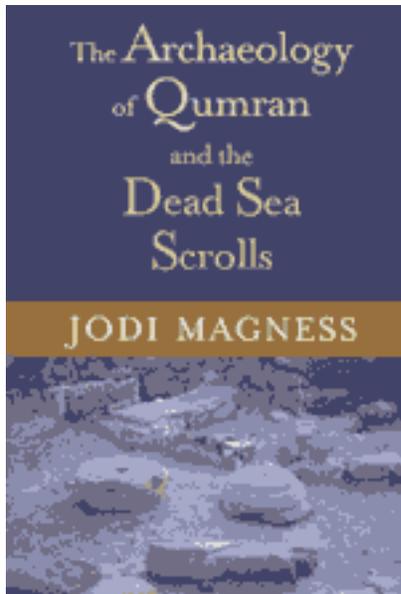


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**Magness, Jodi**

*The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. x + 238.  
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Thousands of articles and books have been written on the Dead Sea Scrolls, and yet a relatively few number were devoted to the archaeology of Qumran, the site by which the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. What is the reason for this disproportionate yield? Perhaps some scholars feel more comfortable dealing with documents rather than with the “silent evidence” that features archaeological material, or perhaps many scholars who contribute to the research of the Dead Sea Scrolls have never visited the site, to survey its geographical environment, leaving them inadequately prepared to tackle the archaeology of Qumran.

This book is one of a few attempts at dealing with issues concerning the archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls in a large volume. Although the first scrolls came to the attention of the scholars in 1947, it was not before November–December 1951 that the Dominican monk, Fr. Roland de Vaux from the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, began to excavate the site. By his final season in 1958 Fr. de Vaux unearthed almost the entire site of Qumran and all the site of Ein Feshkha, situated about two kilometers south of Qumran. Fr. de Vaux never published a final report of all the material excavated at the sites. Jean-Baptiste Humbert from Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem assumed this endeavor. To date,

Humbert has published the first out of two expected volumes. With this in mind, Jodi Magness's book is an interesting challenge to encounter the material before all the data is published.

This is perhaps the reason why this volume is not truly a synthesis of the archaeology of Qumran but rather a series of articles mostly adapted from her previous publications in scientific and popular journals and magazines and arranged for the general public. The second challenge she faced was writing a scientific book to a popular audience. This is not an easy task. There is a need to bring the most updated material to an audience, who is not necessarily familiar with the fundamentals of scholarly archaeology. In other words, how do you educate your average reader from the lowest level of knowledge to the latest innovative ideas without imposing too much irrelevant information on the laypeople, while not boring the scholarly readers? During the past few decades, books oriented to this kind of readership adopted a method in which they presented to the readers the current scholarly ideas without interrupting the flow with footnotes, endnotes, or brackets. This is done by adding a section at the end of each chapter called "Bibliographical Notes." One wishing to get a broad survey would skip to the next chapter, leaving the notes to be reviewed by the more interested reader. Magness uses this method and shows a great deal of scholarly integrity.

Chapter 1 is an excellent and concise introduction to archaeology in general and the archaeology of Qumran in particular. It briefly explains what archaeology can and cannot accomplish. I do recommend this chapter to be read by students interested in archaeology.

Chapter 2 reiterates the famous story of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the exploration of Qumran, starting with the geology of 100 million years ago and tracing it down to the of the twentieth century C.E. Some will be surprised to find out that the first excavator of Qumran was the French archaeologist Clermont-Ganneau already in 1874. Clermont-Ganneau excavated one of the 1,213 tombs at the east side of the site and thought the site to be uninteresting.

Chapter 3 is addressed primarily for the general audience and is entitled "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Community at Qumran." It aims to bring the average reader to a common level of understanding. Magness offers a fine synthesis of all major researchers on this topic, though little new information is added.

Chapter 4 begins the archaeological discourse, focusing on architecture and the occupational phases of Qumran. This is a somewhat disappointing chapter, presumably through no fault of the author. An archaeological description without an adequate presentation of illustrations is an impossible mission. The book provides sixty-six figures, all in black in white, mostly reprinted from other publications, with very few originals and all condensed in the first thirty-six pages of the book. This is obviously the book's greatest deficiency. The most important illustrations are apparently the plans of the site, figures 5, 6, 7, and 8. Here they were reprinted from the original publication of Fr. de Vaux and made too small to see clearly the numbers of the rooms. For this reason, the detailed description of the author related to the various rooms/ loci are extremely difficult to follow. A twenty-first century book geared to the general public should take advantage of the new graphic technologies, easing the reader as much as possible. Color illustrations placed in their relevant pages would have definitely enhanced the book and turned it into a much more valuable asset.

The architectural description, which follows that of Fr. de Vaux, has two important stratigraphical innovations that were published already by the author in 1995. (1) De Vaux suggested that the site of Qumran was founded in the first half of the second century B.C.E. (Period Ia), while Magness proposes, based on lack of distinctive evidence, that the occupation did not begin before the first half of the first century B.C.E. Period Ia did not exist, according to the author. (2) Fr. de Vaux suggested a gap of about twenty-seven years of occupation following an earthquake dating at 31 B.C.E. (i.e., much of the period of Herod the Great), while Magness maintains that there was no gap and the occupation continued until about 9/8 B.C.E. It would be better to await the final publication of the data before presumptuously making these proposals.

