Absent but Accounted for: A New Approach to the *Copper Scroll*

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> Why would Pausanias have doubted the royal lists of Arcadia or Achaea? . . . No, he did not doubt these imaginary lists, which had duped so many people, beginning with their own creator. This historiography of sincere counterfeiters is so strange that it is worth pursuing for a moment. We will see that if we pursue this problem of the counterfeiter, it becomes impossible to distinguish between the imaginary and the real. (Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?*)[1]

Like so much of early Jewish literature, the strange Dead Sea scroll known as the *Copper Scroll* (3Q15) remains suspended somewhere between reality and fantasy. Even before scholars had fully unrolled its copper plates in 1956, they were able to discern that it recorded a list of treasures, but there soon broke out a dispute over whether this treasure was real or not. Some scholars felt that the treasure was too large to be real and that it was a figment of its author's imagination. They sought the origins of the scroll in ancient Jewish legend. Others believed the treasure to be quite plausible, probably connected to the Temple in some way. The scroll itself, however, revealed nothing that might settle the issue in one direction or the other. In what follows, I wish to explore a way beyond this impasse, not resolving whether the treasure was real or not, but suggesting how it could be both at the same time. Such a claim will seem contradictory, but it is my hope over the course of this essay not just to establish the possibility of such a position but to demonstrate that such a

[1] Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (trans. Paula Wissig; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 102–33. I would like to thank Mira Balberg, Hindy Najman, and Mira Wasserman for their feedback in response to earlier versions of this essay, and James Redfield for careful and discerning editorial assistance.

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reading is actually more consistent with the evidence we have than any reading that imposes an either/or choice between reading the treasure as fictional or genuine.

Part of what motivates this argument is the fact that both of the aforementioned readings of the *Copper Scroll* have strong arguments in their favor. By the time of the initial announcement of the scroll's discovery in June 1956, the earlier of the two views (that the treasure was imaginary) had already taken shape, finding a champion in Jozef Tadeusz, who had been entrusted with the scroll's official publication.[2] In Milik's view, the immense quantity of treasure, an estimated 200 tons of gold and silver, defied plausibility, but there was another reason he was skeptical. By the time of the scroll's composition in the first or early second century C.E., some Jews had come to believe that the ark of the covenant and other cultic objects known from the Bible's description of the Mosaic cult had not been destroyed with the Temple in 586 B.C.E. but had been concealed underground or in a cave. Noting that the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. revived the telling of this story, Milik believed the *Copper Scroll* was an offshoot of its fantastical claims.

Nothing in the scroll makes explicit a connection with the hidden ark legend—it never mentions the ark or angelic intervention or the other biblical and supernatural elements that appear in the hidden ark story—but there was intriguing circumstantial evidence to support Milik's position: parallels with later stories of legendary treasure. The most intriguing example, republished by Milik, is a Hebrew text known as *Masseket Kelim* (Tractate of Vessels) that records a detailed inventory of legendary Temple treasures hidden in the time of the first Temple's destruction.[3] *Masseket Kelim* was composed in Late Antiquity or the Middle Ages, long after the *Copper Scroll*, but resembles the scroll in striking ways. It records a detailed list of cultic treasure. At one point, it uses a similar toponym to describe one of the hiding places, and, most remarkably, it actually refers to a "copper scroll" used by the priestly guardians of the Temple to record the treasure. How to account for its resemblance to the *Copper Scroll* remains a mystery, but for Milik, *Masseket Kelim,* along with Arabic examples that he cites, established that the kind of reading he was proposing for the scroll—a detailed list of imagined sacred treasure—had demonstrable literary parallels from the Near East and even in Hebrew.[4]

As the scholar charged with official publication of the scroll, Milik wrote with much authority, and he had the endorsement of other important scholars like

[2] J. T. Milik, "Le rouleau de cuivre de Qumrân (3Q15). Traduction et commentaire topographique," *RB* 66 (1959) 321–57.

[3] J. T. Milik, "Notes d'épigraphie et de topographie palestiniennes," *RB* 66 (1959) 550–75.

[4] Recent scholarship suggests that the identity and locations of the vessels listed in *Masseket Kelim* were derived through creative inferences from biblical sources. See James Davila, "Scriptural Exegesis in the Treatise of the Vessels, a Legendary Account of the Hiding of the Temple Treasures," in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior* (ed. Daphna Arbel and Andrei Orlov; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011) 45–61.

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Sigmund Mowinckel and Frank Moore Cross.[5] Almost immediately, however, there emerged a second approach to the treasure, introduced by Karl Georg Kuhn and made popular by John Allegro, a British scholar who oversaw the effort to open the scroll.[6] As Allegro noted, the scroll does not contain any kind of narrative, much less one that connects the treasure to a legendary story like the hidden ark myth. Nor are there any discernible myth-like elements in the list of treasures themselves and no mention of the ark or other cultic objects kept in the holy of holies. Moreover, while it is true that the amount of treasure seems immense, Allegro argued that it was not as large as scholars believed it to be. Because no scholar knew the precise weight of the unit of mass used in the scroll, the "talent," there was a credible argument to be made for lowering the total value of the treasure in a way that made it more plausibly sized. Thus, whereas previous scholars posited a treasure worth hundreds of millions of dollars, Allegro placed its value at closer to a million dollars. Scaled down in this way, the deposits listed in the scroll were comparable to treasure hoards found in Palestine, including a hoard found at Qumran itself.[7] Concluding that the treasure was real, Allegro suggested it likely originated from the Second Temple, having been hidden by the Zealots during the revolt against the Romans, and grew so convinced of its existence that, using the scroll as his guide, he undertook several expeditions to retrieve it.[8]

Although Allegro's position was rejected by the more established scholars responsible for its official publication, it has since become the more widely embraced of the two positions, or so suggests a poll taken at a *Copper Scroll* conference held at the University of Manchester in 1996, where a majority of the scholars present agreed that the treasure was probably real.[9] Over the decades scholars have offered different hypotheses about why and when the treasure was concealed, connecting it to almost every known group or sect in a position to hide such a treasure in the Judean wilderness. Many believe it came from the Second Temple in Jerusalem, but some hold that it was the property of the Dead Sea sect, believed to have settled not far from the cave where the scroll was found, and a few outliers tie the scroll and its treasure to a supposed effort to rebuild the Temple

[5] Sigmund Mowinckel, "The *Copper Scroll*—An Apocryphon?" JBL 76 (1957) 261–65; Frank Moore Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958) 21–25.

[6] Karl Georg Kuhn, "Les rouleaux de cuivre de Qumran," RB 61 (1954) 193–205; John Allegro, *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

[7] For the coin hoard discovered at Qumran, see Marcia Sharabani, "Monnaies de Qumran au Musée Rockefeller de Jérusalem," RB 87 (1980) 274–84.

[8] For his account of his effort to find the *Copper Scroll* treasure, see John Allegro, *Search in the Desert* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964).

[9] George Brooke, "Introduction," in *Copper Scroll Studies* (ed. George Brooke and Philip Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2002) 1–9, at 8.

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in the period of the Bar Kokhba revolt.[10] As different as these theories are, what unites them is the conviction that the scroll records a genuine treasure, a conviction that has led to further attempts to demonstrate that the amount of treasure listed in the scroll was plausible for that historical era, not as large as earlier scholars assumed, and consistent with the size of temple treasures known from Greek and Roman sources.[11] By contrast, Milik's position has proven far less influential. It was generally rejected by scholars publishing in the last four decades, and I have not come across any current scholar willing to endorse it.[12]

While the field seems to have settled on Allegro's position, however, the truth is that neither position has definitively refuted the other. Subsequent scholarship may have settled into a consensus that the treasure was authentic, but it is a consensus based on a convergence of educated guesses rather than new data. A fresh look at the two approaches suggests that both are credible options. It is certainly within the realm of historical possibility for such a large treasure to have been concealed from the Romans. Thanks to the work of recent scholars, we know of other cases of large treasure hidden from the Romans, and the historian Josephus suggests that the Jews tried to conceal their wealth in a similar way, hiding it underground and even swallowing some of it in a vain effort to protect it from the Romans (*Jewish War* 5.421; 7.114–115).[13] However, we also know of cases where a hidden treasure construed to be real turned out to be illusory. A famous example in this regard is

