

Copper Scroll

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The **Copper Scroll** (3Q15) is one of the Dead Sea Scrolls found in Cave 3 near Khirbet Qumran, but differs significantly from the others. Whereas the other scrolls are written on parchment or papyrus, this scroll is written on metal: copper mixed with about 1 percent tin. Unlike the others, it is not a literary work, but a list of locations at which various items of gold and silver are buried or hidden. It differs from the other scrolls in its Hebrew (closer to the language of the Mishnah than to the literary Hebrew of the other scrolls, though 4QMMT shares some language characteristics), its orthography, palaeography (forms of letters) and date (c. 50–100 AD, possibly overlapping the latest of the other Qumran manuscripts).^[1]



Parts of Copper Scroll.

Since 2013 the Copper Scroll is on display at the newly opened Jordan Museum in Amman^[2] after being moved from its previous home, the Jordan Archaeological Museum.

A new facsimile (<http://www.youblisher.com/p/786166-The-Copper-Scroll/>) is in production by Facsimile Editions of London^[1] (<http://www.facsimile-editions.com/en/ds>)

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History

While most of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found by Bedouins, the Copper Scroll was discovered by an archaeologist.^[3] The scroll, on two rolls of copper, was found on March 14, 1952^[4] at the back of Cave 3 at Qumran. It was the last of 15 scrolls discovered in the cave, and is thus referred to as 3Q15.^[5] The corroded metal could not be unrolled by conventional means, and John Marco Allegro arranged for Professor H. Wright Baker, of the College of Technology at Manchester, England, to cut the sheets into 23 strips in 1955 and 1956.^[6] It then became clear that the rolls were part of the same document. Allegro, who had supervised the opening of the scroll, transcribed its contents immediately. The original editor Józef Milik first believed that the scroll was a product of the Essene. However he noted that it was likely not an official work of the Essenes. At first Milik believed that the scroll was not an actual historical account; he believed it was that of folklore. Later however, Milik's view took a turn. Since there was no indication that the scroll was a product of the Essenes from the Qumran community, he changed his identification of the scroll. He now believes that the scroll was separate from the community, although it was found at Qumran in Cave 3, it was found further back in the cave, away from the other scrolls. As a result he suggested the Copper Scroll was a separate deposit, separated by a "lapse in time."^[7] Although the text was assigned to Józef Milik, the Jordanian Director of Antiquities approached Allegro in 1957 to publish the text. After a second approach by a new director of Jordanian Antiquities,^[8] Allegro, who had waited for signs of Milik of moving to publish, took up the second request and published an edition with translation and hand-drawn transcriptions from the original copper segments in 1960. Milik published his official edition in 1962, also with hand-drawn transcriptions, though the accompanying black-and-white photographs were "virtually illegible".^[9] The scroll was re-photographed in 1988 with greater precision.^[10] From 1994 to 1996 extensive conservation efforts by Electricité de France (EDF) included evaluation of corrosion, photography, x-rays, cleaning, making a facsimile and a drawing of the letters. Emile Puech's edition had the benefit of these results.^[11]

Dating

Scholarly estimates of the probable date range of The Copper Scroll vary. F.M. Cross proposed the period of 25-75 CE on paleographical grounds, while W.F. Albright suggested 70-135 CE^[12] and Manfred Lehmann put forward a similar date range, arguing that the treasure was principally the money accumulated between the First Jewish War and the Bar Kochba War, while the temple lay in ruins. P. Kyle McCarter Jr., Albert M. Wolters, David Wilmot and Judah Lefkovits all agree that the scroll originated around 70 CE.^[13] Whereas, Emile Puech argued that the deposit of the Copper Scroll behind 40 jars could not have been placed after the jars, so the scroll "predates 68 CE."^[14] Józef Milik proposed that the scroll was written around 100 CE, nearly a "generation after the destruction of Jerusalem."^[15] If Milik's dating of the scroll is correct, it would mean that the scroll did not come from the Qumran community because his dating puts the scroll "well after the Qumran settlement was destroyed."^[16]

