golden-brass plate. Despite the fact that the original was a hoax, Kircher provided the following “translation” in both Arabic and Latin: *Here the sun, the moderator of all things, the fertile divinity of the Nile, on account of the benefits conferred on mortals, is to be celebrated with divine service. Here the inventor of agriculture, planting, seeding, the preserver of Egypt, the Genius of the universe, the repeller of evils, the fertile divinity of the Nile, the vigilant guardian of things, on account of the benefits conferred on mortals, is to be celebrated with divine honors and service.*

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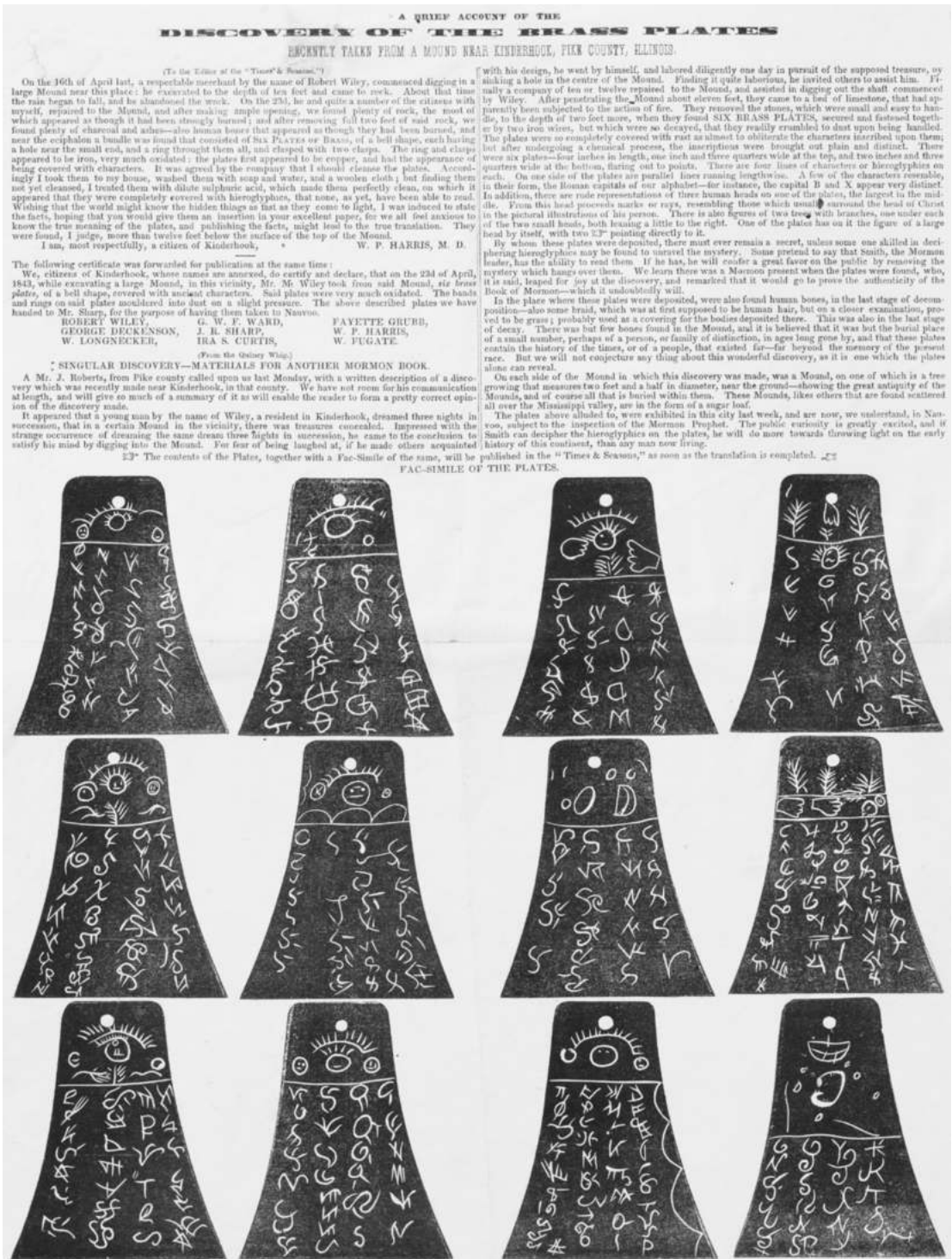


Figure 26. The Kinderhook plates.