[10] The hypotheses are too numerous to list individually, but we can follow Al Wolters ("The Copper Scroll," *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years* [ed. Peter Flint and James VanderKam; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1998] 302–23, at 309–10) in grouping them into four categories: 1) The treasure belonged to the Qumran community and was concealed by it before 70 C.E. (See Bargil Pixner, "Unraveling the *Copper Scroll* Code: A Study of the Topography of 3Q15," *RevQ* 11 [1983] 323–58; Stephen Goranson, "Sectarianism, Geography and the *Copper Scroll*," *JJS* 43 [1992] 282–87); 2) The treasure belonged to the Temple itself and was concealed by the Zealots or priests sometime before its destruction (In addition to Allegro, see Norman Golb, "The Problem of Origins and Identification of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* [1980] 1–24); 3) The treasure records undelivered Temple contributions concealed in the period during or after the Temple's destruction (See Manfred Lehmann, "Identification of the Copper Scroll Based on Its Technical Terms," *RevQ* 5 [1964] 97–105); 4) The treasure belonged to the Bar Kokhba rebels, possibly meant for use in a restored Temple (Ernest-Marie Laperrousaz, "Remarques sur l'origine des rouleaux de cuivre découverts dans la grotte 3 de Qumran," *RHR* 159 [1961] 157–72; Ben-Zion Lurie, *Megillat ha-nehoshet mi-midbar Yehudah* [Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1963]).

[11] See, for example, Judah Lefkovits, *The Copper Scroll 3Q15: A Reevaluation. A New Reading, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 488, who concludes that the treasure probably only consisted of 60 tons of metal (in contrast to the 200 tons estimated by previous scholars), of which only seventeen percent was gold.

[12] See Wolters, "The Copper Scroll," 311.

[13] For a parallel from elsewhere in the Roman world, Cassius Dio reports that in order to protect a massive treasure of gold and silver from the emperor Trajan, the king of the Dacians concealed it in a cavity he had dug out beneath the river Saergetia. Although surviving descriptions of this treasure seem exaggerated, historians believe that the treasure was real, and indeed, a sizeable portion of it may have been found in the 16th century. See John Makkay, "The Treasures of Decebelus," *OJA* 14 (1995) 333–45.

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a treasure thought to have been hidden by the Carthaginian queen Dido. As the episode is recounted by Roman historians (Tacitus, *Annales* 16.1–3; Suetonius, *Nero* 31.4), a fellow named Caeselius Bassus had a dream which revealed that a massive treasure of gold was hidden on his estate in northern Africa, and the story seemed sufficiently credible to the emperor Nero that he mounted an expedition to find it. Everyone at the time assumed the treasure to be real—indeed, the emperor began spending against it on credit—but no one could find it. Nero's expedition soon discovered that it was a figment of Bassus's imagination, which was drawing from a well-known myth told by the likes of Pompeius Trogus, an historian who lived in the age of Augustus. Neither side in the debate over the *Copper Scroll* treasure has yet to address the complication that the difference between real and mythical treasure was not always clear to ancient treasure-seekers themselves.[14]

What prompts the present essay is not just the unresolved nature of the question, however, but my suspicion that these two approaches to the scroll may not be the only options for understanding its composition and function. The sense of sharp opposition between them may partly be due to the personal antagonism that developed between Allegro and Milik themselves, but the antagonism goes beyond the personalities of the scholars involved. At a deeper level, it also reflects a binary mode of thinking resisted by a strain of post-structuralist scholarship, which questioned a sharp opposition between categories like myth and history or the real and the imagined. Through hybrid formulations like "mythistory" and "mythical realities," such scholars have been arguing for several decades now that what we would classify as myth does not necessarily connote falsity, that what we classify as the real or the historical has qualities of fiction, and that the boundary between the real and the imagined is artificial, porous, and imagined in its own right.[15] A classic example of this kind of argument for our purposes is the work cited at the beginning of this essay, Paul Veyne's *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?*, originally published in 1983. Veyne was really asking: did learned Greek minds like the second-century geographer Pausanias really believe the mythological claims that they reported? Veyne's answer reflects this broader scholarly impulse to complicate the distinction between the real and the fictive: the Greeks did believe their myths were true provided one understands that the truth for them was the work of imagination.

[14] This phenomenon of mistaking legendary for real treasure is by no means limited to antiquity. In 2012, two thieves were arrested for breaking into and destroying a 2000 year old well located under a structure from the Crusader period adjacent to the modern-day Israeli city Beth Shemesh. The culprits claimed they were looking for a treasure hidden by one of their forebears, basing themselves on a local legend. See Omri Efraim, "Gold Diggers Ravage Archeological Site," *ynet news*, accessed September 9, 2013, www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4173467,00.html.

[15] Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981); Joseph Mali, *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Peter Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Historical Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

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Given the *Copper Scroll* treasure's ambiguous position between reality and imagination, it would seem ripe for an approach that tries to move beyond this familiar binary, and that is what I aim to develop here: a third approach to the scroll that challenges the opposition between myth and reality that has divided the scholarly discussion thus far. The scroll is only partially preserved. It does not tell us anything about when it was composed or for what purposes, and there is nothing we can do to fill in that basic gap in our knowledge. If we are willing to think beyond the field's sharply polarized options, however, we can at the least expand the interpretive possibilities in ways that go beyond current understandings of the scroll, and as it happens, this approach can also draw the scroll closer to what we know about the larger cultural context in which it was composed. It is not my intention here to try to completely collapse the distinction between the real and the imagined. The unfortunate Bassus learned the hard way that there is a meaningful difference between real and imagined treasure, but that difference is not a straightforward one. As we shall see, in the larger Mediterranean world from which the *Copper Scroll* originates, tangible treasures could be assigned mythical origins while fictional treasures could be counted as historical in ways that place them beyond the either/or options of the real or the imagined. My contention is that this intermediate zone is where the *Copper Scroll* treasure should be placed as well.

My argument here is actually an elaboration, or rather a revision, of an earlier attempt to make sense of the *Copper Scroll*. In an earlier essay, I noted an intriguing parallel for the *Copper Scroll* buried in the writing of the aforementioned Pausanias and his description of a Greek people known as the Messenians who suffer a catastrophe similar to the Babylonian exile when they are defeated by the Spartans and sent into exile.[16] Before their defeat, Pausanias reports, the Messenian leader at the time learned from a prophecy that their survival as a people depended on the preservation of a "secret thing," something which Pausanias never describes clearly except to note that it was inscribed onto a thin metallic foil rolled up like a book (Book 4.26.8). The reference to a hidden metallic scroll caught my attention, calling to mind the *Copper Scroll*, but there was more. The leader buried the mysteries as instructed, and eventually, many generations later, the prophecy came true when another Messenian leader named Epiteles had a vision which led to the rediscovery of the mysteries hidden in a bronze urn buried in a mountain. The story resembles the hidden ark legend, but what is even more interesting about it for our purposes is that it connects this narrative to an object, a metallic scroll also buried in a cave. Here then was an example from the same general period of cultural history that illustrates how the *Copper Scroll* and its treasure could conceivably fall somewhere in between reality and myth. The Messenian mysteries were probably a genuinely existing object at the time Pausanias visited Messenia—both the mysteries themselves and the bronze urn in which they were

[16] Steve Weitzman, "Myth, History and Mystery in the Copper Scroll," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Judith Newman, Hindy Najman, and John Kutsko; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 239–55.

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found were placed on display and venerated—and yet its origins and significance were rooted in a myth very similar to the hidden ark myth.

That earlier study set me on the path that led to this current argument, but as I now have to acknowledge, the explanatory power of the comparison with the Messenian mysteries is limited. The Messenian mysteries seem similar to the *Copper Scroll* in some respects, but there is nothing in Pausanias's description to suggest that their content corresponds in any way to the list of treasures recorded in the *Copper Scroll*, and nothing to help us understand why someone would record treasure in such a way or the purpose of such a document. I stand by the comparison as an argument against drawing a rigid line between myth and reality in our reading of the *Copper Scroll*, but it did not accomplish much more than that.

