Reassessing the Judean Desert Caves: Libraries, Archives, Genizas and Hiding Places

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In December 1952, five years after the discovery of Qumran cave 1, Roland de Vaux connected its manuscript remains to the nearby site of Khirbet Qumran when he found one of the unique cylindrical jars, typical of cave 1Q, embedded in the floor of the site. The power of this suggestion was such that, from that point on, as each successive Judean Desert cave containing first-century scrolls was discovered, they, too, were assumed to have originated from the site of Qumran. Even the scrolls discovered at Masada were thought to have arrived there by the hands of Essene refugees. Other researchers have since proposed that certain teachings within the scrolls of Qumran’s caves provide evidence for a sect that does not match that of the Essenes described by first-century writers such as Josephus, Philo and Pliny. These researchers prefer to call this group ‘the Qumran Community’, ‘the Covenanters’, ‘the Yahad’ or simply ‘sectarians’. The problem is that no single title sufficiently covers the doctrines presented in the scrolls, primarily since there is a clear diversity in doctrine among these scrolls.¹

In this article, I would like to present a challenge to this monolithic approach to the understanding of the caves and their scroll collections. This reassessment will be based on a close examination of the material culture of the caves (including ceramics and fabrics) and the palaeographic dating of the scroll collections in individual caves. While the results of this examination are preliminary, it is hoped that such an exercise will open the study of the Dead Sea scrolls on a new level, by allowing each cave to tell its own, nuanced story, rather than imposing upon it a priori an ‘Essene hypothesis’ or any other all-encompassing theory.

Of the numerous manuscript collections that have been found in the Judean Desert, not one has been found in its original library or archive room, with the exception of caves 4Q and 5Q, which may have served as genizas for the community (see below). The contents of the libraries at Kh. Qumran were evacuated, perhaps on sundry occasions, as refugees fled with the manuscripts and hid them in caves for safekeeping. Due to the quality
of the scrolls left behind and the manner in which they were deposited, it is safe to assume that the original intention was to leave them hidden until a safer moment presented itself for the owners to return and retrieve the precious manuscripts. In all of the cases where scrolls have been discovered, we can likewise assume that the original owners did not consider it safe or did not survive to return for them, likely due to the calamities and harsh reality of their own times.

This begs the question of just how in-use libraries would have been kept in the Judean Desert or elsewhere in the first century. To answer this question it would be helpful to survey the available information on other sundry but parallel collections of manuscripts that existed in the contemporary Roman world. This will be followed by a survey and comparison of the manuscript collections presently available from the Second Temple Period, especially from the area of the Judean Wilderness.

I. The libraries, archives, genizas and hiding places of the Judean Wilderness in the context of the Roman world

At the outset, a distinction should be made between manuscripts found in caves and manuscripts kept in buildings. The scrolls found in the caves in the cliffs do not represent functional, working libraries. Rather, they held the contents of various libraries or archives that had been hidden, most likely to protect them from the threat of theft or destruction. In antiquity, as today, books and scrolls within functional or ‘in-use’ libraries were generally stored on shelves in special rooms within a building, as the following survey indicates.

A. Libraries

Public libraries
The most famous were the Library of Alexandria at the Museon and its ‘daughter library’ at the Serapion, Hadrian’s Library (Athens), the Celsus Library (Ephesus), the library of Attalus I (Pergamon), and Augustus’ library on the Palatine Hill (Rome; which was enlarged by Tiberius and Caligula). Among its numerous holdings, Vespasian’s Library of Peace in Rome, established in AD 76, contained many volumes taken as booty from Jerusalem’s main library, including Hebrew Torah scrolls.

Institutional libraries
These include Galen’s medical library at Pergamon’s Asclepion and the hieratic library at Delphi.

Personal libraries
These represent personal holdings, which range from a few scrolls to collections, in certain cases, of enormous size. The library of L. Calpurnius
Piso (Julius Caesar’s father-in-law) at Herculaneum contained at least 1800 volumes. Certain personal libraries later became institutional (e.g., Galen’s Library) or public. The greatest library of Rome, built by Trajan in AD 114, was based upon the personal library of a certain Epaphroditus of Cherones. Although no functional libraries were found in situ in the Judean Wilderness, the partial contents of libraries were found in caves 1Q, 2Q, 3Q, 6Q, 11Q and Masada. Since their contents represent the collections of specific sects or interest groups, these apparently contained the remnants of institutional libraries. Caves 4Q and 5Q apparently held the worn remains of a much larger institutional library (see below).

B. Archives

Public archives
Examples include the Temple archives in Jerusalem, which were stored separately from the main library and were burned by revolutionaries, likely Sicarii; the Elephantine papyri, and the recently discovered Idumaean ostraca archive (limited in general to receipts and lists of produce).

