

The Lead Books of the Sacromonte in Granada (Spain): Introduction, critical edition and translation by P.S. van Koningsveld, em. Leiden University and Gerard Wiegers

The story of the Lead Books began in the year 1588 with the demolition of an old tower in the city of Granada. The tower, called Turpianan Tower, once probably the minaret of the great mosque, had to make way for the building of the new cathedral which still stands there today. During the demolition, workmen stumbled on a small chest in the rubble. This chest contained a parchment containing a prophecy, bones, and part of a veil. The prophecy was attributed in the subscript, written in Latin with Gothic script, to St John, and the accompanying texts in Spanish, Arabic, and Latin script were traced to a group of Christians who, so the claim was made, had lived in Granada in the first century. Among that group there was a bishop called Cecilius whose name was mentioned on the parchment in Arabic script. The veil was purported to have belonged to the Blessed Virgin.

Many were seized by enormous excitement. To understand the scope of this joy, it must be recalled that the city of Granada did not possess any relics. This discovery would amply compensate for such a lack. But soon after, this enthusiasm was tempered by great skepticism and downright repudiation. Critics, who included the famous Spanish scholar Benito Arias Montano (1527-1598), pointed out that it was impossible for the parchment to be genuine, for - among other reasons - in the first century Spanish had not yet evolved as a literary and spoken language.

From the year 1595 onwards, seven years after the discovery in the ancient tower, a series of lead 'books with Arabic and Latin texts were found in caves in a hillock just outside Granada . These plaques were also accompanied by ashes and bones which were purported to be the remains of Christians who had been burned there as martyrs under the Roman emperor Nero. The remains of Cecilius, the same person mentioned in the parchment in the ancient tower, were also found there. The texts, which contained prayers, acts of Jesus and the Apostles, and prophecies were all said to be written by two brothers from Arabia. One of the lead books mentions that Jesus had cured both brothers in a miraculous way. One of the brothers received the name of Sā'is al-Āya ibn al-Radī , i.e. Cecilius, and his brother the name of Tis'ūn b. 'Attār, i.e. Thesifon . The brothers then journeyed to Spain in the company of the Apostle James, and there they settled with their company in the vicinity of a holy mountain. The books were hidden here, and would only come to light at the End of Time, when the one true message of the gospel, as the books prophesied, would be in the gravest of danger. At that time a priest would come forward with the books and present them at a great gathering, at which Arabs would also be present. Here a decision would be made and woe to those who would not accept these Arabic books. One of the text was called The Essence of the Gospel (Arabic: Haqīqat al-injīl). This Essence of the Gospel was said to have been revealed to the Virgin Mary by the Archangel Gabriel. During the great gathering a humble person of Arab origin would explain the meaning of this text. After he had done so, the whole world would convert to the true belief and the End of Time would be nigh. The Essence of the Gospel is a Lead Book of sixteen leaves, which, apart from one leaf, nobody has been able to decipher and was therefore referred to as the mute book (" libro mudo").

With regard to the contents of the Lead Books, there are three theories: The first theory tells us that the books were Christian documents, the second that they are Islamic, and the third that they present some sort of syncretical ideas, and attempt to find a middle way between Christianity and Islam. We believe an analysis of the Arabic texts shows that the Lead Books present us with an Islamic polemic against Christianity and Judaism. The parchment and the plomos tell a story about Jesus' teachings and life, but do not present him as Saviour. Instead the book present us with a Blessed One, the Saviour, to be disclosed at the end of time during a great gathering to be held in Cyprus, in the lead book called the Essence of the Gospel (Haqiqat al-injil). Study by Van Koningsveld and myself, the first to have been done since the seventeenth century on the basis of the original documents, has shown that the books are deeply coloured by Qur'anic lore, makes it clear that the promised savior is no other than Muhammad. In conclusion, the plomos, by stipulating that they serve as both a correction to the New Testament and the Torah, confirm and establish the truth of Islam, to be revealed when the Essence will be explained and accepted during the great gathering. Our recent research shows that parchment discovered in 1588 and lead tablets were written by one and the same author. The same notions appear in both the parchment and the plomos and the same historical notions about eschatological events underly both.

Publications:

Gerard A. Wieggers, El contenido de los textos árabes de los Plomos: *El Libro de los misterios enormes (Kitāb al-asrār al-'azīma)* como polémica islámica anticristiana y antijudía, in: María Julieta Vega García-Ferrer, María Luisa García Valverde, Antonio López Carmona, eds, *Nuevas aportaciones al conocimiento y estudio del Sacro Monte. IV Centenario Fundacional (1610-2010)*, Granada: Fundación Euroárabe 2011, 197-214).

P.S. van Koningsveld and G.A. Wieggers, "The Book of the Enormous Mysteries that James the Apostle Saw on the Sacred Mountain for the Great Gathering, Written at his Order by Cecilio, his Disciple" - Lead Book Number 22 in the Sacromonte Archive, Granada, Arabic text and English translation with notes, in: María Julieta Vega García-Ferrer, María Luisa García Valverde, Antonio López Carmona, eds, *Nuevas aportaciones al conocimiento y estudio del Sacro Monte. IV Centenario Fundacional (1610-2010)*, Granada: Fundación Euroárabe 2011, 259-272.

P.S. van Koningsveld and G.A. Wieggers, "Five documents illustrating the early activities of Miguel de Luna and Alonso del Castillo in deciphering and translating the Arabic passages of the Parchment found in the Torre Turpiana in Granada", in: María Julieta Vega García-Ferrer, María Luisa García Valverde, Antonio López Carmona, eds, *Nuevas aportaciones al conocimiento y estudio del Sacro Monte. IV Centenario Fundacional (1610-2010)*, Granada: Fundación Euroárabe 2011, 215-258.

These articles can be consulted in UvA DARE.