The next five chapters relate to various aspects of the archaeology of Qumran. The first analyzes the pottery finds of the site and features one of the author's best skills, that of integrating pottery and literary sources. The connection between pottery vessels and the ambiguous state of purity and impurity are very well treated and serve a good example to what archaeology can do. Chapters 5–7 and 9, which deal with communal meals, toilet, sacred space, ritual baths (*miqvaot*), clothing, and tax, are an extremely interesting way to discuss a subject usually neglected or mistreated by historians. Magness portrays a picture of a strange, rigorous sect with eccentric habits. Unlike other groups in the Hellenistic Early Roman periods, the sect members distanced themselves by different clothing, different food, and what would seem to us today as impeccable hygiene. They wore only white loincloths made of linen. They immersed themselves in

ritual purification baths much more often than their fellow Jews. Unlike the Hellenistic meal fashions known as *symposia*, which involved eating while reclining on couches, dining normally from large communal bowls, drinking wine extensively, and eventually holding loud talks and conversations, the Qumran sectarians ate in silence while seated and not reclining, considered their meals to be holy rituals, a substitute for sacrificing in the temple. Instead of sharing their food from large bowls, they ate from individual, hemispherical, small bowls. They maintained a celibate state. They also used private toilets instead of common toilets where everyone was seated alongside the walls of the toilet structure. Unlike the Hellenistic concept of perfection in the combination of “the beauty and the good” in a human body (*kalogathia*), the sect members were careful not to expose their genitalia in public. Men immersed themselves wearing cloths, and women wore full garments.

These chapters culminate with an analysis of the degree of Hellenization in the Qumran sect. This topic was researched many times in the past (see, e.g., G. Bohak, “Hellenism,” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* [ed. L. H. Schiffmann and J. C. VanderKam; Oxford, 2000] and literature there; also R. Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine* [London, 1989]). The conclusion is very obvious, and Magness states it clearly. Externally, the sect rejected Hellenistic influence in architecture, personal habits, communal behavior, and even language. It is noteworthy that this negation does not seem to derive only from their attitude toward Hellenism but rather from their own contemplation on purification obligations and from their unique interpretations of the Bible. However, their belief in predestination demonstrates that they had adopted and manipulated some cardinal ideologies from the Hellenistic world.

In order to demonstrate that the Qumran sect wore clothing different from their fellow Jews, Magness uses the textiles found at the Cave of Letters to explain what Jewish clothing looked like in the Roman period. One important aspect should be addressed on the chapter concerning this clothing. It seems that most researchers focusing on Jewish clothing in the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods rely on Y. Yadin’s thorough report on the textiles discovered at the Cave of Letters. Forty years after his monumental work was published, it becomes apparent that Yadin was too eager to assign as Jewish everything found in the cave. The Roman mantles, for example, were identified as “Talitot” (prayer shawls). The main problem with this attribution is the appearance of colored strips (*clavi*) on the clothing. Tunics and mantles with *clavi* were the privilege only of the Roman aristocracy. Wide *clavi* were worn by the senatorial class and narrow by the equestrian class. Yadin refers to a dissertation of Wilson in 1938

that quoted Pliny the Elder, who supposedly wrote that during the first century C.E. the *clavi* decorations had no class meaning. Wilson had misinterpreted Pliny the Elder; he had actually said the exact opposite. Consequently, the clothes found at the Cave of Letters, along with the mentioned bronzes, were looted from the Romans and hidden in the cave. The finding of only one senatorial and several equestrian mantles reflects the situation in Palestine during the Second Jewish Revolt, which was represented by one ruler from the senatorial rank and a few people from the equestrian rank. This testifies that these clothes were not originally made for the Jewish customers. It should also be mentioned that a toga is not a mantle with a round cut at the neck, as Magness states, but rather a very large and elaborate ceremonial dress that required a few people working a few hours to dress one person.

The chapter devoted to women and the cemetery at Qumran requires, in the light of the new discoveries at the Qumran cemetery, a new approach. The cemetery comprises a total of 1,213 tombs at the site. Not all the north-south oriented tombs were of males, and not all the shallow tombs were bedouins, as was previously believed.

The last chapter of the book deals with two excavated settlements near Qumran; one is Ein Feshkha, about two kilometers south of Qumran. Magness claims that it is not clear whether or not this site was sectarian. However, it is difficult to imagine that there was no connection between the two settlements even if the Qumran sect was totally composed of eccentrics. The conclusion of the author that the settlement of Ein el-Guweir, situated farther to the south, was not a sectarian settlement is convincing, although the absence of scrolls is not enough evidence. After all, there were no scrolls found at Khirbet Qumran either, but they were found in nearby caves.

The book is written with a personal style and flows nicely. At times it is a little too personal with the use of the first person being too extensive. There are also too many repetitions, which is probably due to adapting previous articles to this volume. All in all, it is a very good book, and the author should be congratulated for her outstanding accomplishment.