Institutional archives
Eighteen archival documents seem to have been mixed among the remains of an institutional library found in Qumran cave 4 (4Q342–4Q359), at the time they were discovered by Bedouin. However, certain of those have been proven to derive from the personal archives of the Bar Kokhba period found in Nahal Hever (especially 4Q347 and 4Q359), and not from cave 4Q at all. This has led some to conclude that most, if not all of the papyrus archival documents presumed to have come from cave 4Q actually came from sites elsewhere in the Judean Wilderness. If any of this group of archival documents (such as 4Q350 and 4Q355) should prove to have actually derived from cave 4Q, it might be an accidental addition. By no means could these few fragments definitively represent the actual remains of the institutional archives of any of Qumran’s inhabitants. Moreover, not a single fragment of these documents was found among the 72 manuscripts recovered by de Vaux and his team when they excavated cave 4Q.

Other manuscripts from the caves and site of Qumran have the appearance of being institutional documents but seem to be reproductions of the original documents. These include 4QMMT (Letter), 4Q477 Rebukes of the Overseer, 4Q340 Lists of Netinim and 3Q15 the Copper Scroll (a list of hidden Temple treasures).

Personal archives
Examples of personal archive collections include the Babatha archive (Cave of Letters), the En Gedi archive (Cave of Letters), the Bar Kokhba correspondence (Cave of Letters, Wadi Murabba’at), and, in Egypt, the Hermopolis papyri and the Arsham Correspondence from the Persian Period.
C. Scroll and book storage

Public and institutional libraries normally stored the scrolls in tall wall niches, as at Celsus’ library in Ephesus, at Nessana in the Negev, also at Masada, and apparently at Qumran’s locus 2 (see Figs. 1–3). scrolls would be labelled by either a tag fixed to the exposed end or by the title written on the outer sheet of the scroll toward one end. Personal libraries were also often kept in wall niches, as in the Library of Lucullus (after 66 BC) in Rome, but also in more diverse ways such as in wooden boxes at Herculaneum. Personal archives were known to have been kept in jars whose lids were sealed and tied, such as at Deir el-Medineh in Egypt (see Pfann 2002).

D. Protective safes and hiding places

At Nag Hammadi in Egypt the Gnostic papyrus codices were hidden in jars, as were the papyrus codices of the Chester Beatty and Bodmer libraries.

Fig. 1. Library at Nessana (note the grooves to hold shelves) (photo: S. Pfann)

Fig. 2. Masada library niches (note double door sockets in each niche)
– in all cases, almost certainly to conceal them from invaders. Jars similar to those from Deir el-Medineh were used to hide scrolls from an active library in Qumran cave 1. At the site of Kh. Qumran, cylindrical jars, possibly serving as safes for sundry valued items, were embedded in the floor at various locations in the site, including the room identified as the library. Such safes could have easily been used to hide precious manuscripts or documents. However, all such jars were found empty.
The personal archives and Bar Kokhba letters found in the Cave of the Letters were left by the refugees in a leather pouch and in a wine skin.

E. Which library types can be identified among the Qumran caves?

Closest in breadth of contents to national or public libraries are caves 4a and 4b at Qumran (though it may be that certain censorial limits were observed, since Pharisaic and other sections of Second Temple Period literature were apparently excluded; e.g., Ben Sira, 1 and 2 Maccabees, etc.). However, the fragmentary, worn, and even repaired state of the manuscripts seems to indicate that these caves together served as a **geniza** for retired manuscripts from a variety of sources.

An institutional library could have included (1) collections of authoritative, external sources – e.g., the Bible, certain books of the Pseudepigrapha; (2) collections of internal documents of the group authored by members or predecessors of the group; and (3) miscellaneous external texts and resources originating from non-members or other organizations, limited to benign, amicable or agreeable content and doctrines. This is likely the case for caves 1Q, 2Q, 3Q, 6Q, 11Q and Masada. For each, the heart of the library is the Torah (Books of Moses) and the rest of the library suits...
the concerns and the needs of a specific interest group (concerning which see below: ‘On determining the nature of a library by its contents and duration’).

Composite libraries and genizas (evidenced by diversity of script, language and doctrine derived from a number of divergent sources) could also be evidenced. Based simply upon script, the Cryptic A corpus of manuscripts in the broader library in cave 4Q helps to distinguish at least one part of the library from the others. The palaeo-Hebrew manuscripts in this cave may present another special segment in which manuscripts are included selectively instead of representing the adoption of a cohesive library that was once separate. The other caves from Qumran may contain one, or at the most two, manuscripts in palaeo-Hebrew script, but this again makes a case for selective inclusion (particularly of the Book of Leviticus; 1QpaleoLev, 2QpaleoLev, 6QpaleoLev, 11QpaleoLev). Genizas are typically composite, often mixing manuscripts from various sources, including both libraries and archives. Compare, for example, caves 4Q, 5Q, and potentially, Masada, where there is a surprising mixture of various texts and documents (containing even documents of both lay and priestly character together; see below).