Language and writing style

The style of writing is unusual, different from the other scrolls. It is written in a style similar to Mishnaic Hebrew. While Hebrew is a well known language, the majority of ancient Hebrew text in which the language is studied is generally biblical in nature, which of course the Copper Scroll is not. As a result, "most of the vocabulary is simply not found in the Bible or anything else we have from ancient times."^[17] There is an unusual orthography, and the script has the features which would result from someone writing

on the copper with a hammer and chisels. There is also the anomaly that seven of the location names are followed by a group of two or three Greek letters. The Greek characters were transliterated into Hebrew by Yochanan Ezra (Mordechai) de'Hurst and published on scribd web site (Appendix F):^[18] which relates to the Festival of Sukkot and the necessity of Praise for the reconstruction of the Temple. de'Hurst challenges the rabbinical (universal) position that the Messiah must be a descendant of King David and posits that the Moshiach is King David resurrected from the dead, when the Jewish nation as one, on the Festival of Sukkot, Praise G-D instituting the last statute of David, while simultaneously enthroning G-D and David. A literal transliteration of the Greek characters reads: "Ken, Chag, Hen, Thaah, Day, Taph, Sook." ("Yes, Their Festival, Rooms/Booths, Enough Timbrels/Tambourines, Anointing.") Also, the "clauses" within the scroll mark intriguing parallels to that of Greek inventories, from the Greek temple of Apollo.^[19] This similarity to the Greek inventories, would suggest that scroll is in fact an authentic "temple inventory."^[20]

Some scholars believe that the difficulty in deciphering the text is perhaps due to it having been copied from another original document by an illiterate scribe who did not speak the language in which the scroll was written, or at least was not well familiar. As Milik puts it, the scribe "uses the forms and ligature of the cursive script along with formal letters, and often confuses graphically several letters of the formal hand."^[21] As a result, it has made translation and understanding of the text difficult.

Contents

The text is an inventory of 64 locations; 63 of which are treasures of gold and silver, which have been estimated in the tons. Tithing vessels are also listed among the entries, along with other vessels, and three locations featured scrolls. One entry apparently mentions *priestly* vestments. The final listing points to a duplicate document with additional details. That other document has not been found.

The following English translation of the opening lines of the first column of the Copper Scroll shows the basic structure of each of the entries in the scroll. The structure is 1) general location, 2) specific location, often with distance to dig, and 3) what to find.

1:1 In the ruin that is in the valley of Acor, under
 1:2 the steps, with the entrance at the East,
 1:3 a distance of forty cubits: a strongbox of silver and its vessels
 1:4 with a weight of seventeen talents. K^εN^[22]

(The three letters at the end are Greek.)

There is a minority view that the Cave of Letters might have contained one of the listed treasures,^[23] and, if so, artifacts from this location may have been recovered. Although the scroll was made of alloyed copper in order to last, the locations are written as if the reader would have an intimate knowledge of obscure references. For example, consider column two, verses 1–3, "In the salt pit that is under the steps: forty-one talents of silver. In the cave of the old washer's chamber, on the third terrace: sixty-five ingots of gold."^[24] As noted above, the listed treasure has been estimated in the tons. There are those who understand the text to be enumerating the vast treasure that was 'stashed,' where the Romans could not find it. Others still

suggest that the listed treasure is that which Bar Kochba hid during the Second Revolt.^[25] Although it is difficult to estimate the exact amount, "it was estimated in 1960 that the total would top \$1,000,000 U.S."^[26]

Claims

The treasure of the scroll has been assumed to be treasure of the Jewish Temple, presumably the Second Temple, among other options.

The theories of the origin of the treasure were broken down by Theodor H. Gaster:^[27]

- First, the treasure could be that of the Qumran community. The difficulty here is that the community is assumed to be an ascetic brotherhood, with which vast treasures are difficult to reconcile. (Yet community, as opposed to individual wealth, for a future hoped-for temple is possible. Such is proposed by, among others, Andre Dupont-Sommer, Stephen Goranson, and Emile Puech.)
- Second, the treasure could be that of the Second Temple. However, Gaster cites Josephus as stating that the main treasure of the Temple was still in the building when it fell to the Romans, and also that other Qumranic texts appear to be too critical of the priesthood of the Temple for their authors to have been close enough to take away their treasures for safekeeping. (The Arch of Titus shows some temple items taken to Rome. But several scholars expressed this view.)
- Third, the treasure could be that of the First Temple, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, in 586 BC. This would not seem to fit with the character of the other scrolls, unless perhaps the scroll was left in a cave during the Babylonian Exile, possibly with a small community of caretakers who were precursors of the Dead Sea Scrolls community. (The scroll was written too late for this proposal.)
- Fourth, Gaster's own favourite theory is that the treasure is a hoax.

