

Metal Plates and Other Interesting Stuff

Scholars have recently reported that metal plates were used by the Greeks to preserve important information. Museums in Korea, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Greece, Italy, Spain, France and England display artifacts containing ancient writing on metal. The use of writing on metal was not generally known to the world until just recently. Gunther Zuntz, in his two-volume series entitled "A Course in Classical and Post-Classical Greek Grammar from Original Texts" demonstrated how anciently advanced civilizations wrote their most important information on metal plates.

Dr. Cheesman in his book "Ancient Writing on Metal Plates" explores the many similarities in Old and New World writings; he traces the roots of languages spoken by Pre-Columbian Indians, and provides documented discoveries of engravings and other writings found in the Americas. He has compiled extensive evidence from modern research, which demonstrates that ancient cultures throughout the world commonly wrote and protected records on metal plates.

Phoenicia, 1800 B.C.

One of the earliest known surviving examples of writing on metal plates is the Semitic Syllabic texts written on bronze plates discovered at the city of Byblos on the Phoenician coast of the Mediterranean...modern day Israel... and dating to eighteen hundred years before the Christian era. Preserved on metal to stand the test of time, they are almost four thousand years old. The script is described as a syllabary style akin to a modified Egyptian hieroglyphic system. Scholars consider this the most important link known between Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Canaanite alphabet.

Greece, 600 B.C.

In the ancient Greek world of 600 BC, Orphism was a major religious movement. The earliest Orphic religious texts were written on bronze tablets. The message of the bronze plates was concerning the fate of the soul in the spirit world. The religious significance and divine source of the material apparently justified having it engraved on metal plates.

Walter Burkert, in his recent study of the cultural dependence of Greek civilization on the ancient Near East, refers to the transmission of the practice of writing on bronze plates from the Phoenicians to the Greeks. "The reference to bronze plates, from as a term among the Greeks for ancient sacral laws would point back to the seventh or sixth century B.C. as the period in which the terminology and the practice of writing on bronze plates was transmitted from the Phoenicians to the Greeks." At least two texts claim there existed similar bronze plates that contained the "ancient sacred laws" of the Hebrews, the close cultural cousins of the Phoenicians.

Persia, 500 B.C.

The King Darius Plates, one gold the other silver, date to more than 500 years before the Christian era and preserve the most important information of the kingdom. Darius was of the royal family of Cyrus. Cyrus was the King of Persia who conquered Babylonia and set the Jews free who were held in Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 597 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. Darius founded the line of emperors who ruled Persia until its conquest by Alexander the Great.

Excerpt from the Manuscript “Zarahemla,” by the Author

“Metal plates? I’ve never heard of such a thing. Metal would hardly hold up in these climates...all you’d ever find left of them would be a rust deposit,” Alex stated flatly.

Responding thoughtfully, Grant replied: “You’re right Alex, that would be true if the metal were iron or even steel. Copper or brass wouldn’t hold up much better in the tropical forests of Mesoamerica, but if it were some kind of gold alloy like electrum, a blend of gold and silver used by both the Aztecs and the Incas, it would stand the test of time. Electrum was used in the old world as money and coins from Turkey and surrounding areas, dating to 600 years before Christ are free of corrosion. Gold and silver alloys were also made into thin sheets for inscriptions to preserve important pronouncements. Several of these have been recently discovered. In fact, in the last twenty years or so, ancient metal plates have been found in diverse locations around the world inscribed with what the writers thought was information of great value to future generation.”

“Still I can hardly believe that thin sheets of metal of any kind would survive the climates of this region. Look at the cars down here for crying-out-loud, unless they are constantly cared for the doors will rust out in a couple of years,” Alex stated aggressively as she waved her hands in the air in frustration.

“You know Alex, gold is the only substance known to both ancient and modern man that does not rust or dissolve over time, silver comes close but gold is the all out winner. That characteristic alone is probably why most religions of the ancient world identified with gold. It has always been considered the eternal metal...as good today as it was the day it was refined. You see, it really doesn’t matter whether it was mined thousands of years ago or yesterday...gold is essentially indestructible.”

“I think you’ve said that before,” Alex grumbled. “Why do I suspect you have more than a passing background in gold?”