For this reason, I want to try again with another comparison drawn from the Greco-Roman world, this time an inscription found on the island of Rhodes that has received renewed attention in recent years, the so-called *Lindian Temple Chronicle*. Now on display in the National Museum of Denmark, the chronicle is inscribed on a large, eight-foot tall stone that was probably originally set up in or near a temple of Athena on the island of Rhodes. A few scholars of early Jewish literature have made reference to the *Lindian Chronicle*—some of its narrative section resembles the narrative in 2 Maccabees[17]—but scholars have not compared this document to the *Copper Scroll*. Perhaps one reason for that is the label that scholarship has imposed on it, "temple chronicle," which suggests that it is a historical narrative. Things might have been different had Classical scholarship embraced a title proposed in the early twentieth century: "a historical inventory of the temple treasures."[18] Only a part of the *Lindian Chronicle* is a narrative; much of it is a list of treasures, valuable gifts to a temple of Athena that were no longer there by the time the inscription was composed. What does this inventory tell us about the *Copper Scroll*? The chronicle is not exactly parallel to it, and I would not pretend that it can answer all our questions about the scroll, but I would argue that the resemblance has significant interpretive implications, including suggesting an historically plausible way to position the *Copper Scroll* treasure between myth and reality.

[17] See, for example, Robert Doran, *Temple Propaganda: The Purpose and Character of 2 Maccabees* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981) 103–4.

[18] This title was proposed by G. C. Richards in "Timachidas," *New Chapters in the History of Greek Literature, Second Series* (ed. J. U. Powell and E. A. Barber; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929) 76–83, at 76.

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Accounting for Treasures Real and Imagined

In 1986, a doctoral student named David Wilmot tragically passed away before completing a dissertation on the *Copper Scroll*. Though it remains unfinished, his work lays the groundwork for the analysis proposed here.[19] Schooled in Greek and interested in economic history, Wilmot was able to compare the scroll to other temple inventories found in inscriptions from places like Athens and the island of Delos. Beginning as early as the fifth century B.C.E., the Athenians kept careful records of the treasures deposited in their temple—gold and silver coins, vessels, and other offerings to the gods—and published these records as stone inscriptions. A much-studied example is the inventories of the treasures of Athena kept in what is now known as the Parthenon, inventories which have survived in more than two hundred fragments. The production of such inventories was by no means limited to Athens or other Greek sites, however, and soon spread to Asia Minor, from which inventories survive from the third century B.C.E.[20]

Wilmot recognized that these inventories share much in common with the *Copper Scroll* in both form and content. Greek temple inventories list the sorts of non-perishable offerings enumerated in the *Copper Scroll* (e.g., gold and silver coins, offering vessels) in a similarly brief and formulaic way. They also sometimes give information about the location of the item in a way that resembles the *Copper Scroll*'s efforts to provide information about the location of its items. In Greek inscriptions, treasure inventories are located in temple storehouses, whereas the *Copper Scroll* treasure is scattered in various hiding places in Jerusalem and its vicinity, but even in the more confined space of a Greek temple, a treasure could be hard to find. There could be a lot of items packed together into a room—lined up on shelves, hung from walls, suspended from the rafters—and thus, inventories would sometimes need to provide information about where to find them, providing instructions that recall the kind of directional information provided by the *Copper Scroll*.[21] On the basis of these similarities, Wilmot identified the *Copper Scroll* as an offshoot of the same administrative genre—not the sort of fictional inventory that Milik had in mind, but an actual accounting document that registers the locations of a genuine treasure removed from the Second Temple.

[19] Wilmot's research was never published, and I could not get access to his unpublished draft, but his argument has been summarized by his student Michael Wise, and through him, we can get some sense of his conclusions. See Michael O. Wise, "David J. Wilmot and the Copper Scroll," *Copper Scroll Studies*, 291–309.

[20] Important studies of this material that I have consulted include Jacques Tréheux, *Études sur les inventaires attiques* (Paris: Études d'archéologie classique, 1965); Tullia Linders, *The Treasures of the Other Gods in Athens and their Functions* (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1975); Sara Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion: The People, Their Dedications, and the Inventories* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1989); Diane Harris, *The Treasures of the Parthenon and Erechtheion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Richard Hamilton, *Treasure Map: A Guide to the Delian Inscriptions* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

[21] Wise, "David J. Wilmot and the Copper Scroll," 302–3.

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Wilmot's approach to the scroll might well have revealed other similarities with the temple inventory genre, even conceivably addressing some of the scroll's most elusive features. One of the most stubbornly puzzling aspects of the scroll is its use of Greek letters: seven combinations of two or three letters that appear at the end of entries. For example, the combination of the letters *Kappa-Epsilon-Nu* (KEN) appears in 3Q column 1, line 3 after the clause, "a chest of money and its total, the weight of seventeen talents," or the letters *Sigma-Kappa* (ΣK) in column 4, lines 1 and 2 appear after, "in the large cistern which is…in the pillar, of the North… fourteen talents." Scholars have tried various ways of explaining the letters, arguing that they stand for numerals or that they abbreviate the names of priests or dedicants, but no one has convincingly decoded their meaning or function.[22]

As it happens, Greek temple inventories offer a potentially illuminating parallel in this regard, for it turns out that they too deploy Greek letters, sometimes spelled out (e.g., *alpha, beta*) but usually appearing as simple letters, individually and in combinations of two letters or more. These letters can signify numerals, but they also serve another function, which scholars of the *Copper Scroll* have not considered so far as I know. As Marcus Tod demonstrated in an article published in 1954, such letters often functioned as what he calls "letter-labels" developed to facilitate the ability of temple officials to register and keep track of items within a large inventory.[23] By the fourth century B.C.E., the inventories of some temples had become so packed with offerings, many hard to distinguish from each other, that their guardians had to begin to label them with tags and inscriptions. The individual Greek letters that appear in the inventories seem to refer to these labels: often a single letter (e.g., A, B) would suffice to distinguish an object within a series of similar objects, but when there were enough such objects, a sequence of two or more letters, or a combination of letters and numerals, might be necessary to identify its place in a series (e.g., AI, AII, AIII). Compare this, for example, with the appearance of ΔΙ in the *Copper Scroll* in 3Q15 2:9. If the Greek letters in the *Copper Scroll* are an adaptation of this letter-label convention, any attempt to read them as indicators of quantity or weight or as abbreviated names would be in vain. The letters may only reference an item's position within a registry or shelving system.

The comparison with Greek temple inventories may likewise illumine another curious element of the scroll—why the last of the objects listed in the scroll seems to be a copy or expanded version of the scroll itself. Lefkovits renders the relevant text from 3Q15 12:10–12 as follows:

> In the deep pit which is in Janoah, in the north of Kahelet, its entrance is hidden, and graves (are) upon its opening, (there is) a copy of this document with its explanation, with their measurements and specification.

[22] For a brief survey of previous attempts to explain the letters, see Levkovits, *Copper Scroll 3Q15*, 499–501.

[23] Marcus Tod, "Letter-Labels in Greek Inscriptions," *ABSA* 49 (1954) 1–8.

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Many scholars think this copy refers to a version of the *Copper Scroll* with more details or explanation than the version in our possession, but we cannot draw any firm conclusions since the text of this passage is uncertain and the meaning of several of its terms is unknown. (For example, the word translated here as "specification" has also been understood as a Greek loanword, *prōtokollon*, the first sheet of a papyrus roll.)[24] It would take us too far afield to try to address the philological issues raised by this passage, but I would note with regard to the concealment of a second copy that here too Greek inventories are suggestive. The versions of such inventories that survive are inscribed on stone, but classicists believe there also existed alternative versions, more portable copies of the inventories produced on papyrus, wax tablets, or wood plaques that were stored away in an archive.[25] The following fragmentary passage from an Athenian inventory may refer to such a copy:

> (when) they have finished these things, they are to hand over [the---to the--] and they are to deposit in the Metroon both the [---and the----from which] these objects are constructed, a record may be preserved for [all time---. And the commission is to inscribe] on a stone stele both the names of the dedica[nts and the objects which they have dedicated.[26]

In Sara Aleshire's understanding of this passage, which fills in the gaps with information gleaned from other inscriptions, it refers to two versions of the inventory: 1) a copy deposited in the public archives of Athens (the Metroon) to serve as a permanent record; and 2) another version inscribed on a stone stela. One of the purposes of such redundancy may have been to protect against efforts to change or erase the content of the publicly accessible version of the inventory.