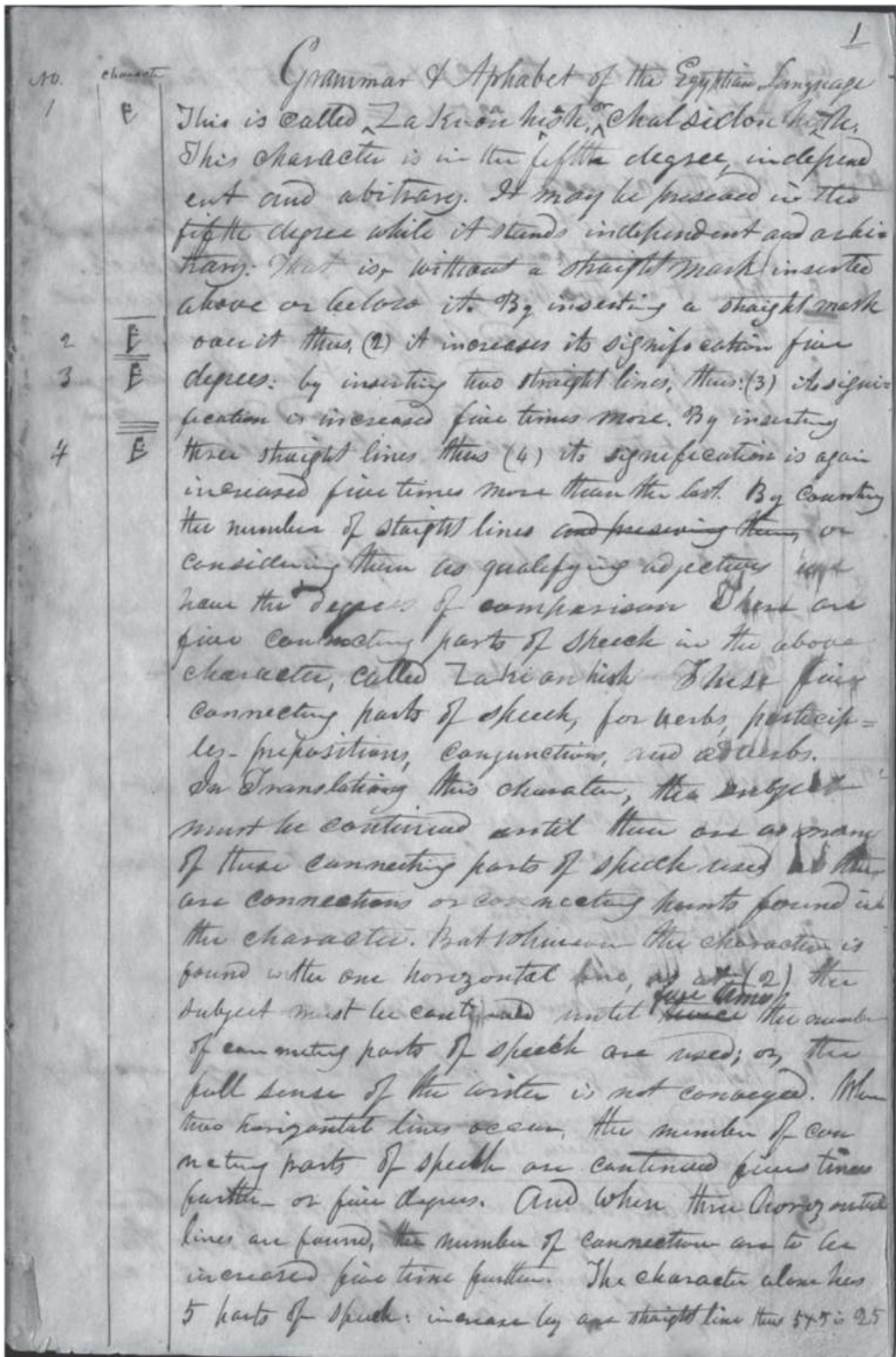


Figure 27. The first page of Smith's Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language (GAEL), part of what is now called the Kirtland Egyptian Papers (KEP).

Ats. Kircherus 27.
de Barachia Nephi.

Le P. Athanasius Kircher Allemand Jésuite est allé à Aix le 3 Septembre 1688. m'a apporté son petit volume de
de Barachias Nephi de Babilone, qui a été en langue Ara-
bique en suite de l'induire, avec une traduction en fran-
çois de son titre, religion, et obélisque des Egyptiens, dont il m'a pu
vouloir me faire voir une copie. Une page de la dernière
partie divisée par articles en forme de lexicon, hieroglyphe,
dont le premier étoit de la signification d'un oeil, et les autres en
suite, qui d'un serpent, qui d'une plume, qui d'un cousteau, qui
d'un petit globe, et ainsi des autres.

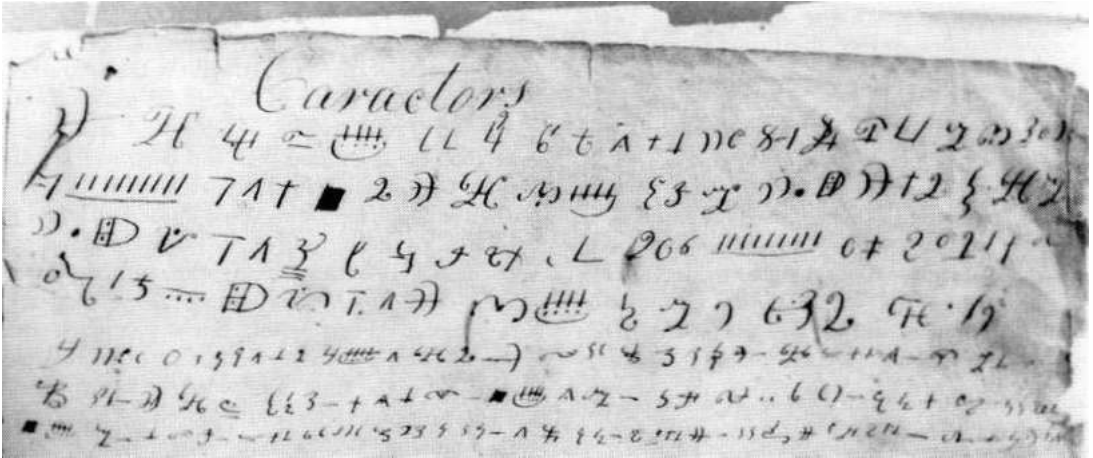
Le livre sembloit ancien, si ce n'est en un endroit de la fin de la
première partie, qui est de l'histoire Egyptienne
Et ailleurs y avoit des discours de moralité, qui n'étoient pas
aussi complets, y manquoient certains feuillets de la com-
mence de l'ouvrage des Egyptiens.

Le livre étoit écrit en papier de Damas, avec une encre noire,
et quelques distinctions de rubrique, principalement les articles de
la lexicon, de la dernière partie, d'univers 100. ans d'ancienneté au plus
d'ancienneté d'écriture.

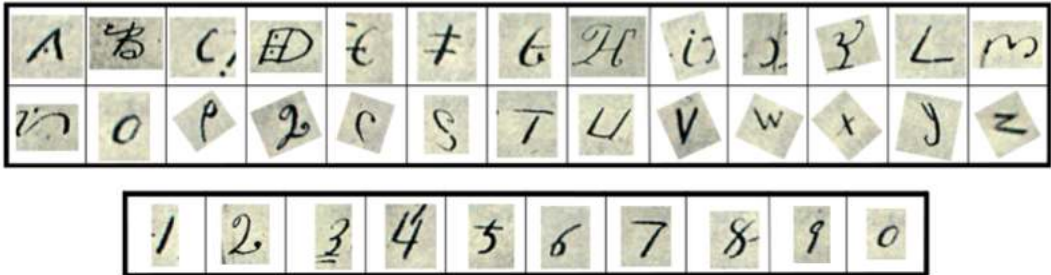
Il m'a été fait un petit extrait abrégé de la division de l'ouvrage en

Figure 28. Peiresc discusses having met with Kircher to inspect his Nephi manuscript.

a)



b)



c)

Joseph Smith's claimed
These characters
are 'Reformed
Egyptians.' Some
critics, however, feel
they are 'Deformed
English.'

Figure 29. a) Smith's one page of "reformed Egyptian" "characters." b) A particular organization and rotation of thirty-six characters from that set. c) An internet meme.