After a thoughtful pause, she continued: “What you say may be true, but gold is rare and was, and probably still is to a great extent, the final measure of wealth...so I suspect religions collected gold and silver because it conveyed the concepts of power and wealth rather than because of its beauty and durability.”

"I don't doubt that for one minute," Grant responded. "But as it relates to the discovery of ancient plates, some kind of gold alloy would have been just about the only portable substance available on which to preserve writings of great value. Even the ubiquitous steles of the Mayan empire, aside from their non-portability, were frequently defaced of characters by marauding kingdoms intent upon political overthrow. So...the bottom line is that if there are significant records preserved from really ancient times in these tropical regions they've got to be on gold, nothing except stone will stand the test of time."

Alex didn't respond immediately, she seemed to be taking it all in, so Grant continued. "Another interesting characteristic of inscriptions found on metal plates is that they seem to be carefully preserved inside stone boxes. These things have been turning up in Iraq, Syria, India, Greece, and even the U.S. in the last two dozen years."

"In the U.S.?" Alex exclaimed showing real surprise.

"Yes, a fellow name John Heinerman is an American collector of inscribed metal plates and stone boxes. Those in his collection are believed authentic and were all discovered in caves in the southwestern U.S."

"Now wait a minute Grant...Jill Furst translated the ancient Mixtec Codex Nuttall of Oaxaca, Mexico, I'm sure you've heard of it because it caused such a ruckus due to the correlation of the creator god Quetzlcoatl with Jesus Christ and the wacko theory that Christ appeared in the Americas. But, the point is that this codex predated Columbus and was written on a sort of papyrus equivalent, pages of bark strip paper, not entirely unlike that developed by the Egyptians. So...your argument that really important records need to be preserved on gold alloy doesn't hold water."

Deciding to leave her comment about Christ's having visited the Americas alone for the present, he responded: "Good point...surely most all ancient records were prepared and saved on inexpensive media; clay tablets in Sumer and Mesopotamia, papyrus in Egypt, brick and stone for monuments. But, it seems to me that other than stone and fired clay; virtually no other media has as much staying power. Clay tablets are breakable and stone records are too heavy to carry. Gold is the only substance that really works for this geographical area. And, as I recall, there are only four complete codices that have survived from the high cultures of the Americas. The rest were destroyed in the Spanish Conquest."

"What a tragedy," she muttered, "Ancient texts were burned and anyone caught trying to preserve them were subject to execution. Virtually everything was lost; it's simply amazing how thorough the destruction was."

He had hit a nerve. Alex was a Mesoamerican archeologist and this was a touchy subject. She was infuriated by the prejudice of men and their ignorance to the value of history.

Grant started to comment, stalled, and sat quietly for a minute then began again more softly. "Yes, well... as you know, early Spanish chroniclers, generally the Catholic clergy, wrote that every Mayan city had historical and religious books at one time. But, my point was simply that if really important information were to be preserved and if a gold alloy was available, it would allow for an essentially "eternal" media that was easy to store and portable. In Israel, where it is dry, there have been discoveries of all kinds of manuscripts over 2,000 years old. Even so their most important information was written on metal, the famous Copper Scroll from the Dead Sea discoveries immediately comes to mind. In Qumran where the Dead Sea scrolls were hidden, many were found sealed in large jars to protect them. But I think it's important that we recognize that in Israel they were not faced with the dampness of the climate that prevails in this part of the world." (End of excerpt)

Nag Hammadi, Egypt

On a December day in 1945, near the town of Nag Hammadi on the upper Nile valley, an Arab peasant digging in search of fertilizer on the east bluff discovered a large red urn. Smashing the jar open with his pick he discovered a thousand pages of ancient papyrus manuscripts bound into thirteen soft leather books. The texts were translations from Greek originals into Coptic, the Egyptian written language from 300 B.C. to 700 A.D that used Greek letters. The site of the discovery was across the river from where in 320 A.D. Saint Pachomius had founded the earliest Christian monastery in Egypt.

Less than a half-century later in 367 A.D., Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria issued a decree banning all scriptures not explicitly approved by the central Church authorities. Some of the local monks copied many such writings-- including the Gospels of Thomas, Philip, and Valentine. The entire library was carefully sealed in a large jar and hidden among the rocks, where it remained undetected for almost 1600 years. These papyri are now preserved in the library of the Coptic Museum at Old Cairo. Thirty years after their discovery they were to finally be translated into English as The Nag Hammadi Library, thirteen beautiful papyrus codices containing fifty-two sacred texts, they are now referred to as the "Gnostic Gospels."