For this analogy to work well, one of the two copies of the *Copper Scroll* would need to have been intended for public display with the other copy stored away, and this would seem to be at odds with how some scholars understand the relationship between the two versions. Lefkovits believes that the *Copper Scroll* was meant to be a secret—indeed, such a tightly guarded secret that he believes the compilers selected engravers who did not know Hebrew so that they would not understand its content for themselves.[27] If he is correct, neither version of the scroll, our version of it or the alternative version listed in the scroll, was intended as a public document. But is he correct? Although the *Copper Scroll* was found hidden in a cave, that does not mean it was intended for concealment. The two surviving

[24] Al Wolters, "The Last Treasure of the Copper Scroll," *JBL* 107 (1988) 419–29, at 426, whose interpretation is disputed by Paul Mandel, "On the Duplicate Copy of the Copper Scroll (3Q15)," *RevQ* 61 (1993) 69–76. On other Greek loanwords that appear in the scroll, see García Martínez, "Greek Loanwords in the Copper Scroll," *Qumranica Minora II* (ed. Eibert Tigchelaar; Leiden: Brill, 2007) 145–70.

[25] Harris, *Treasures of the Parthenon,* 22. For more on Athens's archival system as it developed in the 5th cent. B.C.E., see Alan Boegehold, "The Establishment of a Central Archive in Athens," *AJA* 76 (1972) 23–30.

[26] The translation is from Aleshire, *Athenian Asklepieion,* 278–79. For the Greek text, see 251.

[27] Lefkovits, *Copper Scroll 3Q15,* 454.

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scrolls comprising the composition appear to have once been riveted together as part of a single plaque about 8 feet long, and the archaeologist in charge of the expedition that discovered it, Roland de Vaux, suspected it had originally been intended for public display, probably attached flat to the wall of a public building.[28] The Greeks preferred to inscribe their inscriptions in stone, but bronze was also used as a medium, as illustrated by a Demotic temple inventory from Hellenistic-Roman Egypt that we will consider below.[29] It is also worth considering in this context the curious testimony of *Masseket Kelim*, especially the version found in a Lebanese synagogue inscribed on marble tablets.[30] *Masseket Kelim* also makes reference to another version of the inventory, the version inscribed on a "copper scroll," but *Masseket Kelim* itself was evidently used as a public document—at least that was how the version of it was used into the twentieth century, when a copy of *Masseket Kelim* was found displayed in a synagogue in a manner intriguingly reminiscent of the posting of sacred inventories on temple walls.[31] The evidence is circumstantial, but it establishes another possible link between the scroll and the Greek temple inventory genre.

Such parallels suggest that Wilmot was on the right track when he drew a comparison with Greek inventories, but what he could not have been expected to anticipate was how new research unfolding in the eighties, nineties, and the most recent decade would open up new perspectives on this genre. As Wilmot understood the genre, the inventory was a straightforward administrative document, like a warehouse inventory of our own day, but even as he was pursuing that idea, others were beginning to develop more complex understandings of the genre. Discrepancies in inventories of the same treasure from successive years—treasures listed in a different order from one inventory to the next or disappearing and resurfacing from year to year—made it hard for scholars to imagine how

[28] Roland de Vaux, "Exploration de la région de Qumran," *RB* 60 (1953) 540–61, at 557–58.

[29] See Stanley Casson, "Early Greek Inscriptions on Metal: Some Notes," *AJQ* 39 (1935) 510–17; Callie Williamson, "Monuments of Bronze: Roman Legal Documents on Bronze Tablets," *CA* 6 (1987) 160–83.

[30] The version of *Masseket Kelim* inscribed on marble plaques was copied in part by Jean Starcky and published by Milik in "Notes d' épigraphie," 567–75.

[31] As it happens, the only other reference in the Dead Sea Scrolls to what seems to be a bronze or copper text, a "bron[ze] tablet," mentioned in a poorly preserved portion of the *Temple Scroll* (column 34, line 1), seems to place it in a public space, the Temple itself. The mention of this tablet occurs in close proximity to a description of buildings where cultic vessels were stored: "houses for the utensils of the altar, [that is,] the basins and the flagons and the fire pans and the silver bowls with which one brings up the entrails and the legs of the altar" (column 33, lines 13–15). Might the tablet have been connected to these buildings and their content? There is no way to know because this stretch of the *Temple Scroll* is very fragmentary. Yadin compares it to 1 Kings 7:36 where the word translated here as "tablet" means something like panel. See Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll, Volume 2: Text and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, The Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the Shrine of the Book, 1983) 144. Still, the fact that a reference to a bronze tablet appears in close proximity to a passage listing cultic objects is interesting given our argument.

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such records could be used to keep track of a temple's inventory or determine where something was located. It is possible that the factual and organizational inconsistencies in the inventories simply reflect inconsistent methods of storage (this has been the argument of Richard Hamilton),[32] but even if that was the case, why put such inventories on public display, in the form of stone monuments, and not just file them away? Such considerations led scholars to conclude that the publication of these inventories served functions that went beyond book-keeping.

In the view of Tullia Linders, for example, the purpose of the inscriptions was not just financial but civic: their posting marked the completion of a ritualized transition from one set of treasurers to their successors by publicly registering what treasure had been passed on from one generation to the other.[33] Since only sacred treasuries seem to have been inventoried in this way, and the inscriptions are addressed to the gods, Linders infers that they also conveyed a religious message, declaring to the gods that no sacrilege had been committed against their property.[34] A different, though not necessarily inconsistent, explanation for the inventories was developed by Diane Harris, who argued that they reflected the culture of accountability that took root in a democratized Athens in the fifth century.[35] The Greeks were not the first to keep track of their temple treasure. The Egyptians and other ancient Near Eastern peoples also kept temple inventories, but these were not published in the sense of being made visible to the public (or so argues Harris): they were stored away in palaces and temples accessible only to scribes and officials. In Greece, by contrast, inventories and other cultic financial transactions were put on public display because temple officials in this democratized culture, like other public officials, were considered accountable not just to the gods but to the community.[36]

Recent scholars have been able to deepen and complicate our understanding of this genre in other ways. Sara Aleshire noted that the term inventory covers several different kinds of documents produced in different kinds of situations.[37] In Athens, one kind of inventory, the *paradosis*, appears to have been conducted

[32] Hamilton, *Treasure Map,* 347–48.

[33] Tullia Linders, "The Purpose of Inventories: A Close Reading of the Delian Inventories of the Independence," in *Comptes et inventaires dans la cité grecque. Actes du colloque de Neuchâtel en l'honneur de Jacques Tréheux* (ed. Denis Knoepfler and Nicole Quellet; Neuchâtel: Faculté des Lettres Neuchâtel, 1988) 37–47.

[34] See also Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 86–87.

[35] Diane Harris, "Freedom of Information and Accountability: The Inventory List of the Parthenon," in *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian Democratic Accounts Presented to David Lewis* (ed. Robin Osborne and Simon Hornblower; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 213–25.

[36] Harris's contrast with ancient Near Eastern practice may be overdrawn. In ancient Egypt, for example, temple inventories were not only inscribed on texts; they were also depicted visually on temple walls. See Ben Haring, "Inventories and Administration in the Egyptian New Kingdom," in *Archives and Inventories in the Eastern Mediterranean* (ed. Katelijn Vandorpe and Willy Clarysse; Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten, 2007) 47–57, at 53–54.

[37] See Aleshire, *Athenian Asklepieion,* 103–10.

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regularly, at moments of transition in the administration of the temple when a new board of temple treasurers took over from their predecessors. The inscription of a public monument marked the end of the process, a certification that the accounting had been completed for that particular term of temple treasurers. As part of the transfer of responsibility, however, the temple inventories were reviewed by a board of accountants, and a finding of maladministration could trigger another kind of inventory, a special audit known as *exetasmos* involving an inspection of the objects themselves to confirm what was in the temple and what was missing. A third kind of inventory, the *katharesis*, was a list of items being removed from the sanctuary, usually for the purpose of recasting them into new objects. In that circumstance, it was important to keep track of the whereabouts of the removed treasure so that its material did not get lost in the process of being recycled. Simply noting parallels between the *Copper Scroll* and Greek temple inventories glosses over differences between distinct kinds of inventory compiled in different kinds of circumstances and serving different roles in the supervision of the temple's wealth.

