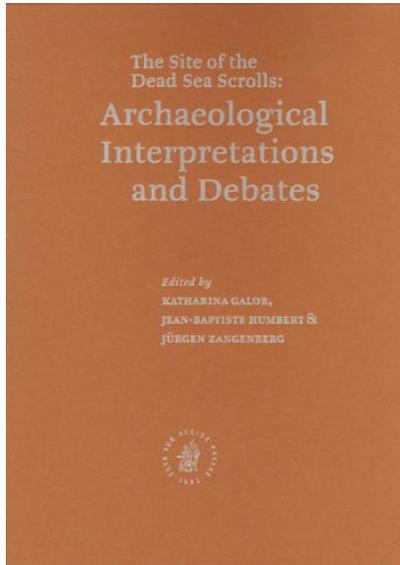


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Qumran, The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates (Proceedings of a Conference held at Brown University, November 17–19, 2002)

Studies on the Text of the Desert of Judah 57

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This book contains written and expanded versions of several papers that were delivered at a conference held 17–19 November 2002 at Brown University, on the archaeological site of Khirbet Qumran. Although this conference brought together a diverse group of scholars to examine the nature of the archaeological site of Qumran, the bulk of papers criticize the traditional Qumran Essene theory. Two of the editors, Katharina Galor and Jürgen Zangenberg, make it clear which side of the current debate they favor by writing in their Introduction (“Qumran Archaeology in Search of a Consensus,” 1–9) that “Qumran archaeology can only benefit from methodological discourses pursued in archaeology” (8). They cite Jodi Magness’s popular synthesis (*The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002]) as an example of the outdated “traditional text-based model” (3 n. 7) and praise Yizhar Hirschfeld (*Qumran in Context: Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004]) as a pioneering scholar who has not allowed texts to distort his understanding of Qumran archaeology. Both works are cited throughout this volume as the premier examples of the differing approaches in the current debate over the connection, if any, between Qumran, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Essenes. This review will highlight some of the controversies reflected in this book by grouping the essays according to common themes. Where appropriate, additional bibliographical materials will be cited to assist those wishing to

study further the debates reflected in this volume, as well as to highlight the present state of Qumran studies.

Khirbet Qumran presents the interpreter with the classical archaeological conundrum: it is a unique site with numerous distinctive features that are difficult to understand in the absence of any parallels. Even the opponents of the classical Qumran-Essene hypothesis recognize that Qumran is unlike any other fortress, manor house, trading post, or Second Temple period site. With no clear archaeological comparison available, it is not surprising that Roland de Vaux and some proponents of the Qumran-Essene hypothesis in this volume continue to rely upon the evidence of the scrolls, often read in conjunction with Josephus, Pliny, and Philo, both to explain Qumran's anomalies and to identify its inhabitants. Since the publication of this volume, Steve Mason ("Essenes and Lurking Spartans in Josephus' *Judean War*: From Story to History," in *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method* [ed. Zuleika Rodgers; Leiden: Brill, 2007], 219–61) has criticized those who use texts, especially Josephus, to identify Qumran's occupants as Essenes. His thesis reflects the view of several scholars in this volume who likewise argue that the scrolls should be given no privileged place in understanding the classical sources on the Essenes and vice versa (for another recent statement of this position, see Albert Baumgarten, "Who Cares and Why Does It Matter? Qumran and the Essenes, Once Again!" *DSD* 11 [2004]: 187). All the essays in this volume in some manner reflect this ongoing debate over the appropriateness of using the Dead Sea Scrolls to understand the archaeological site of Qumran. One group of essays in particular takes an interesting angle on this controversy by offering different explanations of Qumran's walls.

The walls that surround Qumran have been used both to support and to refute the classical Qumran-Essene theory. Jean-Baptiste Humbert's essay ("Some Remarks on the Archaeology of Qumran," 19–39) incorporates insights gained while selecting five hundred photographs from nearly two thousand documents in the archives of the École Biblique for publication. He believes that the similarities in the designs of Qumran and 'Ain Feshkha indicate that both belonged to the upper echelons of Hasmonean society and were part of the same construction project. Humbert suggests that Qumran may have become an Essene settlement during a later phase but that various Jewish populations living in the vicinity made use of its cemetery. He suggests that the stone wall that connects Qumran and 'Ain Feshkha functioned as an *eruv* that allowed those living in the main settlement to walk to the springs on the Sabbath. The essay also includes a previously unpublished plan of the "long wall" on the esplanade prepared for de Vaux by Ch. Coüason.

Qumran's walls also feature in the contributions of Joan Branham ("Hedging the Holy at Qumran: Walls as Symbolic Devices," 117–131) and Stephen J. Pfann ("A Table in the Wilderness: Pantries and Tables, Pure Food and Sacred Space at Qumran," 159–78).