II. The Libraries, Archives, Genizas and Hiding Places of the Judean Wilderness within the Context of the Late Second Temple Period

It seems certain that the vast majority of the recovered manuscripts from the Judean Wilderness are united by the fact that they were originally hidden under difficult circumstances. However, the contents of these collections and associated materials indicate that the various collections were not all homogeneous, were not from the same source and not all from the same period.

Studies of the Judean Desert caves and scrolls in the last decade have focused on various attempts to discern the origins of the collections and to reassess, to the point of dismissal, the connection between the scroll caves and the site of Kh. Qumran. Most recently, Yizhar Hirschfeld argued strongly against such a connection, and indeed, against the assumption that Kh. Qumran was ever home to a religiously oriented group such as the Essenes (Hirschfeld 2004).

Hirschfeld often cited the theories of other researchers who failed to deal adequately with the stratigraphic challenges of the site and drew eclectically from the scrolls and the historical sources to support weakly developed hypotheses.

In this section of the article, I would like to address the difficulties in the theories of those scholars, which is a necessary prelude to reassessing the caves, the scrolls, and their owners. I will then present a fresh synthesis of the material, a synthesis which I feel incorporates as much physical and archaeological data as possible.
Should the scrolls be disconnected from the site?

Following N. Golb (1995), Hirschfeld states, ‘Since not a single scroll was discovered at the site itself, but only in the nearby caves, it can be assumed that the scrolls originated in Jerusalem’ (Hirschfeld 2004: 230) and, ‘By suggesting that Jerusalem is the source of the scrolls, we liberate Qumran from the burden of religious significance that has clung to it. It allows us to give the site a secular interpretation, not as a monastery but as a complex of utilitarian buildings constructed for some commercial, military, or administrative purpose’ (Hirschfeld 2004: 5).

First of all, it is implausible that the inhabitants of any site would leave a sacred scroll, or even small fragments of such a scroll, lying around on the floor, only later to be discovered by archaeologists. Worn sacred manuscripts were customarily interred in a repository for sacred objects, known as a geniza. This was likely the function of caves 4Q and 5Q, which contained the oldest and most fragmentary of the scrolls. In contrast to scrolls that became worn through daily use and were sequestered in a geniza, are those scrolls which, during a time of threat or potential destruction, were carried away from a community’s library shelves, wrapped in linen or sealed in jars, and hidden in safe places for protection and in order to avoid profanation. This was likely the case with the scrolls hidden in caves 1Q, 2Q, 3Q, 6Q and 11Q. It is most likely that the owners hoped that one day they would return to retrieve them.

Secondly, it is simply not true that no scrolls were found at the site. It is well known that the complex of scroll caves 4Q, 5Q, and 10Q lies only 80 m from the buildings of Qumran. Even more importantly, the 7Q, 8Q, and 9Q scroll cave complex, located at the end of the esplanade extending south from the buildings, lies within the protective wall of the site itself. It would not have been possible to enter those caves without first entering the enclosure walls of Kh. Qumran. Thus this would seem to be an unlikely place for outsiders to hide sacred scrolls. Therefore, one can safely suggest that scrolls found in the caves at the end of the Kh. Qumran esplanade and the peninsula of caves 4Q, 5Q, and 10Q were placed there by individuals who inhabited the building complex of Kh. Qumran during one of its phases. The question that remains is how to identify these individuals.

Could the scrolls have been brought from Jerusalem on the eve of its destruction?

To state that the scrolls came solely from Jerusalem (Golb 1995) or partially from Jerusalem and partially from Jericho (Cansdale 1997) is to assert that none of the scrolls from the caves were produced at Qumran. To suggest that all of the scrolls, especially those that issued from the adjacent caves, would have been rescued from the central libraries of Jerusalem, seems to
be implausible (and potentially scandalous within the context of Jerusalem), particularly since no scrolls which could clearly be defined as being of the Sanhedrin, especially the Pharisees, were found among the caves. In fact, at least 20% of the scrolls found in the Yahad/Essene caves of Qumran were produced by a group who derided the Sanhedrin, Pharisees, Sadducees and all other non-members of their sect as ‘Sons of Darkness’.

**Could the scrolls of all of the Qumran caves have been produced and collected solely by the Essenes?**

On the one hand, most scholars who hold to the Essene hypothesis would agree that not all of the scrolls from the caves were Essene compositions and that at least some of the scrolls that are found in the caves were not originally copied at Qumran. On the other hand, these same scholars would still support the idea that the vast majority of the scrolls were penned at the site (keeping in mind that fragments of up to nine inkwells have been identified from the site; Humbert and Gunneweg 2003: 32) and they would still assert...
that the entire collection of literary scrolls from Qumran (and even Masada!) was once collected and owned by the Essenes themselves.

In the end, the global statements made on both sides of the divide have only created an impassable rift between them. Thus it appears that a certain myopia or naivety has developed on both sides. There are those who consider all scrolls to be connected with a single group who inhabited Qumran (the consensus view) and those who believe no scrolls were connected with the site. Although one side might confidently snub the idea that the sum total of all of the scrolls came from the libraries of Jerusalem, and the other dismiss the potential Qumranian origins, it would be prudent not to be so quick to dismiss a suggestion that at least some of the scrolls were derived from each source. With these cautions in mind, it appears useful to evaluate the material remains and literary contents of each cave on its own, assuming the possibility that each individual cave might represent a single coherent library.