Finally, it is worth noting that recent scholarship has also done more to factor into the picture inventories from elsewhere in the Hellenistic-Roman world, not just from Greece but also from Asia Minor and even Egypt. Focusing on lists of offerings from the temple of Apollo in Didyma (in what is now Western Turkey), Beate Dignas shows how the originally Athenian genre was adopted in this new context to honor important benefactors and religious personnel.[38] Also worth considering in relation to the *Copper Scroll* is what has recently been learned about the Demotic temple inventory from Egypt inscribed on a bronze tablet (T. Cairo 30691), found in Medinet Habu and dated to the Ptolemaic or Roman period. Wilmot knew about this example, but he did not have the benefit of recent study, which helped to place it both in relation to earlier Egyptian temple inventories as well as in the context of Roman imperial administration.[39] This text is relevant for the *Copper Scroll* not just because of its use of bronze as a medium but because it shows that Greek conventions of temple inventory extended into the administrative life of Near Eastern temples operating within other cultural traditions.

None of this more recent research shows that Wilmot was wrong to see the temple inventory as the relevant genre for understanding the *Copper Scroll*. It does suggest, however, that the inventory was a more complex and variegated genre than was apparent at the time he was conducting his research. Inventories helped to keep track of what was in the temple, but they also served other roles that went beyond routine book-keeping, social, political, and religious roles. There were also different kinds of temple inventory tied to different moments in the management

[38] Beate Dignas, "'Inventories' or 'Offering Lists'? Assessing the Wealth of Apollo Didymaeus," *ZPE* 138 (2002) 235–44.

[39] Thomas Dousa, Francois Gaudard, and Janet Johnson, "P. Berlin 6848, A Roman Period Temple Inventory," in *Res Severa Verum Gaudium. Festschrift für Karl-Theodor Zauzich zum 65. Geburtstag am 8. Juni 2004* (ed. Friedhelm Hoffmann and Heinz J. Thissen; Studia Demotica 6; Leuven: Peeters, 2004) 139–222, esp.185–86 for discussion of the bronze inventory.

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of the temple treasure. Some seem to have been composed as a matter of regular routine, at a time of transition from one set of treasurers to the next, but others arose in response to irregular circumstances—a discrepancy detected in the records or the discovery of something missing in the inventory. Wilmot introduced a very productive comparison, but more recent research on Greek temple inventories invites a new, more careful look at this genre as a vehicle for understanding the *Copper Scroll*.

Does this new research bear in any way on the issue we are focused on here, i.e., whether the *Copper Scroll* treasure was an actual treasure or an imagined one? This is what brings us to the *Lindian Chronicle*, which has also received renewed attention in recent years as part of a larger reassessment of the temple inventory genre. The inscription was discovered in 1904 and has been studied for more than a century, but it has received renewed attention in the last decade, especially by Carolyn Higbie and Josephine Shaya, and it is this new phase of research which recommends the *Lindian Chronicle* as a particularly illuminating analogue for the *Copper Scroll*.[40]

The *Lindian Chronicle* shares much in common with the temple inventories we have been considering. It, too, is a list of temple treasures—cups, bowls, clothes, and jewelry, all of which have parallels in other inventories and which are described in a similar kind of way, with information provided about who gave the offering and the material from which it was fashioned. Like the temple inventory, it is inscribed on stone and set up in a sanctuary, and the way it organizes its list—the particular arrangement of the list in columns, and the appearance of a prescript running along the top of the inscription—also has parallels in known examples of the inventory.[41] Angelos Chaniotis has read the chronicle as an attempt to mimic the temple inventory, keeping the chronicle generically distinct from the inventory while acknowledging their similarities.[42] Shaya seems to agree, but she also recognizes that the inventory genre was an elastic one, absorbing literary elements from other genres and coming to serve as a kind of public historiography.[43] However we characterize its connection to the inventory genre, the *Lindian Chronicle* invites us to be more flexible in how we think about that genre and the kind of treasure that it can record.

[40] Carolyn Higbie, *The Lindian Chronicle and the Greek Creation of their Pas*t (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Josephine Shaya, "The Lindos Chronicle and the Lost Treasures of Athena: Catalogs, Collections, and Local History" (Ph.D diss., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002); idem, "The Greek Temple as Museum: the Legendary Treasure of Athena from Lindos," *AJA* 109 (2005) 423–42.

[41] Shaya, "Lindos Chronicle," 128–37.

[42] Angelos Chaniotis, *Historie und Historiker in den griechischen Inschriften* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1988) 54.

[43] Shaya, "Lindos Chronicle," 131–37.

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What is most interesting about the Lindian treasure for our purposes is that most of this treasure is absent at the time the inscription was composed, having been lost long before. This is made explicit in the prescript along the top of the stele:

> In the priesthood of Teisylos, the son of Sosikrates, on the twelfth day of [the month] Artamitios, it was resolved by the Councilors [of the Lindians] and the Lindians: Hagagesitimos, son of Timakhos, a citizen of Lindos, made the proposal: since the temple of Athena Lindia is both most ancient and most honored [and] has been adorned with many beautiful offerings from the oldest times on account of the epiphany of the goddess, and [since] it happens that most of the offerings together with their inscriptions have been destroyed by time, with good fortune be it resolved by the Councilors and the Lindians, with the ratification of this decree, to choose two men, who, once chosen, are to prepare a stele of Lartian stone according to the written instructions of the architect, and they are to inscribe upon it this decree [and] are to inscribe from the letters and public documents and from other testimonials whatever is suitable concerning the offerings and the epiphany of the goddess.[44]

It is possible that a few of the items listed in the *Chronicle* still existed at the time of its composition.[45] Most were lost, however—"destroyed by time" in the words of the decree. Later in the *Chronicle*, in the final narrative section, the inscription discloses what happened to some of them: they were destroyed in a fire, which consumed the temple three hundred years earlier in 391 B.C.E. We cannot determine what happened to all of the treasures listed in the Chronicle, but what seems to qualify most, if not all, of them for mention in the inscription, apart from their association with the Lindian temple, is the fact that they no longer exist.

In point of fact, many of these treasures may never have existed. In one of the earliest studies of the inscription, Christian Blinkenberg showed that the *Chronicle*'s authors did not distinguish clearly between what we might call myth and history, attributing various gifts to figures from the mythological past, including Kadmos, the legendary Phoenician ruler; Minos, mythical king of Crete; Heracles and his sons Tlapolemos and Telepos; Menalaos, husband of Helen of Troy; and Helen herself.[46] Blickenberg believed that the more recently given gifts were historical, but, as Shaya notes, even these can fuse fact and legend, as when the *Chronicle* claims that Phalaris, a real-life tyrant from the sixth century B.C.E., donated a krater he inherited from the mythical artist Daidalos.[47] The Lindians did know the offerings listed in the *Chronicle* did not exist in their day, but they had an explanation which

[44] The translation is from Shaya, "Lindos Chronicle," 69. For the Greek text of the inscription, see Shaya, "Lindos Chronicle," 250–58; Higbie, *Lindian Chronicle*, 19–49.

[45] Shaya, "Lindos Chronicle," 125–27. Earlier scholarship suspected that a few of the treasures still existed at the time of the inscription's composition, but, as Shaya notes, even if some of the objects still existed in the authors' day, these were the exception.

[46] Christian Blinkenberg, *La Chronique du temple lindien* (Copenhagen: B. Luno, 1912) 49.

[47] Shaya, "Lindos Chronicle," 26–28.

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was different from modern scholarship: not that they arose from legend and never existed, but that they had been lost in an earlier era.

Why go to such lengths to itemize a treasure no longer in the temple? Shaya offers one possible explanation. One reason to visit a temple in this period was to behold the treasures inside, objects which inspired awe in spectators because of their association with the mythological past. We know of many such objects, the pre-Christian equivalent to the medieval relic. A temple at Samothrace displayed bowls given by the Argonauts. A temple of Athena in Odysseia claimed Odysseus's shields and the back of his ship. Delphi could boast possessions like a bronze tripod from the funeral games of Patroklos, Achilles's companion, and among the items listed in the Delian temple inventories were a bow and quiver of Heracles.[48] Possessing such treasures added to the venerability of the temple, showing that it has been honored by the greatest of heroes and associating it with wondrous events, and even if a treasure was no longer found in the temple, the mere fact that it had once been there could augment the temple's reputation. Hence, the importance of documenting that such a treasure had once existed and of doing so in the form of a publicly visible inscription from which visitors could learn about the treasure and be impressed.