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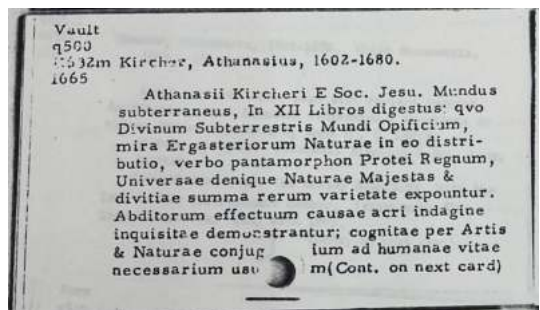
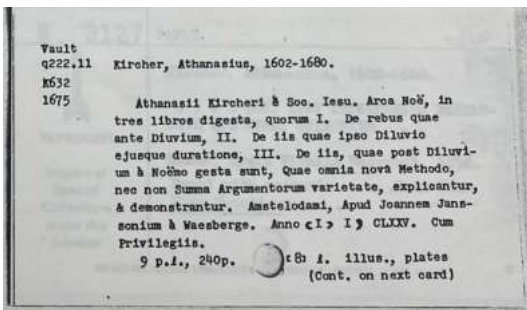
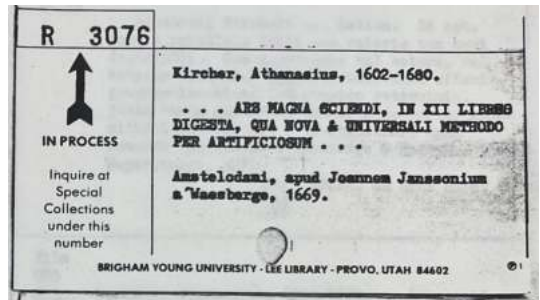
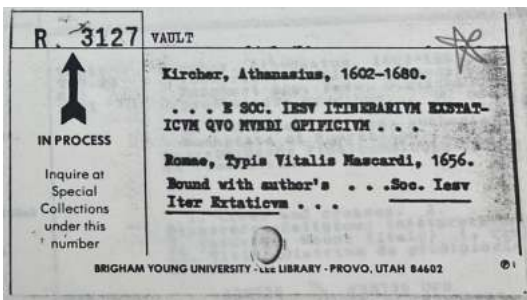
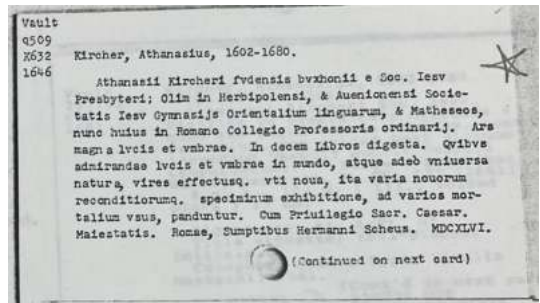
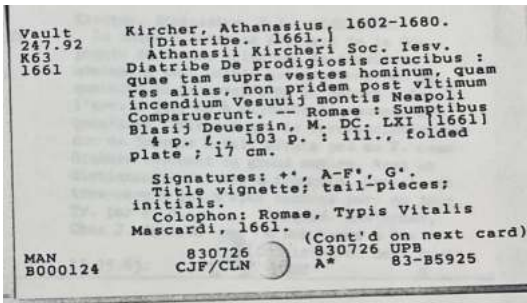
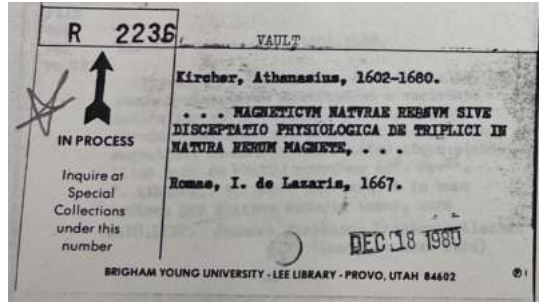
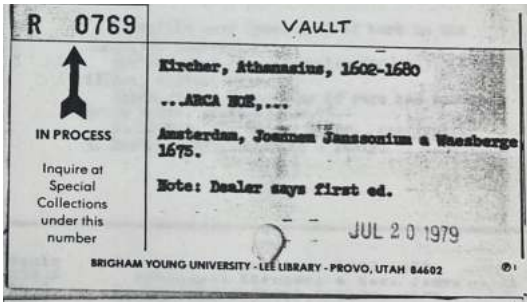


Figure 31. A small subset of collection cards from the A. Dean Larsen file within BYU's Special Collections. Notice that each of Kircher's works was immediately placed in the vault; only recently have these volumes and the details of their procurement been made accessible—at my request.

a)



b)



Figure 32. Facsimile 2 from *The Book of Abraham*. Notice that the penis of Min (7) was erased from the 1902 edition (a) to make the scriptural content more PG-rated, which policy was reversed in 1981 (b).