The Dead Sea, Israel and Jordan

In the spring of 1947 shepherds searching for a stray goat in the Judean Desert along the northwestern end of the Dead Sea, came upon a long-untouched cave and found jars filled with ancient manuscripts. The Dead Sea lies 1,300 feet below sea level. The river Jordan empties into this bitter salt lake at the bottom of the deepest valley on earth, dropping abruptly through a rocky desert known as the wilderness of Judea. The Dead Sea is surrounded by a series of

descending cliffs and plateaus scarred by dry riverbeds called wadis, narrow gorges and gullies.

The story is oft told that a young Bedouin by the name of Mohamed Abdid threw a stone inside a crevice and heard the shattering of pottery, prompting him to explore the area further. Other variations tell of guns strapped to the belly of goats smuggled close to Jerusalem to be stashed in the limestone caves that pepper the cliffs along the wadi known as Qumran. The area is only 13 miles east of Jerusalem.

Whatever the real discovery story, by 1948 a Bedouin tribesman sold seven scrolls to a shoe-maker slash antiquities dealer named Kando who in turn sold four of the scrolls to Bishop Mar Athanasius Samuel of the Syrian Orthodox monastery of St Mark. Kando then managed to sell the other three scrolls to Professor Eleazar Sukenik of Hebrew University. Bishop Samuel took the four scrolls he had purchased to the American School of Oriental Research, now the Rockefeller Institute, from whence they made the debut to the world.

Initially there were scholars who viewed the scrolls as obvious fakes that must have been produced by antiquities dealers to heat up the trade, but eventually their disbelief that anything could have lasted 2,000 years and still be intact, gave way to empirical evidence to the contrary. For many of the self-possessed scholars of the time, the greatest insult to their supposed expertise was that an ignorant goatherd uncovered this incredible treasure. How could it be true they reasoned, that someone without their preeminent knowledge of such things had not been present to unearth and validate the documents? Scholastic reputations were made and lost based on the toss of a shepherd's rock.

When archeologists located cave number one, where the first seven scrolls were found, there was pottery, cloth, wood, and other manuscript fragments discovered at the site. These discoveries proved decisively that the scrolls were in fact authentically ancient. The world's most celebrated Middle Eastern archeologist at the time was William Foxwell Albright. Upon his receiving photos of the scroll of Isaiah recovered from cave number one, he wrote: "I repeat that in my opinion you have made the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times --- certainly the greatest biblical manuscript find...What an incredible find!" That statement finally turned the tide and everyone scrambled to be in the know.

Most of the intact writings were in the form of scrolls, writings on papyrus, and leather, written with a carbon-based ink, from right to left using no punctuation except for an occasional paragraph indentation. One was etched in copper, all were rolled up for easy storage. The term "Dead Sea Scrolls" became the standard designation for the documents found in this area whether complete or in fragmentary form. The initial discovery by the Bedouins yielded only seven scrolls but it launched a search that lasted until the present day. Further discoveries produced thousands of scroll fragments from fourteen caves and 825

to 870 separate scrolls. The Temple Scroll was the longest measuring almost 28 feet in length.

The Dead Sea manuscripts contain previously unknown stories about biblical figures such as Enoch, Abraham, and Noah. The story of Abraham includes an explanation as to why God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Never before seen psalms attributed to King David and Joshua have been found and prophecies by Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel not included in the Bible are written here. Every book of the Old Testament except Esther plus many other books treated with equal reverence combine to comprise this incredible ancient library.

Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls appeared for sale on June 1, 1954 in the Wall Street Journal, the advertisement read: "The Four Dead Sea Scrolls: Biblical manuscripts dating back to at least 200 BC are for sale. This would be an ideal gift to an educational or religious institution by an individual or group. Box F206.