On determining the nature of a library by its contents and duration

Ostensibly, an initial separation of the caves into two main groups can be proposed: firstly, those which contain manuscripts providing typical Yahad doctrine (caves 1Q, 4Q, 5Q, 6Q), and, secondly, those caves or sites which do not contain scrolls with Yahad doctrine (caves 2Q, 3Q, 11Q and Masada). As it turns out, although the group of twelve scroll caves (i.e., caves 1Q–11Q, remembering that 4Q is actually two separate caves, 4a and 4b) are united by the presence of epigraphic finds, each has a distinct profile, sharing only some characteristics with one cave or another. These characteristics include aspects such as palaeographic date, genre, and content of the scrolls. A quick glance at the palaeographic dates of caves 1Q, 4Q, 5Q and 6Q reveals a muddled picture (Fig. 7). However, by examining the chart more closely, two distinct patterns emerge, one shared by caves 4Q and 5Q (Fig. 8), and one shared by caves 1Q and 6Q (Fig. 9).

Through assessing such criteria more closely, profiles of distinct libraries begin to emerge. Setting aside for the moment the caves in the marl terrace, especially 4Q and 5Q, as potential genizas (see above), let us examine caves 1Q and 6Q, located in the central cliffs.

The Yahad priestly and lay characters of caves 1Q and 6Q

Caves 1Q and 6Q are similar in that they contain certain scrolls that are typically Yahad in doctrine (e.g., in cave 1Q: the Rule of the Community, the Thanksgiving Scroll, and typically Yahad oriented commentaries; in cave 6Q: the Damascus Document; Fig. 12A) and are written exclusively in Hebrew and Aramaic. However, the scrolls of cave 1Q are written exclusively on parchment while those of cave 6Q are written for the most
Fig. 7. Palaeographic dates of caves 1Q, 4Q, 5Q, and 6Q

Fig. 8. Palaeographic dates of caves 4Q and 5Q
part on less costly papyrus (Fig. 10A). Cave 1Q contains scrolls of a more liturgical nature, including multiple copies of the Book of Psalms and two copies of the Thanksgiving Scroll and the Community Rule (which would point to a priestly Yahad library; Fig. 10D). Cave 6Q, on the other hand, reveals a library of a more lay character, a library containing the Damascus Document (with rules for lay members of the movement), a number of apocryphal or legendary works and a megillah (a pocket scroll carried by laity during festivals) of the Song of Songs (Fig. 10B). One other enigmatic difference between the two caves is that cave 6Q has no remains of phylacteries, while cave 1Q contains the remains (either parchment slips or leather cases) of eight phylacteries (as do all other verifiable Essene-type caves, i.e., 4Q and 5Q).

Furthermore, the striking parallel between the palaeographic dates of the scrolls of caves 1Q (at least 77 scrolls identified) and 6Q (at least 26 identified) is noteworthy. Figure 9 indicates that the period of manuscript collection (or production) for both caves 1Q and 6Q was from the late second century BC until the first quarter (1Q) or first half (6Q) of the first century AD. At least in the case of cave 1Q, which contained the major community compositions, the small early peak may well indicate an early history of this library, since the Yahad community’s document 1QS derives from that period. The high peaks of the later period represent the apex of library expansion for both libraries. On the other hand, there is one distinction that may be significant: the final
The zealot character of caves 11Q and 3Q

The caves of the north cluster (caves 3Q and 11Q, associated with certain nearby contemporary caves which lacked scrolls), share important similarities with one another and stand at a significant distance from the other caves in the central and southern cliffs (Fig. 14). With respect to doctrine, the genuine Yahad scrolls (e.g., the Damascus Document, the Thanksgiving Scroll, or the Rule of the Community) are completely lacking in these two caves. Instead, three copies of the Temple Scroll were found, a composition that is known to contain doctrines that are at variance with those of the Yahad (Fig. 12A). The main texts of caves 3Q and 11Q share a priestly and/or a Temple orientation, focused on defining and protecting the Temple and its contents (e.g., 11QTemplea–c, 3QCopper Scroll).

Certain scrolls from caves 11Q and 3Q which were once considered to be Yahad compositions are no longer believed to be so. The Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice (Fig. 10D) and New Jerusalem (Fig. 12E) are now generally held by scholars not to be Yahad compositions. The commentaries 11QMelchizedek and 3QpIsaiah are anomalous and too ill-defined to be

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**Fig. 10. Priestly vs. lay libraries**

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confirmed as *Yahad* compositions. Although 11QMelchizedek uses the word ‘pesher’, it does not comment on the text of a biblical book in the order of its verses, as do other Qumran commentaries. 3QIsaiah starts with verse one of the Book of Isaiah, but the small piece of text that follows the verse is illegible. Also, there is no reason to believe that groups other than the *Yahad* did not write their own commentaries.