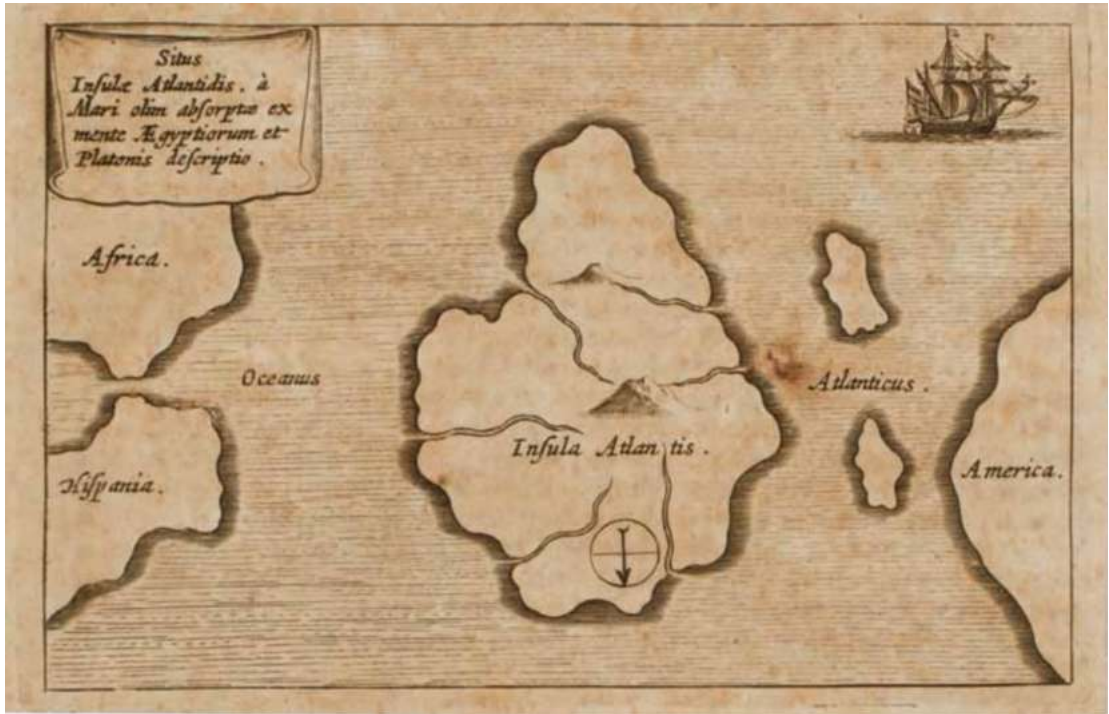


Figure 33. Kircher's map of the Atlantic (ca. 1665), detailing the position of the island of Atlantis. North is downward.



Where late the Savage reamit in search of prey,
Fair science spreads her all embracing ray,
The ancient forest falling, its inmates fled,
See, Seals and Sons of harrowing in their stead!
'Tis seems like those, that frigid's pow'r disclose,
She makes the desert blossom like the rose.

This view of the principal Buildings of Dartmouth University is humbly inscribed
to the Honorable John Wheelock, Esquire, LL.D. President, by
George Ticknor, Dekeator,
and Member of the Yorkshire Class, aged eleven years. - July 1803.

Figure 34. The sophomore class of 1803 dedicated an engraving of the school (top) to John Wheelock, who succeeded his father as the Second President of Dartmouth College. Some have suggested that Professor Smith may be the portly professor in the lower right-hand corner. The class gift also featured an inscription (below), which was the same poem that John Wheelock recited during his commencement speech.

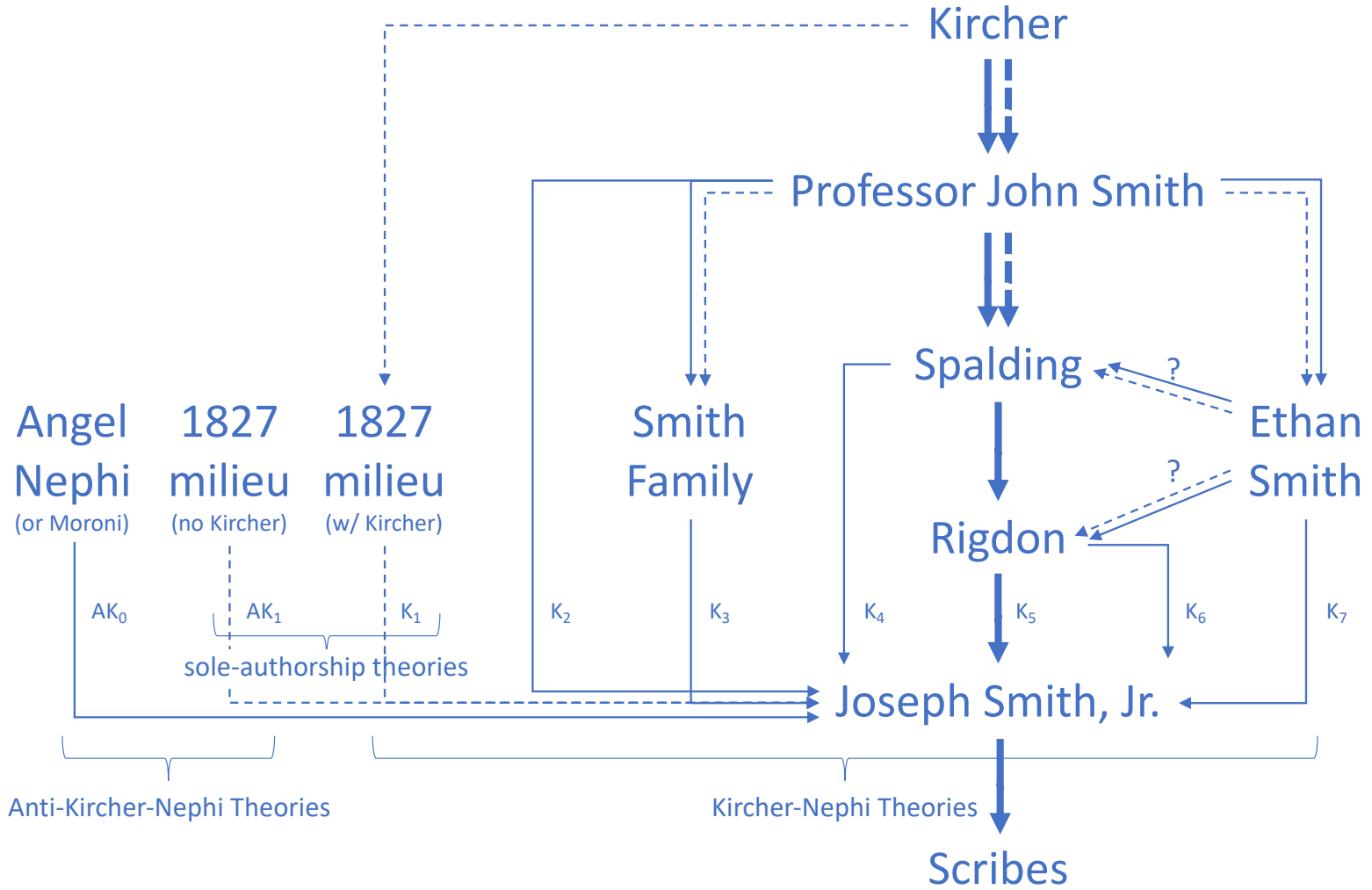


Figure 35. Potential mechanisms for Kircherisms getting into *The Book of Mormon*. I sometimes call K₅ *the Straight Path*.