Archaeologists began to search for a location close to the caves that might help identify the people who either authored or hid the scrolls in the area. A group of structures located on a barren terrace between the cliffs where the caves are found and the Dead Sea overlooking the mouth of the Qumran wadi yielded an old Judaic military garrison that apparently had its roots in a former monastic conclave. Shortly after this discovery, paleographic evidence along with historical information, linguistic styles, carbon-14 dating, and artifacts, (mostly date stamped coins), established that the scrolls and the Qumran ruins were from the period 200 BC to just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 69 AD. The latter date is associated with the Roman general Vespasian having passed through the area to address a Jewish rebellion, which had begun in about 66 AD and was evidently suppressed by 68 AD. Vespasian went on to become the emperor of Rome and his son Titus directed the final destruction of Jerusalem.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are indeed ancient; they cover a period of perhaps 250 years and include the late Second Temple Period, a time when Jesus of Nazareth lived. They are older than any other surviving manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures by almost one thousand years. The open translation of many of the scrolls have rendered entire lines of Biblical scholarship mute and undermined the authority of many institutions.

Since their unearthing over half a century ago, the scrolls have been the object of great academic attention, as well as heated debate and controversy. Certain organized religions and a number of entrenched institutions of higher learning would surely have preferred the scrolls not have ever come to light. Some of these institutions did their best to control the release of documentation so that translations might not be reviewed in the open without prior and careful censorship.

Ultimately, after forty years of effort and significant drive by politically non-aligned scholars to gain what the "Biblical Archaeology Review" magazine reported as "intellectual freedom and the right to scholarly access," the carefully erected walls of censorship began to collapse. In 1988, the Israel Antiquities Authority expanded the number of scroll assignments for translation to outside scholars. In 1991, the Biblical Archaeology Society published a computer-generated version and a two-volume edition of the scroll photographs.

In a heroic move the Huntington Library of California in late 1991, forty-four years after the scrolls first discovery, made available to all scholars the photographic security copies of the scrolls on deposit in its vault. Under duress and knowing it had lost the battle to control the scrolls, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced that it too would be issuing an authorized microfiche edition, complete with detailed indices.

About two thousand years elapsed between the time the scrolls were deposited in the caves of the inhospitable hills surrounding the Dead Sea and their discovery. The fact that they survived for twenty centuries, that they were found accidentally by Bedouin shepherds, that they are the largest and oldest body of manuscripts relating to the Bible, make them a truly remarkable archaeological find. Hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions of dollars, have been expended trying to translate, preserve, control and exploit the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Certain self-appointed guardians of orthodoxy, both Christian and Jewish, coupled with politicians seeking their support, succeeded in keeping many of the manuscripts out of the public domain for almost fifty years. Now, the material is all out for scholars to independently evaluate.

The Copper Scroll

In 1952 a copper scroll was found in cave number three at Khirbet Qumran. A second copper scroll was subsequently found in another cave. Whereas most of the Qumran library was discovered by Bedouins and sold through antiquities dealers, or Jordanian authorities, this particular find was actually made by archaeologists. Originally the text had been incised on thin sheets of copper, sometime later the individual metal sheets were joined together and rolled up. When found the copper was heavily oxidized and far too brittle to unroll. For five years those having control of the Copper Scroll, debated how to open them. At the Manchester College of Technology, under the supervision of John Allegro, who published the first translation, they were cut through with a small saw leaving 23 copper strips, each one curved into a half-cylinder.

The Copper Scroll turned out to be a treasure map. The first column of the scroll begins with: "In the fortress which is in the Vale of Achor, forty cubits under the steps entering to the east: a money chest and its contents, of a weight of seventeen talents."

The scrolls go on to describe the locations of vast quantities of buried treasure, of gold and silver, valuable ceremonial vessels, and coins. Excerpt statements include such things as: “In the gutter which is in the bottom of the rain water tank...” and “In the Second Enclosure, in the underground passage that looks east...” and “In the water conduit of.... the northern reservoir.”

The last item listed in the Copper Scroll reads: “In the Pit adjoining on the north, in a hole opening northwards, and buried at its mouth: a copy of this document, with an explanation and their measurements, and an inventory of each thing...”

Josephus, the famous Jewish general who became a Roman citizen and lived in the court of Vespasian in Rome, post 70 AD, wrote the history of the Jews directly after the destruction of Jerusalem. In his writings he described the “pit” (mentioned above) in great detail. He records the pit as being situated directly beneath the great Altar of the Temple.

