

Copper Scroll Studies
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FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE COPPER SCROLL

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Introduction

In my article, 'Sectarianism, Geography, and the Copper Scroll', after conceding that much about this text remained enigmatic to me, I asserted that the Copper Scroll belonged to the Essenes, that it did not list items from the Jerusalem temple, and that some of its items were probably located east of the Jordan River.¹ Now I can offer a few further supporting observations, as well as a new guess concerning the function of the Copper Scroll's Greek letters.

To my knowledge it is still the case that no evidence has been presented that contradicts the most plausible scenario, namely that the Copper Scroll and the Cave 3 texts on leather (which include sectarian texts) were deposited by members of the same group. The fact that the Copper Scroll and various scroll jars were within clear sight of one another makes most implausible the hypothesis that the Copper Scroll might have been deposited after the leather scrolls and by someone unrelated to the deposit of the leather scrolls; as has often been observed, such a hypothesis ignores the fact that this cave would not have appeared to such a depositor as a safe hiding place.²

1. S. Goranson, 'Sectarianism, Geography, and the Copper Scroll', *JIS* (1992), pp. 282-87.

2. In this respect I agree, among others, with F.M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), n. 29 on pp. 22-25; B. Pixner, 'Unravelling the Copper Scroll Code: A Study on the Topography of 3Q15', *RevQ* 11 (1983), pp. 323-65; and A. Wolters, 'History and the Copper Scroll', in M.O. Wise, N. Golb, J.J. Collins and D. Pardee (eds.), *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site* (Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 722; New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1994),

This is not the occasion for an extended defense of the view that the Qumran text collection is an Essene accumulation, but allow me to state that I find the identification persuasive, that I have defended it in previous and in forthcoming publications, and that I assume here that Qumran was one of the places where Essenes lived. This is also not the occasion for an extended defense of the proposal that Alexander Jannaeus was regarded by the Essenes as a wicked priest, and that Judah, who, according to *b. Qid.* 66a, asked Alexander to give up the priesthood, was regarded by Essenes as a teacher of righteousness.³

Kohlit and Sites East of the Jordan

This is, however, an occasion to continue consideration of the term *kohlit* (כחלית) which appears both in the Copper Scroll and in *b. Qid.* 66a. According to the latter, Alexander Jannaeus returned from conquering 60 towns in *kohlit*, which in this case is most plausibly identified as an area east of the Jordan River.

In my view, Pixner's article on the Copper Scroll made a relevant and useful contribution in calling special attention to this important term *kohlit*, even though I find his interpretation of it not persuasive. In addition to my previous reservations about his interpretation of the term as applying to three separate monastic centers (rather than to one district),

pp. 285-98. In note 11 of my previous article (cited above) I mistakenly wrote that the report by J. Patrick on his Cave 3 excavation was forthcoming, when, in fact, it was already in print in *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 6 (1988), pp. 66-70. However, his new information—concerning, for instance, the date of one collapse from the cave's roof—substantially matches what I had heard from him orally and does not change my view that the Copper Scroll depositor must have been comfortable leaving that text along with other texts only because all the texts belonged to his own group.

3. Provisionally, see, e.g., Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.34-40; I. Friedlaender, 'The Rupture between Alexander Jannaeus and the Pharisees', *JQR* NS 4 (1913-14), pp. 443-48; M.J. Geller, 'Alexander Jannaeus and the Pharisees', *JIS* 30 (1979), pp. 202-11; and E. Main, 'Les Sadducéens vis par Flavien Josephé', *RB* 97 (1990), pp. 161-206; E. Main, 'For King Jonathan or Against Him? The Use of the Bible in 4Q448', in M.E. Stone and E.G. Chazon (eds.), *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the First International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 12-14 May, 1996* (STDJ, 28; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), pp. 113-35. See now S. Goranson, 'Others and Intra-Jewish Polemic as Reflected in the Qumran Texts', in P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, II (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 534-51.

Pixner's interpretation is made unlikely by his translation of 3Q15 1.9 ('On the hill of *Kohlii*...') because this appears to imply that a hill or tell appears within such a *kohlii*. Such is not plausible, as it would require either an unusually small tell or an unusually large monastery. K. Beyer translates כְּהַלִּי as 'schwarzes Objekt', which seems unlikely.⁴ V. Jones has also proposed a meaning based on the potential color association, as a reference to a 'blue aura'.⁵ Rather, a district remains the most probable meaning.

J. Lefkowitz has helpfully indicated a possible, restored fifth instance of the term כְּהַלִּי in 4.1.⁶ Lefkowitz provides a useful discussion of the term, but does not determine a definite meaning or location, but he writes that it may be identical with the wilderness of כְּהַלִּי mentioned in *b. Qid.* 66a; Lefkowitz, following Rashi, interprets this as being within the wilderness of Judah.⁷ But if this *baraita* has a historical basis, the military campaign of Alexander Jannaeus was more probably east of the Jordan River.