The scrolls from both caves 3Q and 11Q represent the remnants of relatively young libraries (Fig. 11). The scrolls of these two caves are among the latest from Qumran; 83% of the 11Q scrolls and 100% of the 3Q scrolls date to the first century AD. In fact 65% of the approximately 50 combined manuscripts from caves 11Q and 3Q date from the last 25 years before the fall of Jerusalem. The first-century scripts of these scrolls also tend to be particularly elegant and stately, perhaps linking them to the finer scribal schools of Jerusalem. All the scrolls from both caves were written on parchment (with the exception of the Copper Scroll), but none on papyrus (Fig. 10A). In addition, the corpus from both caves is exclusively in Hebrew and Aramaic; no Greek scrolls have been found in either cave.

Furthermore, in terms of both location and material culture, caves 3Q and 11Q stand apart from the other caves. The pottery, which includes distinctive oil lamps, is late (mid- to late first century AD). Five cylindrical jars, out of the 35 found in cave 3Q, were subjected to provenience testing. Results of neutron
activation analysis of the clay from at least four of the jars (and one lid) show that the jars were made from Jerusalem clay, indicating that they were brought from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea region (Humbert and Gunneweg 2003: 13–14). Furthermore, the textiles of cave 11Q are distinctive from those of caves 1Q and 4Q, for example, in that they are bleached white with indigo stripes (Bélis 2003: 236, pl. III:1–7). Bleaching is not found elsewhere at Qumran, where natural ‘off-white’ cloth is the norm.

Based upon the distinctive doctrine, the late dating, and the scribal elegance of the manuscripts, together with the Jerusalem source for the pottery, the bleached textiles, and the contents of the Copper Scroll, it is very possible that Golb and Cansdale might be correct in their suggestion that at least certain scrolls were brought from the libraries of Jerusalem, or even from the Temple, to the Qumran caves, and to caves 3Q and 11Q in particular. But if they are right, they are only partially so. The scrolls from caves 11Q and 3Q might, in fact, have been brought there from Jerusalem, but certainly not by the Yahad group, whose doctrines, sectarian compositions, and textiles are lacking in these two caves. It is far more likely that the scrolls of caves 3Q and 11Q were brought there by the revolutionary priestly protectors of the Temple and its treasures, more commonly known as the Zealots (a suggestion already made by both C. Rabin [1956] and J. Allegro [1964]).

I would suggest that these, and the other caves of the northern cluster, were inhabited briefly at the end of the First Revolt. The best candidate for ownership of these manuscript collections would seem to be the group of rebels led by the Zealot general Yehudah ben Yair, who came down from Jerusalem to the forest/thicket of the Yarden to make their last stand, along with another group of refugees from Machaerus.

When Bassus had settled these affairs, he marched hastily to the forest of Jarden, as it is called; for he had heard that a great many of those that had fled from Jerusalem and Macherus formerly, were there gotten together. (211) When he was therefore come to the place, and understood that the former news was no mistake, he, in the first place, surrounded the whole place with his horsemen, that such of the Jews as had boldness enough to try to break through, might have no way possible for escaping, by reason of the situation of these horsemen; and for the footmen, he ordered them to cut down the trees that were in the wood whither they were fled. (212) So the Jews were under a necessity of performing some glorious exploit, and of greatly exposing themselves in a battle, since they might perhaps thereby escape. So they made a general attack, and with a great shout fell upon those that surrounded them, (213) who received them with great courage; and so, while the one side fought desperately, and the others would not yield, the fight was prolonged on that account. But the event of the battle did not answer the expectation of the assailants; (214) for so it happened, that no more than twelve fell on the Roman side with a few that were wounded; but not one of the Jews escaped out of this battle, for they were all killed, being in the whole not fewer in number than three thousand, (215) together with Judas, the son of Jairus,
their general: concerning whom we have before spoken, that he had been captain of a certain band at the siege of Jerusalem and by going down into a certain vault underground, had privately made his escape.

(Jos., JW 7.6.5.210–215; Whiston translation)

**Shortcomings in the traditional ‘consensus’ theory**

If the *Yahad* is identified with the Essenes, then the consensus of the majority group of scholars, the champions of the Essene hypothesis, appears to be correct, but only partially so. Most, but not all, of the caves and their scrolls can be identified primarily with the *Yahad* who lived at the site of Qumran (though only during two or three of the site’s phases). However, judging by the presence of typical *Yahad* compositions, only caves 1Q, 4Qa, 4Qb, 5Q and 6Q can be connected to the group with any certainty.

Having segregated 3Q and 11Q as a sub-unit of caves, and 1Q, 4Qa, 4Qb, 5Q and 6Q, as a second group, can we recognize other unique libraries in the Judean Wilderness? What can be said about cave 2Q and about Masada? In fact, it can be suggested that a third category of library can be connected with First Revolt rebel groups. This sub-group shares some features in common and other features in contrast with the *Yahad* libraries, which from henceforth will be defined as Essene.