LIBRARIES OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE.	
College Library, about	6,400 vols.
United Fraternity, College Society, about	6,500
Social Friends, about	6,500
Medical Library, about	700
Library of North. Academy of Arts and Sciences, about	1,300
	<hr/>
	21,400

The college library has two copies of Eliot's Indian Bible. One is perfect except the title-page of the Old Testament. At the end is a versification of the Psalms, as far as to the 4th verse of the 137th. The library has also some fine folio editions of the Fathers, Athanasius, Eusebius, etc.; Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, Montfaucon's *Antiquities*, and *Palæographie*, Vossius, Hippocrates, Cerda's *Virgil*, etc. The library possesses 17 portraits. Of these there are, a full-length portrait of the Earl of Dartmouth,

Figure 36. An excerpt from *Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review* showing notable volumes possessed by Dartmouth pre-1850. *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* is specifically listed.

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March 5--Died in Friendship, at 2:00 O'clock A. M. Saturday February 27
1886. Mrs. Sidney Rigdon aged 86 years. Deceased was the wife of the late
Sidney Rigdon, credited with being the author of John Smith's Mormon bible.
At the time of her death she was stopping with her daughter, Mrs. Samuel
Spears. In Friendship she was widely known, and will be mourned by a vast
number of friends. Funeral services were held at the residence Sunday after-
noon and the remains were laid to rest in Maple Grove cemetery.

Figure 37. A snippet from the typed field notes of Arlene Hess.



Figure 38. Frontispiece of *Le Parasite Mormon*. The gluttonous, plagiaristic, and parasitic main character, Mormon, stands in a pot that doubles as a podium, lecturing the chefs on how to properly cook his last meal (he himself is to be the main course). The text beneath the image says: “O friend, do you see the cook teaching? Such a man makes a spectacle of himself from a tripod of brass.”

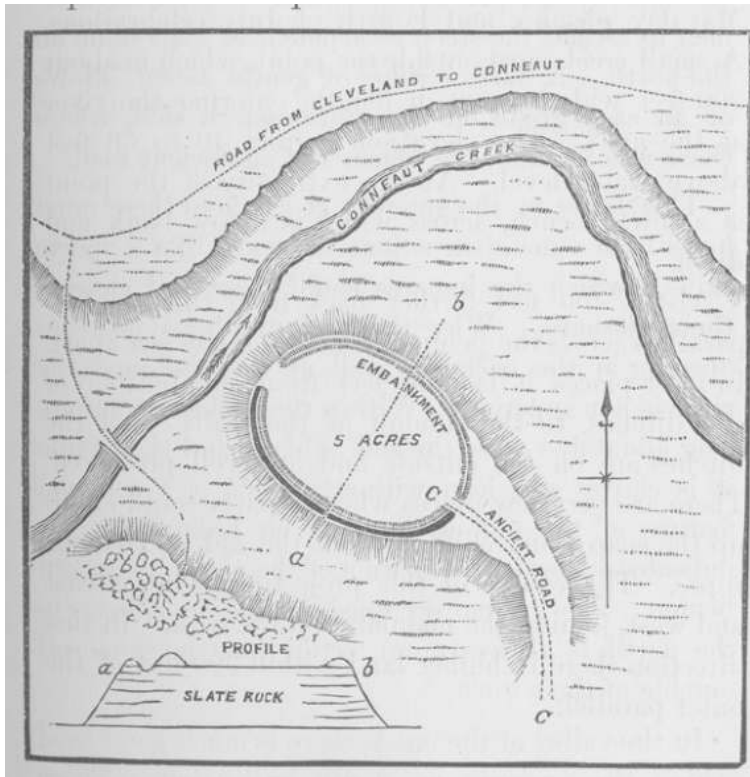


Figure 39. The bend in the Conneaut River where Spalding places the cavernous hill from his *Stories from Lost Manuscripts Found*. Spalding imagines that the ancient fort, like the Temple of Solomon, was built atop a cave containing the golden plates and the wisdom of the ages—a clear allusion to the founding myth of Royal Arch Masonry.



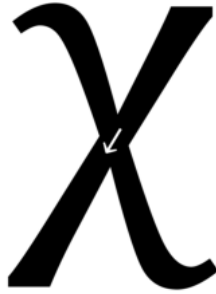
a)



b)

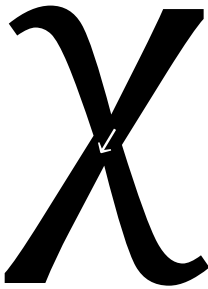
Figure 40. *Simia mormon*, or “scary-faced ape.” *Simia* is the genus name and *mormon* is the species name (uncapitalized). The bottom figure is how the monkey was depicted in 1796 by Harrison, Cluse & Co. (another Fleet Street publisher).

Mor → mon

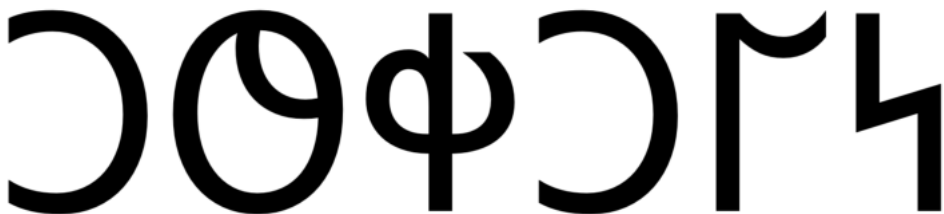


Mon → mor

gargoyle → Mormo → Mormon → Monmor → Montmaur



Montmaur → Monmor → Mormon → Mormo → scarecrow



Inset figures from Chapter 14. (top) The relationship between Pierre de “Monmor” and his caricature, “Mormon,” is itself a chiasm, which Monsieur de Vayer constructed to shield himself from potential legal action. (middle) In the early 1640’s, Ménage had called Montmaur a gargoyle, which Valois and Vayer connected to épouvantail (scarecrow) through a clever sequence. (bottom) The word “Mormon” written in the Deseret alphabet.