Pixner proposed that the mention of *nahal hagadol* in 3Q15 10.3-4 could well refer to the Yarmuk River. Lefkowitz provides massive and quite helpful commentary, but when it came to *nahal hagadol*, he wrote (p. 728), 'It is a mystery to which river or wadi the Great River refers', not noting till later the suggestion that it may be the Yarmuk River.⁸

Several of Pixner's other proposed locations east of the Jordan are not persuasive, but the idea is worth pursuing. There is no reason *a priori* to neglect other apparently weighty trans-Jordanian possible readings. For example, not only J.T. Milik, but also F.M. Cross read Kefar Nebo at 9.11

4. K. Beyer, *Die aramäische Texte vom Toten Meer. Ergänzungsband* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), pp. 224-33.

5. See D.C. Browning Jr., 'The Strange Search for the Ashes of the Red Heifer', *BA* 59 (1996), pp. 74-86, and Vendyl Jones, 'The Copper Scroll and the Excavations at Qumran', reprinted from his newsletter *The Researcher* (February 1996) on the web site, The Vendyl Jones Research Institutes (<http://www.vendyljones.org.il>).

6. J.K. Lefkowitz, *The Copper Scroll—3Q15: A New Reading. Translation and Commentary* (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1993), available from University Microfilms in two volumes. This seems a plausible reading, with the first letter and part of the second restored; the fourth letter could be a *tav* though it is understandable that *he* and *het* are also possible.

7. His main discussion is on pp. 183-87.

8. As an aside, it could be expected that, if a Syria-Israel peace treaty were negotiated, one of the many consequences would be to make excavations near the Yarmuk, including in northern Jordan, more practicable.

and considered the site, with a waterfall, appropriate.⁹ This suggestion of sites east of the Jordan is not intended to dismiss but to supplement the arguments, for example, that several sites (e.g. Sekakah) apparently are in and around Qumran.¹⁰

A conjecture that perhaps Essenes were named after a village east of the Jordan is attested, with variations, at least as early as 1604 by Nicolas Serarius.¹¹ The claim that Essenes were named after Ossid east of the Jordan was made by C. Salmasius in 1629.¹² If there is any connection between such place names—Essa or Ossid, spelled נִ'וֹס and נִ'וֹס—and the Essene group name, the place was more likely named after the group than vice versa. A. Neubauer reasonably concluded that the village of Essa, mentioned in rabbinic literature along with other sites having hot baths, was located east of the Lake of Tiberias.¹³ It would make sense for R. Meir to go there, as claimed in *Gen. R.* 36, a site with hot baths, east of the Tiberias Lake, to recite the book of Esther. Of course the lack of any extant copies of Esther at Qumran is well known. Callinhoë, east of the Jordan and near the Dead Sea, has also been suggested as an alternate to the reading that takes this as a reference to Asia Minor.¹⁴ And Essenes and/or Ossenes were said by Epiphanius to have survived post-70 CE in Perea, trans-Jordan.¹⁵

9. F.M. Cross, 'Reuben, First-Born of Jacob', *ZAW* 100, supplement (1988), pp. 46-65 (51-52).

10. As shown, e.g., by H. Eshel, 'A Note on Joshua 15.61-61 and the Identification of the City of Salt', *IEJ* 45 (1995), pp. 37-40.

11. N. Serarius, *Trihaerisium*, Book 3, ch. 1, is cited here from the anthology edited by J. Trilandius, *Trium scriptorum illustrum de tribus Iudeorum sectis syntagma* (Delft, 1703), p. 106.

12. Cited here from his *Plinianae exercitationes in Cuii Iulii Solini Polyhistoria* (Paris, 1629, repr., 1689), pp. 430-34, and see my 'Sectarianism, Geography, and the Copper Scroll', p. 287.

13. A. Neubauer, *La géographie du Talmud* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères), pp. 38, 273, 308-309.

14. G. Vermes, 'The Eymology of "Essenes"', *RevQ* 2 (1959-60), pp. 427-43 (443), suggested a third option: that R. Meir was neither in Asia nor in a town named Essa (or Ossa), but 'among the Essenes'. For the suggestion of Callinhoë, see N.I. Weinstein, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Essäer* (Vienna: Ch. D. Lippe, 1892), pp. 9-11. See also S. Wagner, *Die Essener in der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion* (BZAW, 79; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960), pp. 119-20 and M. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim*... (repr.; New York: Judaica Press, 1985), pp. 93, 1098.