**Features of the rebel caves (2Q, 3Q, 11Q, Masada) shared in common with the Essene libraries**

All the caves, whether Essene or not, treasure the Torah. With regard to pseudepigraphic and non-biblical texts, the Book of Jubilees is found in 2Q, 3Q, 11Q and potentially, Masada (also in Essene caves 1Q and 4Q; Fig. 12E); New Jerusalem is found in 2Q and 11Q (and also in Essene caves 1Q and 4Q; Fig. 12E). The Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice is found in 11Q and Masada (as well as in 4Q; Fig. 10D). The Book of Giants appears in 2Q but is also found in Essene caves 1Q, 4Q and 6Q (Fig. 12E).

**Some common features of the overall rebel group (2Q, 3Q, 11Q, Masada) over against the Essene libraries**

**Concerning the Prophets** (Fig. 12B). 3Q, 11Q and Masada have only Ezekiel; the Temple Scroll of cave 11Q quotes almost exclusively from Ezekiel, a book that has a Temple orientation and is supportive of the Zadokite priesthood. (On the other hand, cave 2Q has Jeremiah and 3Q has a commentary(?) on Isaiah.)

**Concerning the Apocrypha** (Fig. 12C). Ben Sira, which runs contrary to Essene teaching on a number of points, including its support for the lunar calendar, is found only in 2Q, Masada and 11Q (quoting a chapter in 11QPsal). This book is not found in the other caves.
This evaluation of the manuscript collections on the basis of content, exclusion and inclusion of books, leads to tentative identifications with specific movements and groups in the First Revolt. It may be suggested that, just as a distinction can be made between Essene priestly (1Q) and Essene lay libraries (6Q), so, too, a distinction can be made between rebel priestly and rebel lay libraries.

### Concerning the Liturgy and Calendar (Fig. 10E)

Although there is a reasonable predominance of multiple copies of the book of Psalms and liturgies in libraries which are devoted to priestly practice (more than 15% of the manuscripts in caves 1Q and 11Q) there are also certain distinctions in liturgical practice that can be discerned between the main Essene priestly and rebel priestly caves 1Q and 11Q. The most obvious distinction is found in the definition of the liturgical year itself. Although the 364-day solar calendar is predominant among the extant scrolls from the Qumran caves, the calendars that are attached to or embedded in the central rulebooks vary when comparing the actual feast days that are observed during the course of the liturgical year. The calendar attached to the 4QSe manuscript of the Community Rule limits its acknowledged feast days to those which are commanded in the Bible, including Second Passover. The Temple Scroll (11Q) observes a pentacontad festal cycle which adds a sequence of additional harvest festivals including the ‘Feast of New Wine’ and the
‘ Feast of New Oil ’, each separated by 49 days, but does not mention the Second Passover.

Concerning Phylacteries and Mezuzahs (Fig. 10E). The remains of 33 phylacteries and eight mezuzahs were found in the caves of Qumran. Curiously, all were found in Essene caves (in 1Q, 4Q, 5Q and suspected Essene cave 8Q; only lay Essene cave 6Q lacks them). The fact that no phylacteries were found in the suspected rebel caves 2Q, 3Q or 11Q may be of significance with regard to halakhic practices among the sects of the late Second Temple Period.

Rebel priestly vs. rebel lay libraries?

Rebel priestly libraries
Limited to 11Q (but to some extent, also Masada’s library, which appears to have a mixture of priestly and lay components). As in the case of the Essene priestly libraries, the rebel priestly libraries have liturgies, multiple copies of the book of Psalms, and texts that focus on the Temple structure and service (Figs. 10D, 12A–B).

Potential rebel lay libraries
Caves 2Q and 3Q both have copies of the typical megillot Ruth (two copies) and Lamentations, which are normally associated with lay participation in the yearly festivals (Fig. 10B). 2Q and 3Q also have legendary texts/apocrypha, which are often found in lay contexts, presumably since they bolster lay participation in the divine plan. (This is also the case for the lay Essene cave 6Q.)

Although cave 2Q is in the same cluster as cave 1Q, it is not likely connected with the Essenes, since it contains no community documents. It also includes Ben Sira. Like 3Q, it lacks liturgies and other scrolls normally associated with priestly groups.

The case of Masada
Early during the Revolt, Masada became the sole stronghold and residence of the Sicarii. The founder, Judah the Galilean, and his successors were called ‘teachers’ by Josephus (JW 2.118). There is no reason to believe that this group would not keep an institutional library. The cache of scrolls found at Masada that were once thought to be connected with the Qumran scrolls (i.e., the Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the New Jerusalem text), are no longer considered to be either Yahad or Essene in character. The corpus of manuscripts from Masada should be viewed as the remnants of a Sicarii library, written mainly on parchment, with certain lay and priestly components (Figs. 10, 12). (The various extraneous papyrus documents derived from the Roman occupation of the site must be treated separately.)