The Treasure Hunt

The Copper Scroll records 182 tons of precious metals stored in sixty different locations. In 1960 it was estimated that the treasure would be worth at least a Billion dollars! That amount today would equate to a much larger number and could run to ten times that amount. When the text of The Copper Scroll was made public it set off a treasure hunt, but Israel was not a safe place to be running around digging things up inasmuch as the entire area was in a constant state of war. Nonetheless, many people have spent much of their lives in hot pursuit of the treasure spelled out so meticulously in the Copper Scroll.

No one admits to having found the treasure, and no one admits to knowing much about it, but theories abound. Of course, IF someone were to say they had found some or all of it, there is virtually no chance they would be allowed to keep what they found because government agencies in both Israel and Jordan have made clear the treasure should be considered theirs. So, I suppose it actually makes sense that no one would admit too knowing much about it.

We now have good reason to believe that this great treasure was apparently accumulated through the payments of tithes and offerings to the temple in Jerusalem and was hidden for safekeeping before the destruction of the temple by Rome. Some others still believe the treasure belonged to the sect that lived at Qumran, usually identified with the Essenes, a Jewish group mentioned in the works of the historian Josephus.

The Knights Templar

Some historians and treasure buffs believe the Knights Templar found the treasure at the conclusion of the First Crusade in 1096 AD. The full name of the Knights Templar was “The Order of Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon”. The Templar’s was an Order of warrior-monks who took vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, in the service of the Holy Land during

the period of the Crusades. It is thought by some that they discovered the treasure in about 1100 AD when they were granted quarters in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which was built on the site of the second Temple of Solomon. As mentioned, Romans destroyed the temple in 69 AD.

The early history of the Knights Templar is shrouded in mystery but the Order was likely the military arm of the Priory of Sion (Zion), a secret society based on the belief that the original chalice that held the blood of Christ was the secret of the Holy Grail. The secret being that the Grail was not a chalice at all, but rather the pregnant Mary Magdalene. The Priory of Sion supposed that Mary was Christ's consort and that they had a child together which therefore represented the continuation of the blood of Christ. If their beliefs were true then the child would in fact be the literal preservation of the blood of Christ.

Thus was the Templars solution to the mystery of the Holy Grail, it was a bloodline, not a chalice, as believed by the Roman church. The original Templars may have become something akin to a Praetorian guard, or in modern terms, a Secret Service, for the protection of what they believed to be the literal lineage of the Savior.

Historically what we do know is that during the Crusades the Knights Templar established themselves at Jerusalem's Temple Mount, also known as Mount Zion, whereupon they began secret and rather extensive excavations.

What is also well known is that directly thereafter they became an enormously rich and powerful Order. After the Crusades were over, the Knights Templar returned to their chapters throughout Europe and became known as moneylenders to the monarchs. In the process many historians believe they invented the Banking System, although on a personal note my research indicates those concepts are considerably more ancient. What is well established history is that the secret Order of the Knights Templar became for a time, the richest and most powerful organization in the medieval world and their network of fortresses became the center of trade and banking for almost 200 years throughout most of Europe and parts of Asia.

By the 1300's the Templars had their own fleet of vessels based at La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast of France. The Order's battle flag was the skull and crossbones, later to become a symbol of pirates the world over. The Catholic Church disbanded the Order and excommunicated its known members on Friday the 13th, October 1307. That same day eighteen galleys (some sources say the number was fifty) set sail under flag from La Rochelle and were never seen or heard of again. The belief that Friday the 13th is an unlucky day may hail back to this very event in history as those of the Order not having escaped were captured and subjected to horrible tortures. The king of France and the Pope of Rome seized the Order's identifiable assets within their areas of jurisdiction thereby

returning France and Rome to solvency after years of being deeply in debt to the Templars.

It is largely held that an influential host of Templars fled to Scotland under the guise of stonecutters and established a fraternity of Masons as a covert continuation of the lower levels of their order. It is also convincingly argued that a multitude of Templars fled to Switzerland where the forest Cantons (states) had united into a union (nation) just sixteen years earlier. Switzerland went on to become the greatest banking nation in all of history with its banks currently claiming to administer over 2/3rds of the wealth of Europe.

Many of the secret temple rites of the Priory of Sion and the Knights Templar are thought to be preserved through the fragmentation of its Order into such organizations as the Rosicrucians, the Masons, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, The Scottish Rites of Freemasonry, and other elements of the societies' that sprang forth from the geographically isolated shards of the former Templar network.