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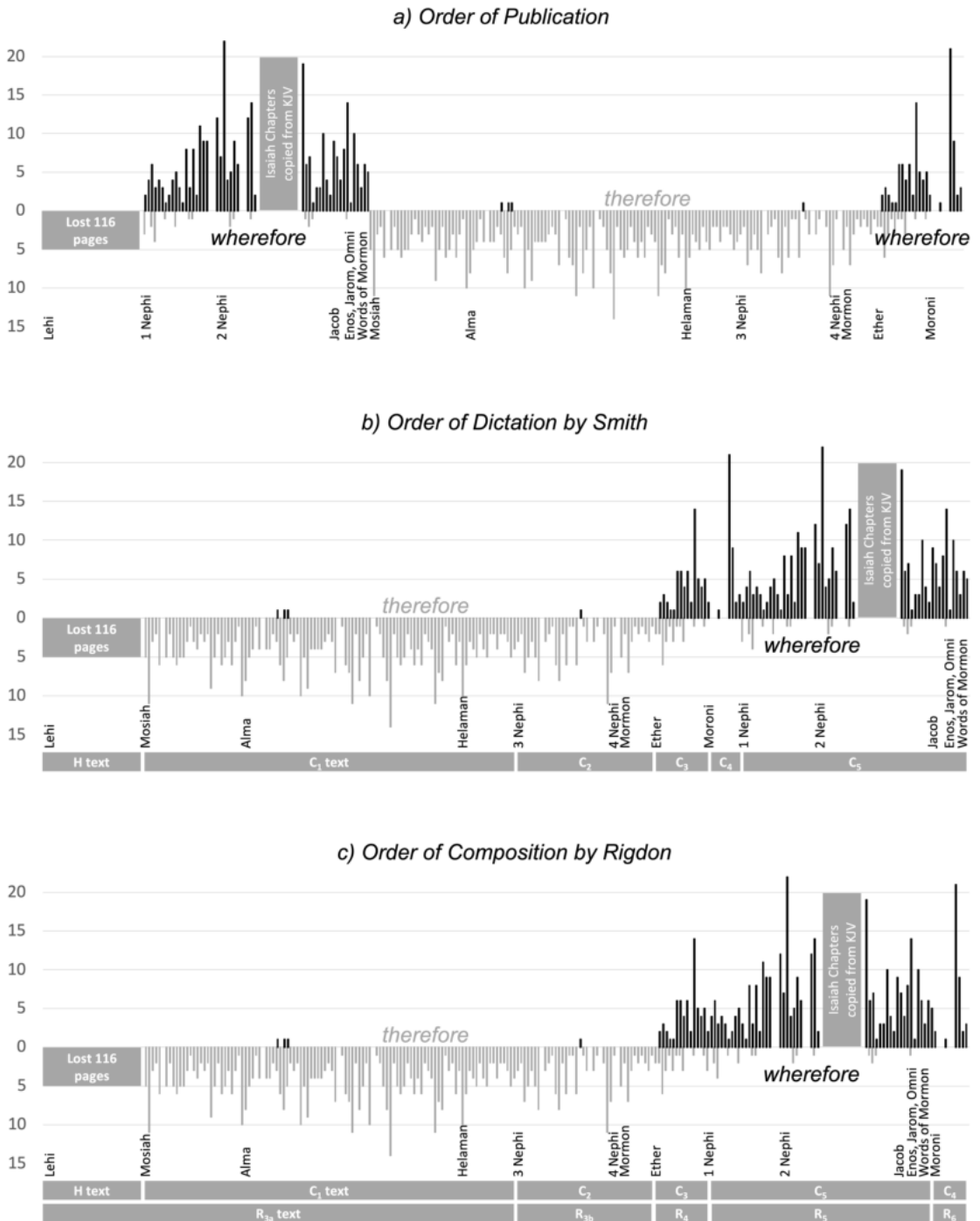


Figure 41. Instances of *therefore* (gray) and *wherefore* (black) in *The Book of Mormon*, broken down by chapter. The top graphic a) shows the publication order of the books within *The Book of Mormon*. The middle graphic b) shows the order as dictated by Smith to his scribes. The bottom graphic c) shows the order in which the books were composed by Rigdon. Quotations from the KJV are omitted for clarity.