There are other options besides those listed by Gaster (see Wolters in Bibliography p. 15-17 for a more up-to-date list). For instance Manfred Lehmann considered it Temple contributions collected after 70 AD.

Scholars are divided as to what the actual contents are. However, metals, such as copper and bronze were a common outlet with which archival record were kept. Along with this, "formal characteristics" establish a "line of evidence" that suggest this scroll is an authentic "administrative document of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem."^[28] As a result, this evidence has led a number of people to believe that the treasure really does exist. One such person is John Allegro, who in 1962 led an expedition. By following some of the places listed in the scroll, the team excavated some potential burial places for the treasure. However, the treasure hunters turned up empty handed.^[29]

Thus, a treasure has yet to be found. Even if none of the treasures comes to light, 3Q15, as a new, long ancient Hebrew text has significance. For example, as comparative Semitic languages scholar Jonas C. Greenfield noted, it has great significance for lexicography.^[30]

In 1996 Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas published 'The Hiram Key' in which they claimed that the Knights Templar had excavated beneath the ruins of the Temple mount between 1118 and 1128. They had lived a life of polity over those years but then they became fabulously wealthy and were allowed to form their own order. Knight and Lomas have suggested that this sudden wealth was due to their recovery of the treasures described in the Copper Scroll. British army excavations under the temple in the 19th century found evidence of previous excavations with some Templar relics. Robert Eisenman, in his 1997 book "James the Brother of Jesus" also argues that the Copper Scroll is an authentic treasure map created by the Essene community, and places its authorship around the time of the First Revolt. He later maintains that a duplicate copy of the scroll may have been discovered by the Knights Templar during the First Crusade, who then dug up all the treasure and used it to fund their order.

Jim Barfield, a retired fireman from Oklahoma, claims to have deciphered the scroll as a Temple treasure map. His trips to Israel to meet with some officials of the State of Israel, archeologists, and religious leaders have garnered some support, but falls short of what he needs to continue excavations.^[31]

It is more than plausible that the Romans discovered the treasure. Perhaps when the temple of Herod was destroyed the Romans went looking for any treasure and riches the temple may have had in its possession.^[32]

The Romans might easily have acquired some or all of the treasure listed in the Copper Scroll by interrogating and torturing captives, which was normal practice. According to Josephus the Romans had an active policy regarding the retrieval of hidden treasure.^[33] And like the story above, their means of discovering treasure locations almost always rest in interrogation and torture.

Media

In 1958, novelist Nathaniel Norsen Weinreb published *The Copper Scrolls*, the tale of a scribe named Kandane who is hired by a priest from Qumran to inscribe a list of sacred treasures. Weinreb wrote his novel before he or the general public learned that the so-called 'scrolls' of copper, were in reality, two separated sections of what was originally a single scroll about eight feet in length.

A Long Way to Shiloh (known in the USA as *The Menorah Men* so as not to be thought a Civil War novel) is a thriller by Lionel Davidson, published in 1966, whose plot follows the finding and contents of a similar treasure scroll.

The denouement of Edwin Black's *Format C*: included using the Copper Scroll to find the Silver Scroll, giving the protagonists the information they needed to find and defeat the main threat of the book.

The Copper Scroll is the subject of a political thriller, *The Copper Scroll*, by Joel C. Rosenberg, published in 2006. This book implements its author's theory that the treasures listed in the Copper Scroll (and the Ark of the Covenant) will be found in the End Times to refurnish the Third Temple.

It also features in Sean Young's novel, *Violent Sands* (<http://www.breakneckbooks.com/sands.html>). In this historical novel, Barabbas is the sworn protector of the Copper Scroll and the treasure it points to. He is under orders to protect this document at all costs.

The scroll—and a search for its treasures—was featured in a 2007 episode of The History Channel series *Digging For The Truth*. The program gives a basic knowledge of the research of the Copper Scroll and all the major theories of its interpretation.

A reinterpretation of the location and quantity of the treasures has been written about by metallurgist Robert Feather, where he suggests the number system and units of measurement indicated are Egyptian. He links the scroll with the city Amarna and the Pharaoh Akhenaten.^[34]

See also

- Kohlit

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External links

- Hebrew text of Copper Scroll with English and French translation (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/36002392/Qumran-Copper-Scroll>)
- English text of Copper Scroll with explanatory footnotes (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~hummm/Resources/StudTxts/3Q15.html>)
- Hebrew text of Copper Scroll with English translation (work in progress) (<http://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm/copertx2.html>)



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