15. *Panarion* 19.2.1 on Ossenes in Peraea; cf., e.g., 20.3.1 on Ossenes in the land beyond the Dead Sea; and heresy 53 on the Ossene-related Sampsaens in Peraea and

A burial complex on the outskirts of Abila included three ceramic inkwells, one of which was similar to those at Qumran, but more importantly, it also contained a cylindrical, 'scroll-type' jar.¹⁶ De Vaux noted this jar as the only parallel to the Qumran type known to him.¹⁷ This discovery is of interest additionally because it is located in the proposed 'land of Damascus' area. Unfortunately, apparently, records of that salvage dig were lost. Jodi Magness notes only one other parallel, from Jericho, and she rejects some other suggested comparanda.¹⁸ A photo by J. Trever of a display case in the Amman museum seems to include the tallest of the Abila inkwells.¹⁹ The case includes two jars; is one merely of Qumran provenance (i.e. is one the Abila jar?). Pottery, of course, as well as any distinctive burials or water installations that may be found in the area would be of interest. In any case it would appear to be worth publishing, if the object (or photos, drawings, descriptions, or measurements of it) does turn up.²⁰

Qumran Hoards

Jodi Magness's redating of the end of Qumran Period Ib to '9/8 BCE or some time thereafter' is persuasive.²¹ The hoard of Tyrian silver tetra-

Moabitis. I assume here that these 'Ossenes' are related to 'Essenes' (derived from מְעַבִּיטִים).

16. F.S. Ma'ayeh, *ADAJ* 4-5 (1960), p. 116 and pl. V.1. The plate shows three inkwells or inkpots but unfortunately does not show the jar.

17. R. de Vaux, *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: British Academy; Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 54-55 n. 1. See also 'Chronique archéologique', *RB* 67 (1960), p. 229.

18. J. Magness, 'The Community at Qumran in Light of its Pottery', in *Wise et al., Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 39-50 (41).

19. In S.A. Reed, 'Survey of the Dead Sea Scrolls Fragments and Photographs at the Rockefeller Museum', *BA* 54 (1991), pp. 44-51 (48).

20. For further information on the excavations at Qweilbah (= Quailba), near Abila, see now J.D. Wineiland, *Ancient Abila: An Archaeological History* (BAR International Series, 989; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2001), pp. 15-16.

21. 'The Chronology of the Settlement at Qumran in the Herodian Period', *DSD* 2 (1995), pp. 58-65, quote from p. 64. See also A. Kushnir-Stein, 'Another Look at Josephus' Evidence for the Date of Herod's Death', *Scripta Classica Israelica* 14 (1995), p. 73-86, for a possible refinement during that period; this argues that Herod died not before Passover 4 BCE but during winter 4-3 BCE, which would be relevant to the periods of Qumran if the events surrounding the death of Herod played a role in the destruction of Qumran at the end of Period Ib or in the resettlement afterward.

drachmas found at Qumran in locus 120 was evidently buried soon before the end of period Ib. When the same (Essene) group resettled the site shortly afterward, it is likely that the depositor, the Essene treasurer, had died. At any rate the coins (which are the type used for Temple dues) were not dug up throughout the next seven or so decades of Essene occupation of the site, suggesting that this hoard location was no longer known. Experiences such as this one could have encouraged the practice of record keeping, to prevent such further losses in the future. Saving funds apparently had a long history within the Essene movement.

The items listed in the Copper Scroll apparently include funds and objects *for* the (or a) Jerusalem temple; there is no evidence that any of these items were *from* the Jerusalem Temple. An assumption that, since Jewish temple items are mentioned, it necessarily relates to either the standing pre-70 Temple or to a Bar Kochba-intended one, seems unwarranted. Apparently the Essenes collected for a hoped-for, future, alternately organized Temple.²²

The Greek Letters

I wonder if the seven sets of Greek letters found at the ends of seven items relate to removals or withdrawals of deposits. All seven appear in the first four of the twelve columns; all in the first of three sheets of copper; and all ranging from the first to the fifteenth of the sixty items (using the numbering of Lefkowitz). If the text was not written at one sitting, the earlier items could represent the earliest deposits. Since only some of those earliest deposits are marked with Greek, this could represent removals of some of those deposits. The Greek might indicate abbreviated names of persons, as previously suggested, or times of removal; my suggestion concerns not so much the deciphering of the Greek letters individually as in seeking a plausible function for them overall, as applied to only seven items.

If this is the case, the Essenes decided to move some deposits to safer areas (either to a central treasury or to re-internments, whether in the same or in regrouped lots). For example, the silver chest or sedan chair mentioned in 1.3 (in one of the items marked with Greek) could be the

22. For an example of differing Essene legal positions regarding the temple, see J.M. Baumgarten, 'The First and Second Tithes in the Temple Scroll', in A. Kort and S. Morschauser (eds.), *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985), pp. 5-15.

same silver chest listed in 12.5, though with a differing amount deposited with it.

Another possibility is that some or all of these seven specially marked items may have been uncovered by others—either Romans or other non-Essenes. The Greek could be used as easily distinguished endnotes. It would be hard, after all, to erase an entry on copper, in order to cancel a listed deposit. Finally, I admit that these suggestions concerning the Greek letters are all highly speculative.