In contrast to the collection profiles of caves 11Q and 3Q, the period over which scrolls were introduced into the collections at both Masada and cave 2Q lasted from the late second or early first century BC until at least the mid-first
century AD. There were two major peaks during this collection period at both sites: 31–1 BC and AD 25–50 (representing 73% and 52% of the total, respectively; Fig. 13). Although this may indicate groups with longer histories, the earlier peak might simply represent the incorporation of a group of manuscripts collected for an earlier, unconnected library.
The elusive character of caves 7Q, 8Q, 9Q, and 10Q
The manuscript remains from caves 7Q, 8Q, 9Q, and 10Q are quite meagre and assessment of their character is thus highly tentative. It may be suggested that the remains from cave 7Q, which contained only Greek biblical and literary documents, written on papyrus, reflect the remnants of a Hellenistic Jewish scroll collection. The manuscript remains from cave 8Q, which contained Psalms, a liturgical work, a phylactery and a mezuzah, although having a definable character, are too sparse to connect with the other caves. The manuscripts from caves 9Q and 10Q are not definable since they each contain one fragment of indecipherable text. However, in light of the food remains and lamps from all four of these caves, they all appear to have been used at the end of Period IIb (AD 66–68) as residences for the rebels. This is also true with respect to most of the caves throughout the Qumran cliffs as well as in the caves of Wadi Murraba’at where at least one papyrus divorce document (Mur. 19) dating to year 6 (!) of the First Revolt and an ostracon (Mur 72) derive from a refugee from Masada.

Too many scrolls?
Hirschfeld, following Golb and Cansdale, suggests that there are too many scrolls and too great a diversity of texts to be owned by the Essenes or connected with the site of Kh. Qumran.

As demonstrated above, not all the caves find their origins in the Essenes. As for the potential that the diverse documents from the remainder of the caves (1Q, 4Q, 5Q and 6Q) had been deposited there by the Essenes, one should remember, first of all, that the group that collected the scrolls were known to themselves as Sons of Light, the Yahad, and other terms. They never called themselves ‘Essenes’, a term used only by outsiders (just as the titles ‘Pharisees’, ‘Sadducees’, and even ‘Christians’, were at first only used of those groups by outsiders). Secondly, according to Philo and Josephus, the Essenes were absorbed in studying the sources. They interpreted the sacred writings, the law and the prophets. They produced their own rulebooks and by oath were devoted to them. They also studied the ‘works of the ancients’ for the sake of the ‘body and soul’, for healing of diseases and protection.

There are some among them who, trained as they are in the study of the holy books and the <sacred> writings, and the sayings of the prophets, become expert in foreseeing the future: they are rarely deceived in their predictions.

(Josephus, War 2.8.159)

One of them then takes up the books and reads, and another from among the more learned steps forward and explains whatever is not easy to understand in these books. Most of the time, and in accordance with an ancient method of inquiry, instruction is given them by means of symbols.

(Philo, Quod Omnis Probus liber sit 80–82)
In addition, he swears to transmit none of the doctrines except as he himself received them, abstaining from all <alteration>, and to preserve the books of their sect likewise, as also the names of the Angels. Such are the oaths by which they secure the fidelity of those who enter the sect.

(Josephus, War 2.8.142)

They apply themselves with extraordinary zeal to the study of the works of the ancients choosing, above all, those which tend to be useful to body and soul. In them they study the healing of diseases, the roots offering protection and the properties of stones.

(Josephus, War 2.8.136)

Conclusion

It appears to be high time to abandon the monolithic approach to the caves that assumes a common owner or origin for all the caves. Rather, each cave must be assessed on its own merits. Salient features of the scroll collections found in each cave include doctrinal content, date range, scroll material, language, and scribal protocols. In addition, the material culture associated with each cave and its scrolls must be examined and compared, including pottery forms, clay source analysis and textiles. Last but not least, the location of the caves with respect to one another and with respect to Qumran itself may be an indicator of ownership. On this basis, the foregoing study has suggested that caves 1Q and 6Q derive from priestly and lay Essene groups, respectively; that caves 4Q and 5Q served as genizas for the Essenes, both priestly and lay, during their phases of occupation of the site; that caves 11Q and 3Q derive from priestly and lay Zealot parties at the end of the First Revolt; that caves 7Q, 8Q, 9Q and 10Q date as well to the First Revolt; that Masada finds its owners among the Sicarii, and that cave 2Q is potentially connected with Simon bar Giora, whose troops were known to be in the area of the Judean Wilderness at the time.