Branham proposes that Qumran's enclosure wall was constructed as a symbolic device of liminality. Pfann's study likewise explores the walls as dividers. He attempts to defend the classic Qumran-Essene theory by attempting to delineate holy and impure areas within the site's interior walls. Pfann also emphasizes that three scroll caves (7, 8, and 9) are located within the enclosure wall, a fact that, in conjunction with the archaeological remains from the caves and the site, makes it irresponsible not to include the scrolls in any discussion of Qumran archaeology.

Several articles in this volume take a regional approach to support or refute the classical Qumran-Essene theory. Yizhar Hirschfeld ("Qumran in the Second Temple Period: A Reassessment," 223–39) offers a presentation of his widely published thesis that Qumran was a manor house. Hirschfeld is highly critical of de Vaux and Magness for their use of the scrolls to interpret the site. He proposes that these documents were merely brought to the site from some public library for concealment. His thesis is challenged by the essays of Joseph Patrich ("Agricultural Development in Antiquity: Improvements in Cultivation and Production of Balsam," 241–48) and Magen Broshi and Hanan Eshel ("Was There Agriculture at Qumran?" 249–52), three of the most prominent supporters of the traditional Qumran-Essene theory. These scholars discuss Qumran's geographical situation and soil composition to rebut any notion that the southern terrace was used for agriculture or balsam production. A contribution by Mireille Bélis ("The Production of Indigo Dye in the Installations of Ain Feshka," 253–261) proposes that indigo dye was produced at 'Ain Feshkha and used in some of the Cave 1 wrappings.

The most important, and controversial, contribution in this volume is clearly the lengthy chapter by Yizhak Magen and Yuval Peleg ("Back to Qumran: Ten Years of Excavation and Research, 1993–2004," 55–113). This article is unique because it offers an original thesis and the preliminary results of their excavations of Qumran that were conducted between 1993 and 2004. This chapter should now be read in conjunction with their slightly more detailed preliminary report (*The Qumran Excavations 1993–2004: Preliminary Report* [Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2007]). Magen and Peleg propose that Qumran was originally a military post responsible for the security of the Dead Sea shore. From the 63 B.C.E. Roman conquest to the earthquake of 31 B.C.E., the site became a center for the production of clay vessels, and possibly dates and date honey. It retained its same function during the Herodian period, when more kilns were constructed and production increased. Its occupants even added a synagogue (L4) to serve its workers. Magen and Peleg suggest that the scrolls are unconnected with the site but were brought there from Judean synagogues and hidden there at the time of the First Revolt.

Magen and Peleg's chapter is essential reading for all interested in Qumran, since it contains many new and important findings. Most notable are the large paved square located immediately south of the refectory (L77) and adjacent storage rooms (L86 and 89), new finds from the Iron Age, and the excavation of nine burials. Two of the graves contained no bones, but fourteen jars with sealed lids and the residue of some organic material, possibly date honey. The authors cite Num 19:14–15 to account for the presence of these jars as “fastened lids “ (*tzamid patil*). Unfortunately, neither in this chapter nor in their subsequent publication (“Back to Qumran,” 68–69; *Qumran Excavations*, 45–47) do Magen and Peleg provide any information about the sexing, alignment of the skeletons, locations, or photographs necessary for interpreting the graves they excavated. They do note that one grave contained the remains of a wooden coffin, which suggests that the bones were brought to Qumran from another locale. Magen and Peleg suggest that the cemetery, or part of it, was used for burying people in the region who had been killed in some war at the beginning of the Hasmonean period. The superfluous graves were then used for the deposition of ritually impure vessels. Despite this questionable explanation, their excavation of the cemetery is important, since it shows that it was used in the first century B.C.E.

The most controversial claim made by Magen and Peleg is their contention that Qumran was a pottery production center. They propose that Qumran's builders realized that the clay that accumulated in the bottom of the site's reservoirs was suitable for ceramic production. Here Magen and Peleg make a claim that not only goes beyond the evidence but enters the realm of speculation. They fail to consider a basic geoarchaeological principle regarding the deposition of sediments in flowing water. The authors correctly note that the builders of Qumran chose a unique site on the plateau that was conducive to the collection of rapidly moving water through an extensive system of aqueducts and retention basins (*miqvaot*, according to the classical Qumran-Essene theory). A 2006 flash flood that caused Qumran's channels to flow with water bears witness to the large amount of water that once moved through this system on a regular basis (for a photograph, see <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/BARExclusive/bswbBARMainPage.asp>). Such rapidly moving water will sort out lighter sediments, leaving behind gravel and sand. These undesired particles would have been caught in the sedimentation basin at the site and removed by its inhabitants. Rapidly moving water, moreover, tends to suspend lighter particles (silt and clay) and carry them over a great distance. It is not surprising that Qumran's lower pools (L58 and L71) are full of fine clay, which has been deposited by periodic flash floods after the site's abandonment. The authors neglect to mention Frederick E. Zeuner's (“Notes on Qumran,” *PEQ* [1960]: 27–36) study of the sediment that washed into Qumran's pools, which he concluded was not conducive to the manufacture of ceramic vessels. The recent discovery that some of the vessels uncovered