Beyond wanting to associate themselves with mythological heroes and events, however, there might have been another reason that the Lindians felt it important to itemize the treasures lost from their temple. As we have noted, the public posting of the temple inventory seems to have arisen from a desire to hold temple officials accountable, to make sure that they and the community were fulfilling their duties as guardians of divine wealth. From this perspective, absent treasure posed a serious problem, raising questions about the integrity of the temple's treasurers who had a duty to guard the temple's contents. To avoid these kinds of problems, the temple treasurers had to keep track not just of what was in the temple's treasury but of everything that had gone missing as well, to account for what had been lost or damaged. Thus the development of the special audit known as the *exetasmos*, mentioned earlier as a review of the temple's inventory triggered when it emerged that something was missing. The following inscription describes the procedure in Athens:

> The Prytaneis [executive members of Athens's governing council] are to command also that Eukles, the public scribe, come to the Acropolis to record the objects in the Chalkotheke [a storage room on the Acropolis]. And when the building is opened, he is to examine each by type and to record their number and the Prytany secretary is to make a copy and the other secretaries of public documents [are to make copies]. And when everything has been examined and recorded, the secretary of the Council is to inscribe [the record] on a stone stele and set it before the Chalkotheke; for the inscribing of the stele the treasurers of the Council are to give 30 drachmas from the expenditures voted

[48] For these and other examples, see Shaya, "Lindos Chronicle," 214–19.

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> to the Council. And the secretary of the Council is to make copies of the stelai [of] the inscriptions/records concerning the material in the Chalkotheke. And when these have been read, the Prytaneis are to make a public summons in the Council Hall concerning these whenever it is possible, and, once the Council has heard the objects [just] inscribed being read against the objects inscribed on the [earlier] stelai, if anything is missing, to deliberate and bring the matter to the demos so that the demos may hear and deliberate how the missing objects can be replaced so that matters will be best and most holy toward the Goddess.[49]

According to this testimony, when suspicion emerged, a secretary would conduct an inspection of what was in the temple and have the results recorded in a public inventory that was then compared to earlier inventories. If the process revealed that something was missing, the community would have to figure out how to replace it since it was divine property.

This description implies the existence of a class of object that would have gotten special attention from those in charge of the temple's treasury—those objects not found where they were supposed to be in the temple. Treasurers who failed to note the absence of an item in what they received from their predecessors could be held liable for the loss, and this gave them an added incentive to register any missing or broken objects they knew about, as in another Athenian inscription:

> Silver crown which Dion dedicated; it is not present [in the temple]…. Mnesarete [dedicated] 10 drachmas; [this dedication] is short [of the recorded weight] by 3 drachmas; these [three drachmas] he [the priest] said that Diokles Myrrhinousios must repay. It is missing one more drachma, 1 dr., [which is] in the keeping of Telesias…Onasos [dedicated] 12 drachmas, on a tablet. From [the dedication] is missing 4 dr.; this is the deficit which Polyxenos paid back on his own behalf. (lines 1–2, 6)[50]

Yet another temple inventory, an inscription from the island of Samos dated to the year 346/5 B.C.E., records such missing items in the form of a brief list: "In the Great Temple, Pelysios, the sacred slave of the goddess, read out from the sealed document all the votives and showed that they were there, except the following which were missing."[51]

The passage refers to a proceeding in which a temple servant reads aloud a list of the votives in the temple as part of a process of determining what was still there or not. Notice that the servant is said to have read out a list of all the objects expected to be found in the temple, but it is only the missing objects that are catalogued in this particular passage. From this example, it appears that the process of keeping track of temple treasure occasionally yielded two kinds of publicly displayed inventory: a list of what was found in the temple and a list of what was lost.

[49] The translation here is cited from Hamilton, *Treasure Map,* 347–48.

[50] Text cited from Aleshire, *Athenian Asklepion,* 129 (Greek, lines 1–7), with the English translation on 135–36; brackets added by author.

[51] Cited from Tullia Linders, "Inscriptions and Orality," *SO* 67 (1992) 27–40, at 37–38.

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The *Lindian Chronicle* seems to be an outgrowth of this interest in keeping track of lost treasure. The temple's reputation depended to some degree on the impressiveness of the gifts that had been deposited there, gifts that demonstrated the temple's significance in Greek history and affirmed the presence of the goddess there. But where were these gifts? To answer these questions, the Lindians and their leaders undertook a kind of audit, not the *exetasmos* described above but an investigation which entailed looking into the records to retrieve information about the lost offerings. The effort involved historical scholarship, not book-keeping, but it resulted in an inscription not unlike the Samian inventory quoted above, a public itemization of treasures belonging to the temple but no longer there.

In the Athenian *exetasmos* noted above, the community needed to know what items were missing so that it could deliberate on how to replace them. It is conceivable that the inventory of lost treasure in the *Lindian Chronicle* was also preliminary to an effort to replace the missing items. One of the lost offerings listed in the inscription is a linen cuirass given to the temple by the Egyptian king Amasis, notable for the fact that each of its yarns was comprised of three hundred and sixty threads. Sometime after the inscription's publication in 99 B.C.E., the cuirass was evidently rediscovered, for Pliny the Elder reports that it was seen by the Roman Licinius Mucianus, Vespasian's right-hand man, when he visited the temple in the first century C.E., though by that point it apparently only survived as "small remnants" (Pliny, *Natural History* 19.2.11–13).[52] It is conceivable that the posting of the inscription helped spur interest in the retrieval of the lost treasures that it recorded, but what is also important to note is that an accounting of missing treasure was something a temple might undertake whether or not the treasure was retrievable. The guardians of a temple's wealth were expected to know if something was missing from among the items under their supervision and to disclose that information. Recording their loss was an exercise in honest stewardship, proof that those responsible for the temple were fulfilling their obligations to the community and to the god to whom the offerings belonged.

Even centuries after the loss of the temple's treasure, the *Lindian Chronicle* suggests, it could be important for the community to know the contents of the treasure, where it came from, how to identify it, and its value. Itemizing such objects was itself a way of honoring the god (showing how she had been honored in the past), but it was also fulfilling a basic responsibility of temple stewardship, acknowledging what had belonged to the god. Being able to itemize the treasures that had been in the Lindian temple, documenting what they were even if the objects themselves were gone, was a way of asserting the integrity of a community or priesthood charged with guarding sacred property.

In the light of all this, we are in a position to expand on the conclusions that Wilmot drew from his comparison with Greek temple inventories. Confining himself to certain examples of the temple inventory, Wilmot classified the *Copper Scroll* as a

[52] See Shaya, "Greek Temple as Museum," 435–36.

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"non-literary text." Milik had been wrong to draw connections to later mythological narratives, he argued; the scroll was an administrative document recording a genuine treasure. Adding the *Lindian Chronicle* to the mix complicates any neat distinction between a literary and non-literary document, or between a genuine and mythical treasure, by showing that the genre could sometimes venture into territory located somewhere between the poles of the fictional and the historical. The *Chronicle* fuses myth and history in its representation of the past, and the treasure that it records similarly falls between the categories of the real and the imaginary.

If our intent were to choose sides in the debate over whether the *Copper Scroll* treasure was real or not, we might use the *Lindian Chronicle* to defend Milik's conclusions. Particularly interesting is the *Chronicle*'s similarity to *Masseket Kelim*, the strange document combining a detailed inventory of imagined temple treasure with a narrative about how those treasures were lost. Critics of Milik's position have been able to dismiss the relevance of *Masseket Kelim* because it is so late, from Late Antiquity or the Middle Ages. The *Lindian Chronicle* invites a reconsideration of that objection by showing the existence of this kind of literature in antiquity, in a text that predates the *Copper Scroll* by two centuries.[53]

Our goal here, however, is not to revive Milik's position, but to try to find some way beyond the sharp binary between myth and reality that put his view in opposition to the observations of Allegro and other scholars. For the most part, it seems that the Greek temple inventories were referring to real objects, items discoverable through inspection, but the *Lindian Chronicle* shows that this was not always the case. When it only had textual sources to go on, a community could mistake a mythical treasure for a missing real one and respond to it as if it had once been in the temple, seeking documentation for its existence, even itemizing it. In fact, we know this to be the case not just for Greek legendary treasures but for Jewish ones too. Despite never having seen it themselves, despite the fact that the ark may well have been an entirely legendary object, Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman period assumed that it was a genuine cult object—invisible, irretrievable without supernatural intervention, but as real as the objects in use in the then-functioning temple. The Mishnah, for example, recounts an incident in which a priest working in the Temple figured out the place where the ark was hidden by noticing something wrong with the flooring. Before he could tell others, he was struck dead, but his fellow priests seemed to know the general area where the ark was located (m. *Sheqalim*. 6:2). The Mishnah draws no distinction here between the ark and the various treasure chests described in the immediately preceding passage in m. *Sheqalim* 6:1 as a part of the Second Temple. The only difference, from its perspective, is that the ark was hidden underground, invisible yet present.