Notes

1 The appellation ‘Qumran Community’ is insufficient since the primary group among the scrolls was not limited to the area of Qumran. ‘The Covenanters’, preferred by Shemaryahu Talmon, could be used to define a number of different groups. ‘Sectarian’ is a generic term which can fit a number of sects which existed during the Second Temple Period. The term ‘Yahad’ does represent the priestly group connected with the Community Rule, but does not represent the lay group(s) connected with the related Damascus Document, also found at Qumran. None of these terms sufficiently defines the group connected with the Temple Scroll or other distinctive documents found among the caves. For this study, the Essene character of the groups represented by the Community Rule and the Damascus Document is considered highly probable since no other material remains of the well-attested Essenes have been found outside of these documents and the Qumran site connected with them. It is also highly implausible that the same historical sources would have entirely overlooked or ignored such an otherwise Essene-like
group with such an extensive manuscript collection and archaeological remains, as is
found at Qumran and associated sites like Ein Feshkha. For the purposes of this essay
the group treated in the Community Rule will be called ‘Yahad’ or ‘priestly Essenes’,
and the group(s) of the Damascus Document will be called the ‘lay Essenes’.
‘Sectarian’ will be utilized to convey its generic meaning related to Jewish sects in
general.

2 The fact that locus 2 lay below the room with plastered benches and ink-wells
(locus 30) and was adjacent to locus 4, the benched room, indicates that it was a
meeting room associated with the production and storage of scrolls.

3 With the premature death of Prof. Hirschfeld, the archaeology community
suffered the loss of a fine colleague. He was in the prime of life and of his academic
productivity. He will be remembered for the valuable contributions made to our
field of study by his publications and his excavations at Hammat Gader, Ramat
HaNadiv, Ein-Gedi, Tiberias, Shivta, and throughout the monasteries in the
Judean Wilderness.

4 A distinction should be made, however, between compositions with an interest
in a Zadokite priesthood and those which scholars could identify as belonging to the
party of the Sadducees in Jerusalem. Apparently the factional nature of certain
parties such as the Essenes (described by Josephus, Philo and Hippolytus), the
Pharisees (e.g., the schools of Hillel and Shamai detailed in Rabbinic literature)
and the rebels (e.g., the Sicarii, Zealot, Simon bar Giora, and John of Gischala
factions as described by Josephus) is potentially true also among the Zadokites
(which includes the Hellenized form known as the ‘Sadducees’ and the other
subgroups represented by MMT and the Temple Scroll).

5 Caves 7Q–10Q must be eliminated for this part of the assessment due to the
insufficient quantity of manuscript remains in those caves.

6 This survey is based on the paleographical dates for the scrolls published in
the editio princeps. While some minor adjustments in paleographical dates can be
anticipated in the future, for the moment these remain the accepted dates for the
production of the scrolls.

7 It may be significant that all phylacteries and mezuzahs were found in caves
which could be defined as priestly Essene or ‘mixed priestly and lay’ Essene in
character.

8 It is widely known from the literature that at least one other group from the
Second Temple Period, the Pharisees, did wear phylacteries. A head phylactery
case was found at W. Murabba’at and hand phylacteries were found both at
W. Murraba’at and at N. Hever, both sites generally taken to be from the Bar
Kokhba Period. It should be noted that Murabba’at does, however, have at least
some materials identified with the First Revolt.

9 Cave 2Q is likely connected with revolutionaries, perhaps with the group led by
Simon bar Giora. This group is known to have had a presence in the area. The two
copies of the Book of Ruth would have had extra significance for this group whose
leader, bar Giora (‘son of a proselyte’), like Ruth, was a convert to Judaism who
originally came from across the Jordan.

10 Since a Psalm scroll and a hymn have already been identified in 8Q, the
existence of a phylactery and mezuzah in the same cave might lend support to the
idea that this cave conveys a priestly Essene character. However, the evidence still
remains admittedly meagre to support such an assertion.

11 R. de Vaux understood Kh. Qumran to be a site with multiple phases of
occupation. His assessment was based both on changes in stratigraphy and in
material culture, including ceramics, coins, and fabrics. The presence of weapons,
stoneware, hoards of Revolt coins, and new additions to and distribution within

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the pottery repertoire in the latest stratum at Qumran argues for the presence of rebel occupants. I would suggest that such a presence came about at the beginning of the Revolt in 66 AD and ended in 68 AD (based upon the modest number of ‘year 2,’ 68 AD, Revolt coins in the debris). Although cave 2Q may be linked with this occupation, I have proposed that the deposits in the northern cluster of caves – which are located 2 km from the site and which contain the latest scrolls – were left there in AD 70 by members of the Zealot party, fleeing from the besieged temple in Jerusalem, two years after the site of Qumran had already been destroyed and was at that point still largely in ruins and temporarily unoccupied (see Fig. 15). For an updated assessment of de Vaux’s multiple periods of occupation of Kh. Qumran, see Bruce and Pfann 2006.

12 DJD 2. pp. 104–109, Fig. 28, pl. XXX.

Bibliography


Archaeology of Qumran and Ein Feshkha

Archaeology of the Qumran Caves

Cave 1Q

Caves 2Q–3Q, 5Q–11Q; Survey Caves 1–40; Caves A and B

Caves 4Qa and 4Qb

Survey Caves


Ancient Libraries