from Qumran contain Jerusalem clay calls into question Magen and Peleg's thesis (Joseph Yellin, Magen Broshi, and Hanan Eshel, "Pottery of Qumran and Ein Ghuweir: The First Chemical Exploration of Provenience," *BASOR* 321 [2001]: 65–78). This finding suggests that some of the Qumran vessels were actually manufactured of clay brought to Qumran from Jerusalem (see further, Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*, 74).

The essays by Gregory L. Doudna ("The Legacy of an Error in Archaeological Interpretation: The Dating of the Qumran Cave Scroll Deposits," 147–57) and Rachel Bar-Nathan ("Qumran and the Hasmonaean and Herodian Winter Palaces of Jericho: The Implication of the Pottery Finds for the Interpretation of the Settlement at Qumran," 263–77) offer different yet related challenges to the traditional consensus. Doudna largely relies upon the work of Bar-Nathan to support his controversial thesis that de Vaux dated the scroll deposits too late. His extensive discussion of ceramic typology seeks to demonstrate that the traditional dating of the scrolls jars at Qumran to Period II is incorrect. Largely following his interpretation of Bar-Nathan, Doudna suggests that these jars "may have been exclusive to Period Ib and not to both Ib and II, as de Vaux claimed" (152). Bar-Nathan's important study seeks to dissociate the caves with Qumran, arguing that the ceramic corpus from Qumran and Jericho are quite similar. Her finding that most of the pottery from the scroll caves, with the exception of isolated Cave 1 vessels, dates to the first century C.E. (277), poses a significant challenge to Doudna's thesis and his interpretation of her findings. Although Bar-Nathan believes that the Qumran cylindrical jars were used for the storage of scrolls, she rejects the link between these jars, the scrolls, and the archaeological site. Like many others in this volume, she believes that the scrolls emanated from outside Qumran and that the scroll jars could have been brought there from Jericho or Jerusalem.

The essays of Doudna and Bar-Nathan should now be read in light of several other pieces. Most notable is a paper by Jodi Magness that was read at the Brown conference but published elsewhere ("Why Scroll Jars?" in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches* [ed. Douglas R. Edwards; New York: Routledge, 2004], 146–61) that refutes the thesis that Qumran was a center of ceramic production. Magness uses the Dead Sea Scrolls to argue that the Qumran sectarians also stored pure food and drink in the scroll jars. Ceramic typology has also featured in a recent debate over the dating of Qumran's aqueducts. Magen and Peleg discovered cracks in an eastern refuse dump located between the enclosure wall and the cemetery similar to the earthquake crack in pool L48/49 that extends through the entire site from the north to south (see J.-B. Humbert and A. Chambon, *Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrân et de Aïn Feshkha, Vol. 1: Album de photographies. Répertoire du fonds photographiques. Synthèse des notes de chantier du Père Roland de Vaux* [Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1994], 16). Efforts to associate the crack in L48/49 to the earthquake of 48 C.E. (D. Stacey, "Some Archaeological

Observations on the Aqueducts of Qumran,” *DSD* 14 [2007]: 223–43, esp. 233–34) or the eastern dump to 749 C.E. (Magen and Peleg, *Qumran Excavations*, 8–11; idem, “Back to Qumran,” 62–64) are untenable, since there is no corresponding whole or restorable ceramic vessels contemporary with these proposed dates. (For this evidence, see J. Magness, “A Response to D. Stacey, ‘Some Archaeological Observations on the Aqueducts of Qumran,’” *DSD* 14 [2007]: 244–53, esp. 251).