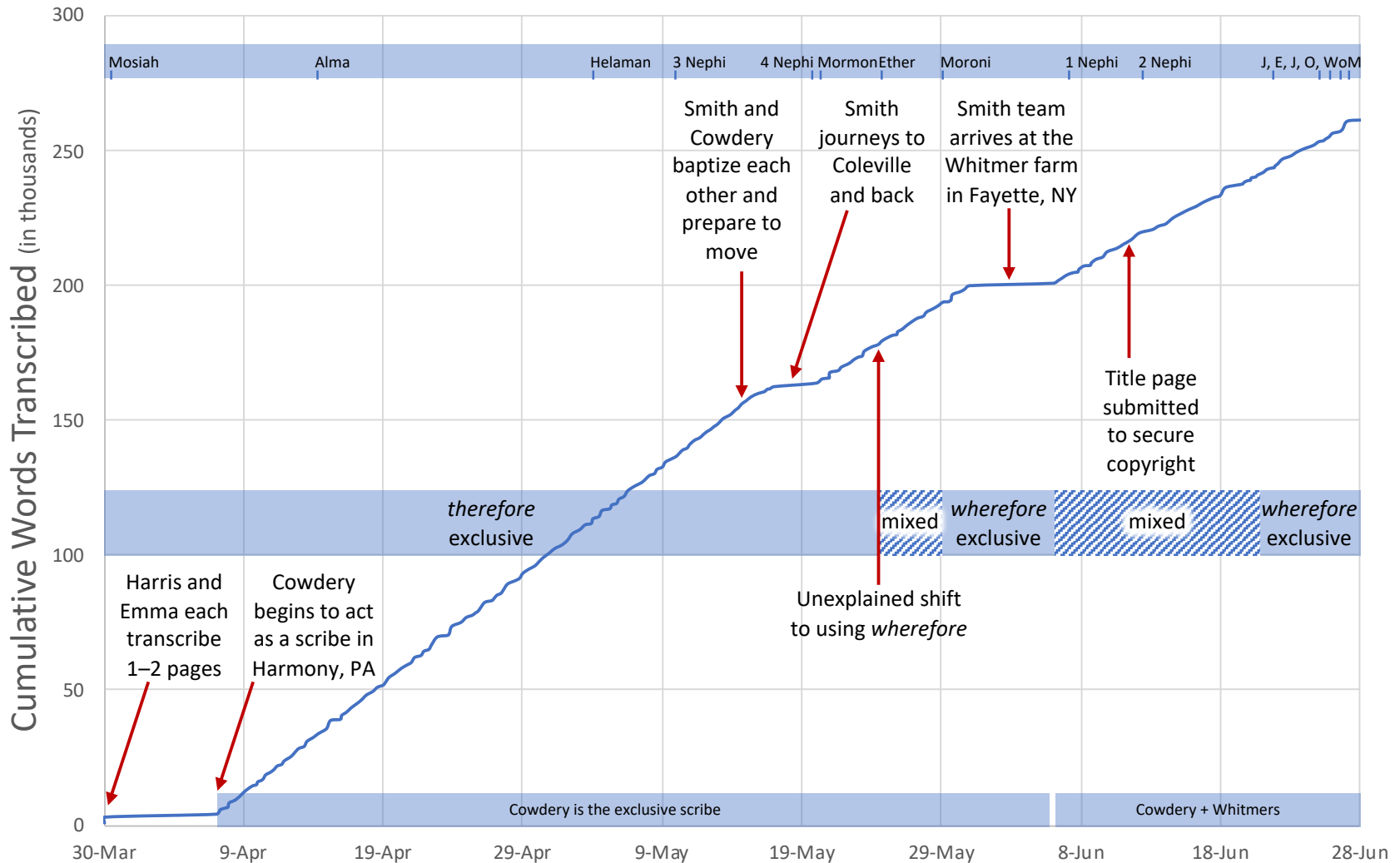


Figure 42. The timeline associated with the Smith-Cowdery dictation (the production of the C text in 1829).

a)



b)

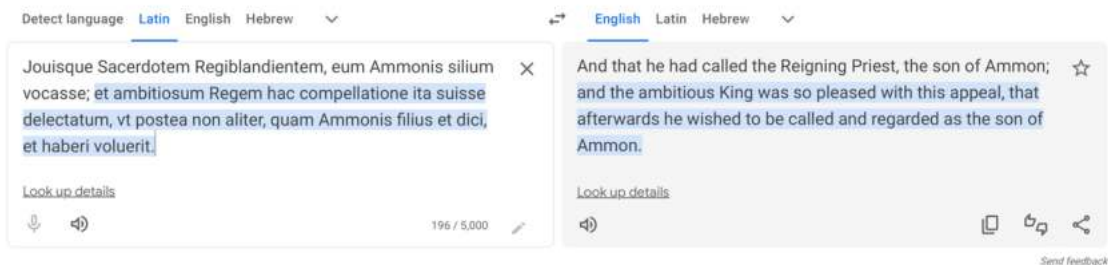


Figure 43. From *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, Tomus I. a) A man (or statue of a man) without arms standing in a field next to a ram (page 205), and b) the translation into English of a snippet of text coming immediately before the image (on the prior page).

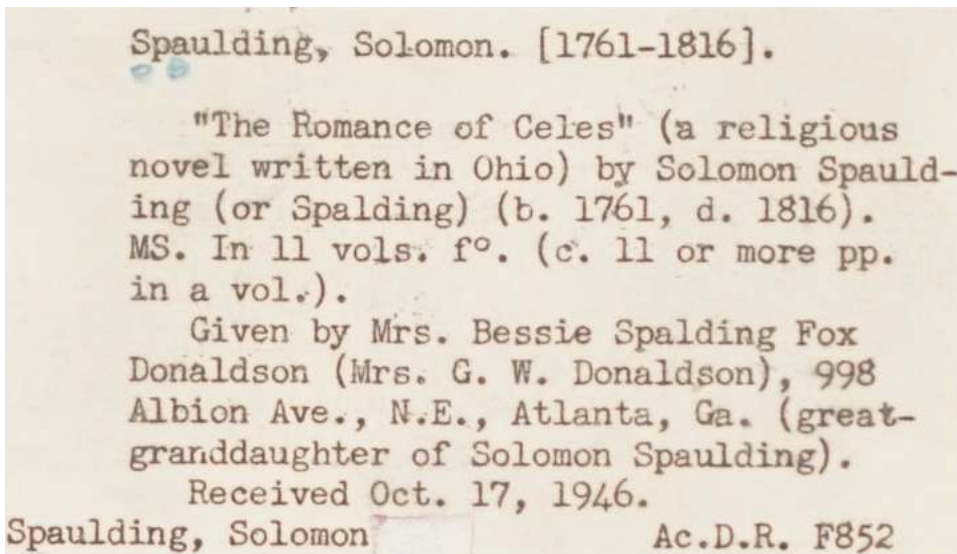


Figure 44. Card catalog entry for *The Romance of Celes* in the Library of Congress.

