

Copper Scroll Studies

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An International Symposium on the Copper Scroll was held at Manchester University's Institute of Science and Technology in 1996. The results became a collection containing 22 papers of which most were presented at this symposium. The principle speakers were Israel Knohl, Émile Puech and Al Wolters. Various issues concerning this scroll were addressed. The editors divided the publication into three sections: 1. Opening, restoring and reading the Copper Scroll; 2. Archaeological and Linguistic Studies and 3. Interpreting the Copper Scroll.

This scroll is the only Copper Scroll in the whole corpus of Dead Sea Scroll texts/fragments. Naturally it would have deteriorated during the past 40 years after it was worked on in Manchester subsequent to its unearthing. The opening paper deals with this issue of (re)restoration in a highly technical scientific manner. Fortunately this process was carried out with great care guided by the "principles of reversibility and of minimal intervention" (p. 23). This approach will certainly have a positive impact upon the future conservation of the scroll.

A figure who played a major role in the initial phases of the scrolls research is John Allegro from Manchester – he, *inter alia*, in 1960 published a transcription and translation of this scroll. Allegro became a controversial figure in the scholarly community. Amongst other things he claimed a relationship between the teacher of righteousness and Jesus based upon his interpretation of the Nahum commentary. He also had disputes with a number of colleagues and institutions. In the second paper *Philip Davies* provides additional information of this enigmatic figure discussing letters by and to Allegro provided by his wife. Light is shed on a number of issues concerning Allegro's views and reactions. He believed that the treasures mentioned in the copper scroll were removed from the temple in Jerusalem and actually dumped in the Judaeian desert and he actually organised search parties in order to discover them. This view is apparently followed by a number of scholars (p. 28). Davies offers a fresh and objective perspective on the role played by Allegro without villifying him.

Another prominent figure in the study of the copper scroll is Henry Wright Baker – he was the first person to unroll the scroll. The story of this event including a short reference to Baker's life achievements are discussed by Johnson. After the scroll was discovered on 14 March 1952 it was taken to the Palestine Archaeological Museum where it lay for months. Because of the intervention of Allegro the scrolls were taken to Manchester in 1955 and cut into strips by Baker using a dentist drill and a small circular saw. These strips were later used as basis for publication.

The potential of photographic and computer imaging technology for the study of the copper scroll is the title of a joint paper by *Lundberg and Zuckerman*. It is astonishing how advanced technology can contribute towards the study of ancient artefacts. Zuckerman has been experimenting for many years with modern technology and has developed photographs, new and digital, that are of a better quality than the originals simply because with computer imaging high resolution scans can be made of original texts. This has been done of the Allegro collection and the article demonstrates how computer programmes such as Adobe Photoshop “can turn any trained epigrapher into a superior graphic artist” (p. 53). It is immediately evident what the advantages of these technological developments are. Unclear letters can be enhanced and in the final analysis quick access to scholars can be arranged.

The first analyses based on the new technology mentioned above, is the article by *Puech*: “A new examination of the Copper Scroll”. The author bases his interpretations on the x-ray images by the Electricité de France for scientific restoration and conservation, as well as on photographs of the flattened replica and thirdly a re-examination of the original (p. 62). Puech made a rigid analysis of the copper scroll and distinguishes between the original decipherment and improved readings. He also deals with the amount of the deposits (p. 79ff.). After providing an estimate of the value of the references he refers to Milik’s view that this treasury was legendary (p. 81). Puech seems to differ since he is convinced that a solution to the enigma of this scroll can be found in the topography mentioned in the text. From his decipherment he concludes that all locations should be located to Palestine. This leads him to conclude that the deposits mentioned in the scroll were indeed Essene (p. 88). He offers a plausible interpretation of the deposits. He argues that the copper scroll actually presents a list of Essene treasures hidden on Essene properties before the arrival of the Roman legions (p. 89). These treasures could have been brought from the temple to the Dead Sea when the teacher and his admirers finally left Jerusalem.

In a clearly structured article *Eshel* deals with aqueducts mentioned in the copper scroll. This contribution firstly discusses four aqueducts from the area surrounding Qumran and then analyses parts in the scroll referring to aqueducts. The author comes to the conclusion that the following aqueducts are mentioned in the scroll; Wadi Qumran, Hyrcani and two built along Wadi el-Qelt.