[53] Worth noting in this connection is a recent argument that other medieval Byzantine catalogues of fabulous treasure from the 11th and 12th centuries draw on much earlier sources from Late Antiquity. See Cyril Mango, Michael Vickers, and E.D. Francis, "The Palace of Lausus at Constantinople and its Collection of Ancient Statues," *Journal of the History of Collecting* 4 (1992) 89–98; Shaya, "Lindos Chronicle," 239–45.

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I am stressing this point because it can help to move our understanding of the scroll beyond the polarized options offered by existing scholarship. We have no way of knowing whether the Copper Scroll treasure actually existed or not, but thanks to the *Lindian Chronicle*, we are in a position to see that it did not necessarily matter in this milieu that a given treasure no longer existed or never existed for that matter. What was more relevant was whether a treasure was accounted for or not, whether it was where it was supposed to be in the temple or had been lost.

Of course, the *Lindian Chronicle* is not an exact analogue for the *Copper Scroll*. The treasure listed in the scroll does not have mythological overtones, and it is not really lost in the same way: it purportedly still exists, and whoever composed the scroll claims to know its location. But while the *Copper Scroll* treasure is not exactly missing, it is not quite present either: it is hidden from view, not where a sacred treasure is supposed to be—i.e., stored securely in a temple—but scattered in the most profane of places, concealed in pits and gutters, or among tombs, or buried deep into the ground. In light of the evidence we have been considering here, we are now in a better position to appreciate why someone would keep such careful track of a treasure displaced in this way. In a culture that held its officials accountable for maladministration, it was important for Temple treasurers to know when items were lost, and to publicly disclose any treasures that were discovered missing. This was true of Greek culture, and it may have been equally true of Jewish culture in the age when the *Copper Scroll* was composed, when the community had ample reason to be suspicious of how Temple officials were managing the considerable amount of wealth entrusted to them.[54] There are indications from Jewish sources that the absence of even a legendary item like the ark could undercut the priests' reputation as protectors of the Temple's wealth. Not long after he reports the removal of the ark, the biblical figure of Baruch as described in the pseudepigraphical *2 Baruch* urges the priests to cast the keys of the Temple into heaven and calls on God to guard his house himself—in effect, he calls on the priests to resign—because they have proven "false stewards" (10:18). I would argue for this culture of cultic accountability—the demand that priests be held responsible for lost or damaged Temple treasure—as important background for understanding the *Copper Scroll*, its effort to catalogue the locations of dislocated sacred treasure mirroring the ethic of public accountability responsible for Greek temple inventories.

In support of this hypothesis, we have evidence from early Jewish sources of efforts to allay such suspicions through acts of public disclosure. The Mishnah's description of the Temple records one example of such a practice. According to the Mishnah, the half-shekel contributions that Jews gave every year to the Temple were deposited in three chests distinguished by the Hebrew letters *aleph, beth,* and *gimmel* (or according to Rabbi Ishmael, the Greek letters *alpha, beta*, and *gamma*), and the guardians of this wealth took great care to make sure nothing went missing.

[54] For evidence of priestly theft from the Temple, see 2 Maccabees 4:32; *Jewish War* 6.387–191. For the pilfering of sacred donations intended for the Temple, see *Antiquities* 18.82–83.

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People withdrawing funds from those chests were carefully monitored to make sure that they did not steal anything, and they were forbidden from wearing any kind of clothing or shoes in which anything could be hidden. The reason for this was not just to defend against theft but to discourage people from becoming suspicious of those with access to this wealth:

> The one who withdraws [the wealth] does not enter with a hem in his cloak or in shoes or sandals, or with phylacteries or an amulet, lest people say, "On account of the treasury, he has become poor" [i.e., because he stole, God has punished him with poverty] or lest they say, "Because of withdrawing funds from the treasury, he has become rich," for a man needs to be accountable to people just as he has to be accountable to God. (m. Sheqal. 3:2)

A similar desire to allay public concern about the Temple wealth might also explain another custom hinted at in rabbinic sources which seems to have developed in the Hellenistic-Roman period: the display of the Temple's gold-plated table of showbread and candelabrum to the pilgrims visiting Jerusalem during major festivals (*y. Ḥag.* 3:8 = *b. Ḥag.* 26b). Israel Knohl has suggested that the custom of displaying the vessels reflected a popularizing strain in the Temple cult, an effort to involve the people in its rituals.[55] What we see here suggests another explanation for this custom: it gave pilgrims a glimpse of the Temple's secrets, but it also served as an assurance to the community that its treasures were still intact.

There are even hints of the sort of publicly posted inventories known from Greek temples, though the evidence is admittedly slim. One such hint surfaces in the Mishnaic tractate *Yoma*, which features a list of precious cultic accouterments donated to the Temple to facilitate the Yom Kippur ritual: a chest containing two lots upgraded from wood to gold by a donor named ben Gamla; various kinds of valves given by another donor named ben Qatin; golden handles donated by King Munbaz of Adiabene to adorn various cultic vessels used for the Yom Kippur ceremony; a golden lamp set up over the door of the sanctuary by his mother Helena; a golden tablet on which she had inscribed a biblical passage; and ornate doors donated by a Nicanor, evidently an Alexandrian Jew (*m. Yoma* 3:8–9). The list contains language recalling a conventional formula of Jewish inscriptions from this period: "Ben Gamla made (some lots) of gold, and the people would cause him to be remembered for praise."[56] Perhaps beyond merely echoing the phraseology of inscriptions, however, the list might actually be based on such an inscription, not noting the weight of the objects that it lists (as many Greek inventories do) but

[55] Israel Knohl, "Post-Biblical Sectarianism and Priestly Schools of the Pentateuch: the Issue of Popular Participation in the Temple Cult on Festivals," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid, 18–21 March, 1991* (ed. Julio Trebolle Barrera and Luis Vegas Montaner; 2 vols.; STDJ 11; Leiden: Brill, 1992) 2:601–9.

[56] Noah Greenfield and Steven Fine, "'Remembered for Praise': Some Ancient Sources on Benefaction in Herod's Temple," *Images* 2 (2008): 166–71, esp. 167–68. For more on the inscriptional formula echoed in this mishnaic passage, "May X be remembered for good," see Susan Sorek, *Remembered for Good: A Jewish Benefaction System in Ancient Palestine* (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2010) 75–82.

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registering their material, the name of their donors, and even in one case noting an identifying inscription that appeared on the donated object—all the sort of information registered in Greek temple inventories and the *Lindian Chronicle*.

I believe that what we have in the *Copper Scroll* is another example of this kind of inventory: not an inventory of treasure kept in the Temple but something closer to the lists of missing treasure that we have been considering, or to the *kathairesis*, an inventory of treasure removed from the sanctuary to be melted down and recast as another kind of cult object. I am not suggesting that the *Copper Scroll* reflects a *kathairesis* in a specific sense, but it can be read as a similar effort to keep track of treasure removed from its Temple setting, showing that the treasure still remains under supervision even if displaced, that it remains available and has not been stolen or misappropriated. For a community that carefully monitored what belonged to the Temple (keeping track of individual shekels according to *m. Sheqalim* 7:1), and which could suspect theft when something went missing, the disclosure of such information had value independent of the value of the items involved. Publicly acknowledging missing items demonstrated the integrity of those entrusted with the wealth.