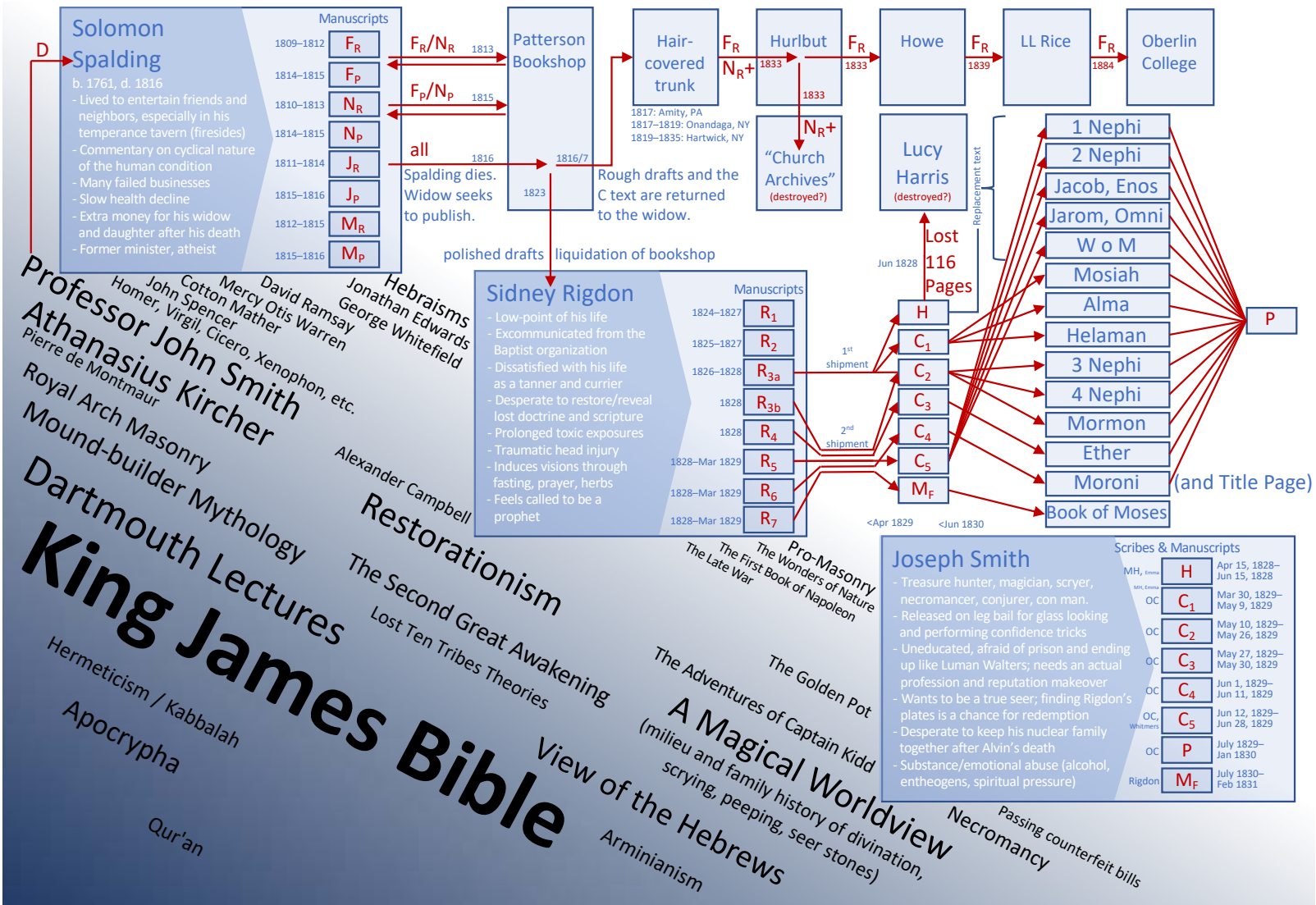


Figure 45. Sources and influences in the construction of The Book of Mormon.



Figure 46. One of the lamens that the Smith family used in conjunction with talismans to confer protection, fortune, and luck.

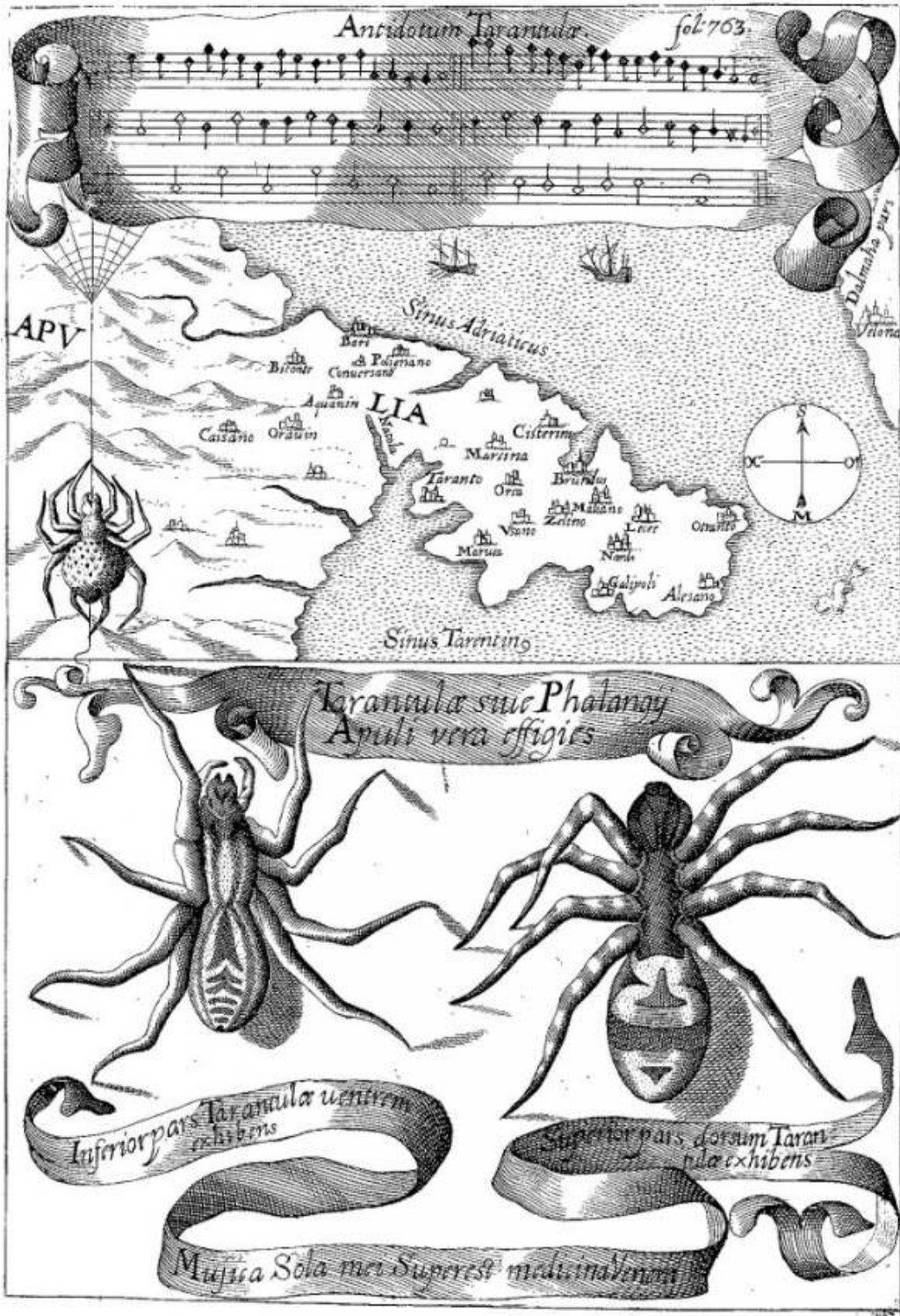


Figure 47. Long before the Christian era, the dance of the tarantella was thought to cure tarantula bites. Kircher, however, was the first to invoke spiritual magnetism in the mechanism.

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The first Mormon, Pierre de Montmaur (from *Histoire de Pierre de Montmaur*).

S C s t s J T d f P G g m
 C C g u C A T H E R I N E
 c j B C f k D E p s S A F m c
 J O a o J j J j J j
 c k A G M d b E O m d s S N B
 t f C H R I S T E N S E e n j M P L
 R F M b r J L b b
 T K a k E e C U s u L j B a d
 j h C T m t M f K n O m n T N
 j p C P I P A R F I r I
 C G s g A s l s b L + 5
 g b K B t I G O
 S J G s w C S M K a m V e A
 M A R G A R E T d g b

The Book of Thoth (Acknowledgments)