Elwolde restricted himself to lexicographical issues in 3Q15 and more specifically the range of the alphabet from *aleph* to *tet*. His contention is to refine the definition of the Hebrew of the copper scroll as “Mishnaic Hebrew (KH)”. He demonstrates some linguistic relationship between Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), for example Ezekiel 4:6, as well as with later biblical books such as the Song of Songs, Qoheleth and Esther. His conclusion is that the language of the copper scroll holds an intermediate position between LBH and MH (p. 112). The second section of the paper is devoted to readings in the copper scroll that entails reactions against Al Wolters who has indeed done a lot of research on this scroll.

Armin Lange comes up with a new interpretation of the noun *dema`* in the copper scroll where it is used 14 times. Making use of available sources (inter alia TLG CD-ROM) including the replica produced by EDF (p. 129) in order to distinguish between letters, he comes to the conclusion that this noun has nothing to do with “tithe”, or “priestly tribute”, but rather should be seen as “valuables” or “treasure” (p. 137).

The copper scroll treasures keep scholars intrigued, as can be gathered from the contribution by *Lefkovits*. He is clearly an adherent of the view that this scroll is indeed to be taken literally (“it is unrealistic to assume that compilers of a secret document would deliberately exaggerate its hidden treasure” (p. 141). In order to prove his point he argues

that the consensus concerning the abbreviation KK for KKRYN (talents) is incorrect, since it was amended by later scribes. In his view it is rather an abbreviation for KSF KRSYN (silver karsh) which is a Persian weight equalling 10 shekels. This interpretation has the implication that the treasure mentioned in the copper scroll is less than a third of the estimated amount of 200 tons of gold, making it more credible.

John Lübbe addresses language issues in the Copper Scroll. In the process he discusses prominent endeavours to typefy the language of the scroll, inter alia, that of Milik, Golb, Wolters and Muchowski. The latter he finds most useful. However, he is also critical of Muchowski for he thinks that too much is deduced from too little evidence. Hence he argues that a more sophisticated model of language is needed in order to address the issue at stake.

Artifacts also drew the attention of scholars like *Stephen Pfann* who concentrated on scroll jars. In a technical contribution he makes an analysis of various jars from Khirbet Qumran and other prominent sites. As an answer to the question whether the unique jars at Qumran were indeed scroll jars or tithe jars, he comes to the conclusion that they were actually used as both even though they could initially have been intended to be used as tithe jars (p. 178).

Schiffman approaches the issue of the language of the copper scroll from a different perspective – that of the architectural vocabulary of the copper and temple scrolls respectively. He firstly compares terms that appear in both writings, thereafter he concentrates on terms that occur exclusively in the copper scroll. Finally the opposite situation is researched.

In the final analysis Schiffman draws significant conclusions. The first obvious one is that numerous architectural terms from the Second Temple period found their way into the two scrolls under discussion. A somewhat speculative conclusion obtains to those cases where terms “might have appeared in the Temple Scroll and does not” (p. 195). From the whole analysis he argues that the Temple Scroll is an older document and that the Copper Scroll was composed much later.

Bar-Ilan also deals with the treasures mentioned in the Copper Scroll, but from a different perspective, a literary analysis. Hence his main argument is a literary one; the genre of the scroll is that of a list. He deems the scroll “a collection of lists of hidden inventory, lists written by the man (men) responsible for a ‘salvage campaign’ - the hiding of the treasures of the Temple for their preservation in case the Jerusalem Temple should fall to the enemy” (p. 209). He also remains sceptical of basing arguments on the basis of texts’ proximity to other (Qumran) texts.

Fidler returns to the geographical references in the Copper Scroll, but approaches it from a symbolic (eschatological) perspective combined with a literary one (Inclusio and Symbolic Geography). The literary perspective, on the one hand, is gained from the opening and closing sections that can be seen as an inclusio. The symbolic, on the other hand, can be interpreted as a type of peshet (p. 212), undermining a literal understanding of the treasures.