In support of this interpretation, we can point to an interesting rabbinic tradition that imagines Moses producing precisely the kind of inventory we have in mind, an inventory of missing sacred donations. This tradition was inspired by the narrative in Exodus 38, which provides a detailed account of the material used to construct the tabernacle of Moses's day, an itemization of specific quantities of gold, silver, and bronze. According to rabbinic readings of this passage,[57] the Israelites were suspicious of how Moses was managing the wealth entrusted to him for the construction of the tabernacle, murmuring to themselves: "How could such a man be put in charge of the tabernacle and not be expected to enrich himself?" In this tradition's recasting of the biblical narrative, such murmurs are what prompt Moses to publish the inventory in Exodus 38 to prove that he had not taken the treasure for himself. In a related tradition, the prophet is said to have published the inventory to account for silver that had been donated to the tabernacle but had seemed to go missing. Moses had used the silver to make hooks for hanging the curtains of the tabernacle, but since the hooks were hidden behind the curtains and hard to see, they went unnoticed in an audit of the materials used in the construction, and thus Moses fell under suspicion of having stolen the silver for himself. It was only when God revealed them to Moses during a second inspection that Moses rediscovered them and was able to register them in the inventory in Exodus 38 (which in verse 28 confirms that all 1775 shekels of silver were used to make the hooks). The midrash reimagines a biblical cultic inventory in light of the Hellenized ethos of accountability discerned behind Greek temple inventories, and the result is a cultic inventory that functions just as those inventories did, triggered by a suspicion that some of the sanctuary's wealth had gone missing, undertaken to

[57] *Tanhuma, Pequdei 7; Exodus Rabbah,* 51.6.

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track the whereabouts of the missing donations, and publishing this information to the community to reaffirm the guardian's reputation as a trustworthy steward.

The inventory of the midrashic Moses is similar in function to the role I am proposing for the *Copper Scroll*—to allay concerns about the whereabouts of a sacred treasure that is not where one would expect to find it. The latter of the two traditions cited above is particularly germane because it reads the Exodus 38 inventory as a listing of a cultic treasure that has gone missing. The silver hooks hidden behind the Tabernacle curtains are similar to the treasures listed in the *Copper Scroll*, in as much as they, too, are hidden from view. By accouting for their whereabouts, Moses is able to re-establish his reliability as a guardian of cultic wealth, and if one carries the analogy through to its logical conclusion, that may well be the function of the *Copper Scroll* as well: through an inventory of missing cult items that specifies their location and their exact quantity, the scroll affirms the integrity of those charged with guarding this treasure. What I am arguing, in other words, is that the *Copper Scroll* comes out of the same Hellenized culture of accountability that has shaped this midrash, a culture that required the guardians of Temple wealth not just to inventory the treasure under their supervision but to disclose what items were lost, deteriorated, or had to be removed in order to avoid the suspicion of theft or being held personally liable for the missing treasure.

How does all this help us to address the question we have been wrestling with—whether the *Copper Scroll* treasure was real or not? A closer look at Greek temple inventories, expanding this genre to include the *Lindian Chronicle*, reveals a category of cultic treasure between our categories of the real and the mythical—missing treasure, treasure that has been destroyed, lost, or removed from the temple. Such treasure was invisible. It could not be seen or used. As in the case of the *Lindian Chronicle* treasure, it was known only from legend. But its physical absence did not make it less real—it had to be itemized in the same way that actually existing treasure was itemized. Since those charged with guarding a temple's wealth were held responsible for treasure deemed missing, they documented absent treasure in great detail, down to individual drachmas, and were evidently expected to disclose its absence to the larger community in the form of public inventories, inventories of what was to be found in the temple but also inventories of what was missing from it. The midrashic traditions we have been citing, along with evidence from the Mishnah and Second Temple period literature, suggest this concern with missing cultic treasure penetrated into early Jewish culture, generating similar anxieties about the whereabouts of absent cultic objects and a similar need to account for them.

By placing the *Copper Scroll* within this cultural context, we can more precisely understand why someone would so meticulously record the details of the treasure that it records. Whatever this treasure was exactly—offerings removed from the Temple at the time of its destruction, offerings intended for the Temple but never making it there—its concealment placed it in this category of absent treasure, treasure that had to be accounted for, documented, and disclosed to the relevant

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community if those responsible for it were to uphold their responsibilities and reputation. What was relevant was that the treasure was believed to be real, that it was felt to be missing—a category of treasure that in this period included not just actually existing treasure stolen or lost but also legendary treasure that only existed in the imagination. Of course, one still wants to know whether there was a *Copper Scroll* treasure or not, but after sixty years of scholarship and debate, it appears that we will never know the answer to that question. If what I am arguing here is correct, what we can say now is that an answer may be beside the point for understanding why the *Copper Scroll* was written or what it was meant to accomplish.

Conclusion

Admittedly, the comparisons we have pursued do not settle the many questions raised by the *Copper Scroll*, but what they do accomplish is a broadening of the cultural context in which we place those questions. For most of the last sixty years, scholarship on the *Copper Scroll* has defined the relevant context for understanding the scroll as first or early-second-century Jewish history, the Second Temple's destruction or the Bar Kokhba Revolt, without sufficiently registering that Jewish culture in this period was a part of a larger Hellenized Mediterranean culture. Wilmot's research suggested a way to enlarge that context, but he was not able to develop the comparison. Elaborating on his comparison with Greek temple inventories, one might plausibly account for a number of the scroll's most puzzling details—the use of mysterious Greek letters at various points in the inventory, the reference to the storing away of a second copy, even the use of bronze as a medium—but what I have emphasized here is how it helps to reframe the debate over whether the *Copper Scroll* treasure was real or imagined.

A majority of recent scholars believe the treasure was real, and what we have seen here supports that position; the treasure listed in all the other inventories we have considered, including the lost treasure of the *Lindian Chronicle*, were all presumed real by those who compiled these inventories. My intention has not been to contest the realness of the treasure but to argue for expanding our concept of a real treasure in this period. In the Greek world, the treasure belonging to a temple could include mythical relics, objects thought to come from demigods and ancient heroes and elevated by their association with extraordinary or supernatural events. I cannot see any empirically discernible way in which these imagined treasures were distinguished in an epigraphic source like the *Lindian Chronicle* from what we would count as real treasure. Indeed, the *Lindian Chronicle* is especially instructive in this regard because of the way it so precisely catalogues a cultic treasure explicitly acknowledged as no longer existing. The same point could be made of Jewish Temple treasure in the Hellenistic-Roman period; our sources do not make an ontological distinction between the lost ark supposedly hidden under the Temple and other cultic vessels present in the Temple in more visible and verifiable ways.

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While this conclusion may be defensible on comparative grounds, however, there is still the problem that it is very counter-intuitive. We are not in the realm of quantum physics, dealing with particles that can exist and not exist at the same moment. One can understand how an illusory treasure could be mistaken as real, and how a real treasure could go missing and become a subject of legend, but how can a treasure be both at the same time? No historical parallel can overcome logical impossibility. To explain why this position is not as nonsensical as it might seem, I want to conclude by moving from the ancient world back into our own. Whatever wealth might be in one's possession, if one thinks about it, much of it is hidden from view—not immediately present to us. Our sense that it exists is based largely on account statements that we trust to give us reliable information about how much is there. We believe that the money is real, and at least when our banking system is working as it is supposed to, we feel assured that we have access to it when we need it, even though we cannot see it or count it for ourselves. It turns out, in other words, that much of our own treasure, for much of its existence, is both real and imagined at the same time (though expected to be made real when we need it).

In a not dissimilar way, many temple treasures in the Greco-Roman period existed in an intermediate state, believed to be real but not available for inspection, not always where they were supposed to be or intact, and sometimes more fictive than existent as was the case with many of the treasures listed in the *Lindian Chronicle*. At certain moments, when the community felt it necessary to audit the temple inventory, the distinction might be clarified to the satisfaction of the community, but for much of a temple's history, the community would not have been in a position to directly confirm which items were actually in the temple and which were not, trusting that they were there but not knowing for certain until the next audit. The fear that such treasure might not really be there is why the Greeks developed the practice of posting temple inventories—a conventional way of resolving what was actually present in the temple and what was not—and it has been my argument that this was the purpose of the *Copper Scroll* as well: to confirm that a treasure that appeared to be missing was really there, absent but accounted for by those entrusted with its safekeeping.

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