The discussions in these recent articles, most notably Magness’s critique of Stacey, also call into question many of the central tenants of the thesis proposed by Magen and Peleg. As Magness notes, the archaeological evidence clearly demonstrates that Qumran was used for the same purpose throughout its entire history. The northern cluster of animal bones (located in L130, L132, L135), for example, points to the existence of another upstairs dining room located in the secondary building situated in the western sector (L111, L120, L121, L122, and L123) of Qumran. (For this and the following evidence, see Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*, 47–71. Magen and Peleg discovered additional animal bone deposits; see their extensive comments on these remains in “Back to Qumran,” 94–96). The great dining room (L77), moreover, was likely rebuilt and moved upstairs following the earthquake of 31 B.C.E. The two pantries associated with these halls (L89 and L114) reveal an absence of cooking pots, suggesting that food was prepared elsewhere and only served in these rooms. The vessels consist almost entirely of dining dishes, such as plates, cups, and bowls. All are uniformly stacked, and 85 percent bear a white surface, suggesting that color was used to indicate their special use, implying a heightened concern with purity (noted in Pfann’s contribution, 162–64). This combined evidence suggests that the inhabitants of this site did not eat out of common dishes like other Jews and that they believed impurity could be transmitted through food and drink. Such findings suggest a sectarian use of the site. There is no clear archaeological evidence, or archaeological parallels, to support the thesis that Qumran was a center for the production of ceramics.

The essays of Olav Röhrer-Ertl (“Facts and Results Based on Skeletal Remains from Qumran Found in the Collectio Kurth—A Study in Methodology,” 181–93), Susan G. Sheridan and Jaime Ullinger (“A Reconsideration of the Human Remains in the French Collection from Qumran,” 195–212), and Konstantinos D. Politis (“The Discovery and Excavation of the Khirbet Qazone Cemetery and Its Significance Relative to Qumran” 213–19) all deal with Qumran’s cemetery. Röhrer-Ertl’s paper sheds little light on the controversy over the presence of women at the site or the remains in the German collection. He fails to provide specific information concerning the location of the graves that could assist in determining which are Bedouin burials (for an exhaustive review of this issue, see Brian Schultz, “The Qumran Cemetery: 150 Years Of Research,” *DSD* 13 [2006]: 194–228). In contrast with other essays in this volume (Patrich, Broshi and Eshel),

the author assumes that Qumran was located in a lush area but provides no evidence. Sheridan and Ullinger's study is essential reading for anyone interested in the Qumran cemetery. The two were prompted to write this article after the publication of correspondence between Henri-Victor Vallois and de Vaux pertaining to the sexing of the skeletons and new photographs of these remains (for some of this evidence, see Robert Donceel, *Synthèse des observations faites en fouillant les tombes des necropoles de Khirbet Qumrân et des environs* [Cracow: Enigma, 2002], esp. fig. 2). The comments in this essay concerning de Vaux's retrieval methods and the subsequent treatment of the remains in the French collection should compel all scholars to exercise extreme caution in using the remains from the cemetery for statistical study. For this reason, the prompt publication of the remains excavated by Magen and Peleg is important. Politis examines the similarities between the cemeteries from Qumran and the Nabatean site of Khirbet Qazone to show that shaft burials are not unique to Qumran, a finding that may help us to understand the social status of the inhabitants of this region.

The remaining two essays unintentionally highlight a significant problem with Qumran research and several papers in this volume. The first, by James F. Strange ("The 1996 Excavations at Qumran and the Context of the New Hebrew Ostrakon," 41–54), discusses the use of ground-penetrating radar to detect hidden voids or caves at depths greater than seven meters around the site. He provides some additional information regarding the discovery of the famous ostrakon with an inscription that was found in an apparent dump. Joan E. Taylor ("Khirbet Qumran in Period III," 133–46) examines the neglected Period III occupation of Qumran, with a special focus on luxury goods. Both essays raise a problematic issue that is cited in many of the essays in this volume, namely, the absence of a final report of de Vaux's excavations. Because scholars still do not have complete, unfettered access to all the remains from de Vaux's excavations, everyone wishing to understand the archaeology of Qumran, as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls, must work with incomplete data. This also raises the ethical issue, which is unfortunately not discussed in the present volume, concerning the appropriateness of conducting new excavations and surveys at Qumran without such a report or access to all maps and other data from de Vaux's original excavation. Without this evidence, archaeologists face the danger of digging blindly in areas that may have been explored or altered by previous excavations. Even worse, they face the potential hazard of wasting valuable time unknowingly digging in the dumps of their predecessors.

Overall, the present volume reflects the current state of Qumran studies—chaos. The papers contradict one another by offering conflicting interpretations of the same evidence. If the field of Qumran studies is to become a legitimate academic endeavor, scholars must have access to all the findings from all excavations and surveys of the site. Until that time, a definitive study of Qumran archaeology is impossible. Because this

book contains findings from a new excavation of Qumran, it is must reading for anyone interested in the site and the scrolls. It is the best available collection of essays on the topic of Qumran archaeology, but one whose deficiencies should urge scholars to demand the immediate release of all the data from de Vaux's excavations and any subsequent explorations of this important site.