Goranson connects with his previous article in some further reflections on the Copper Scroll. He discusses three issues; firstly the term Kohlit which appears also in b. Qib 66a and which he identifies to an area east of the Jordan. Secondly, the so-called Qumran Hoards. In this regard he deems the funds described in the Copper Scroll as objects *for* and not *from* the Jerusalem temple (p. 231). Finally he speculates about the appearance of Greek letters in this scroll.

Israel Knohl finds new light in the Copper Scroll and 4QMMT. As far as the treasures in the Copper scroll are concerned he concludes that they are to be seen as real treasures

and that they were the possessions either of an extremely rich priestly family, or of the temple. Certain passages from 4QMMT is reinterpreted by Knohl as if sacrifices to the Roman emperor are rejected (this is something different from what Josephus refers to namely offerings on behalf of the emperor). He also reinterprets a passage from 4Q513 similarly as “they burnt offerings to the gentiles” (p. 244). This harlotrous act he then brings into connection with the imperial cult of Augustus according to which the emperor and the goddess Roma should be worshipped. According to him 4Q513 is evidence of a polemic against priests that execute such offerings. These reconstructions give him some grounds for dating 4QMMT to around the year 23 BCE (p. 254). He thinks the letter was sent to Simon, the son of Boethus, the new high priest in Jerusalem, which led to the formation of an alliance between the rich priests and the ascetic family. Finally he argues that the treasures mentioned in the Copper Scroll were taken from the temple and given to the Qumranides to hide.

Muchowski offers some thoughts on the origin of 3Q15. He firstly discusses the view that the scroll is a legend, concentraing on Milik’s interpretations. Then he deals with views according to which it is authentic. He discusses older views such as that by Kuhn, Dupont-Sommer, Allegro, etc, as well as more recent views (Golb and Pixner). Muchowski is convinced by the position that the treasures are authentic. He finally discusses a number of views relating the the language of the copper scroll, the dating and toponyms.

The collection also includes a number of popular contributions. *Brenda Segal* discusses some modern religious developments in the form of books based upon Qumran. She mentions more specficially the Copper Scroll in this regard. *Lika Tov* connects her art with paleographical observations and creatively suggests that 25 scribes were actually responsible for the Copper Scroll. She bases her deductions on the handwriting and the different shapes and sizes of letters.

Barbara Thiering, reknowned for her rather creative theories on the scrolls, again has a provocative title, referring to Herod’s bank account. The Temple Scroll is interpreted by her as a plan of the temple that was rebuilt by Herod, offered to him by the Qumranides (p. 278). The Copper Scroll is a reference of the treasures that they were willing to store at Qumran that would be the result of a grand plan to obtain taxes payed in the diaspora for the rebuilding. She does agree that this is “merely a series of conjectures” (p. 279).

Michael Wise addressed the research of DJ Wilmot on the Copper Scroll who died untimely at the age of 43 years. Wilmot’s dissertation that was not completed went under the title “The Copper Scroll: An economic document of the first century Palestine”. Wise discusses the following list of ideas from the dissertation:

1. The Copper Scroll was engraved by four scribes.
2. The economic terminology of the scroll uses language consonant with conventions known from late Phoenician, Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin of the Greco-Roman period.
3. The terminology of the scroll indicates that its scribes were associated with the treasures of the Jerusalem temple.
4. The genre of the Copper Scroll is that of a summarising inventory list.

The final contribution is by *Wolters* on palaeography and literary structures as guides to reading the Copper Scroll. Wolters intends to solve a burning problem in the study of this scroll namely that many readings as they appear in the prepared publications are simply ambivalent. He firstly addresses the issue of palaeography, correcting the work by F-M Cross and then deals with the relevance of literary structure. Wolters found seven clearly distinguishable types of material typefied as: Place; specification; command; distance;

treasure; comments and Greek. The examples discussed by Wolters are convincing in that he demonstrates that the context within the literary structure is determinative for deciding whether a letter should, for example, be taken as a *kaph*, or a *beth* (p. 323), etc.

This collection puts at the disposal of researchers the latest research of one of the enigmatic scrolls from Qumran. The results include creative new theories as well as the substantiation of older ones. The editors should be thanked for this meticulously and neatly prepared work.