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# Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society

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## Editorial

For the opening paper of this volume, Dennis Mizzi has written a clear and concise summing up of the Dead Sea Scrolls, seventy years after their discovery in a cave in the desert. This single discovery has had a monumental impact on our understanding of ancient Judaism, and fundamentally enlarged the body of primary resources from Roman times available for modern study. Yet, the chronology of the site remains a major issue, and particularly questions concerning the origins of the site, whether a Roman villa or religious centre. For many scholars, consensus is far away.

Following this study, there are three on Roman lamps, the first by Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom on ‘factory-made’ lamps found in modern Israel. Using both petrographic analysis and a detailed study of the iconography, a clear distinction can be made in the discussion of ‘Romanisation’, between the indigeneous Jewish inhabitants and the new population of non-Jews who came to Palaestine after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. The second study, by James R. Strange and Mordechai Aviam examines mass production of oil lamps using moulds made either on the site of Shihin or nearby. Their excavation at the site uncovered not just stone moulds for Roman lamps, but also a production centre with a small kiln. This work sheds new light on where lamps were made and their trade in the ancient world. The following research by Anastasia Shapiro starts with an analysis of the petrography of the lamps from Shihin to identify the sources from which the clay used in these lamps came. The lamp clay came from two local sites.

Ido Wachtel, Roi Sabar and Uri Davidovich have written a careful study examining a single site, Bronze and Iron Age Tell Gush Halav (Roman Gischala), with an integrated approach, using both field survey and salvage excavations. Their study shows that the size of site has been often misunderstood. Instead of a large and central site in Galilee, it was rather of medium size, part of a chain of sites along the Meron range.

Moving back in time to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, Samuel Atkins studied the interactions between northeast Africa and the southwest Levant. The earliest commercial exchanges, and routes of transport are evidence of local identities

that indicate both a growth and later withdrawal from foreign ventures. The 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty in Egypt consolidated power while at the same time brought more control over trade.

Michel Freikman and Alla Nagorskaya examine the megalithic architecture of the Shephelah region in Israel, and show how this type of architecture, thought to be totally absent from this region, is far more prevalent than ever considered. Often, what was found was mis-identified or poorly dated. The newest data shows that they belong in the EBI period, although many have been destroyed, or their stones used for later construction.

Orit Peleg-Barkat presents her second preliminary report on her excavations at Horvat Midras, a Hellenistic and Early Roman site that was considerably more well off than other nearby sites. The most important find of the excavation so far is the large funerary monument and a monumental podium.

To those who helped in producing this volume, I owe a debt of thanks, and in particular to the reviewers and those who helped proof the texts. This year, Kimberly Czajkowski jumped in the deep end and produced a formidable collection of reviews. Rachael Sparks has been an enormous help again in getting this issue ready for print. Eitan Klein, the Deputy Director of the Unit for the Prevention of Antiquities Looting for the Israel Antiquities Authority, has kindly taken over the responsibility for writing our *Reports from Israel*, which can be found both in this journal and on our website. To all, I owe my gratitude.

Concerning subscriptions, annual membership of the AIAS will include a mailed copy of the journal as well as access to the Society's other activities. Further details, contact information and a membership form are to be found on the AIAS website: <http://www.aias.org> and see our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/IsraelArchaeologyLondon> for more up-to-date information and news.

David Milson  
Editor

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# Qumran at Seventy: Reflections on Seventy Years of Scholarship on the Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls<sup>1</sup>

DENNIS MIZZI  
*University of Malta*

*Qumran is probably one of the most renowned and disputed sites in the ancient Near East. In large part this is because of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in caves in its immediate vicinity. The year 2017 marks the seventieth anniversary of the discovery of these scrolls, which changed the scholarly landscape of ancient Judaism and biblical studies and also put Qumran on the archaeological map. In celebration of this important milestone, this paper traces seventy years of scholarship on the archaeology of Qumran, with a view to highlighting key methodological issues surrounding the many heated debates about its nature and function as well as its relationship to the scrolls.*

## **Introduction**

The year 2017 marked the seventieth anniversary of the discovery of the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>2</sup> This collection of Jewish texts has been dubbed by many as one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the 20th century, and it has proven instrumental in shedding critical, new light on ancient Judaism and the transmission of biblical texts. It is no exaggeration to say that, in many ways, the discovery of the scrolls was a complete game changer, and thus it is very fitting that it is being celebrated. Nonetheless, the scrolls cannot be isolated from their context, without which a crucial part of their ‘identity’ would be missing. Therefore, any anniversary celebration of this important textual corpus should also be a celebration of Qumran, the site that gave us the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This brief article presents an overview of seventy years of scholarship on the archaeology of Qumran. The history of research is eventful, and the scholarly discussion on the site’s archaeology is quite complex, filling pages upon pages of books and journals. Inevitably, this paper will present nothing but a few simplified snapshots of some salient facets of this exciting field.

## A Brief History of Qumran

The site of Qumran has become intricately intertwined with the story of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The term ‘Qumran’ itself is used unequivocally with reference to this field of studies. However, there is more to the site than just the scrolls. The story, actually, begins several millennia ago. What follows is a concise and filtered history of Qumran. There are numerous debates and disagreements on multiple aspects of the site to the extent that a general paper of this sort would require disclaimers for many statements. Therefore, the ensuing narrative strives to present as straightforward a narrative as possible, yet inevitably an element of bias remains. In the end, this is the story of Qumran as I see it.

The earliest time when humans visited Qumran and left behind material traces of their presence was during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic and Neolithic periods (12<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> millennia BCE). The region became populated in the subsequent Chalcolithic period (5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> millennia BCE). In both phases, people made use of a number of caves dotting the limestone cliffs to the west of the Dead Sea, and there they dropped a number of stone implements, pottery, and other objects (de Vaux 1962; Patrich 1994; Zelinger 2002; Baruch, Mazar, and Sandhaus 2002; Cohen and Yisraeli 2002; Gopher *et al.* 2013). Probably, the caves were visited seasonally and used as shelters by hunter-gatherers or pastoralists who hailed from major settlements in the vicinity, such as Jericho and ‘Ein Gedi. At least one cave was also visited during the early Bronze Age (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, Baruch *et al.* 2002: 193–194).

The region then lay dormant for circa three millennia, until a small Israelite settlement, dating to the Iron Age II (8<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE), was constructed atop the marl plateau above Wadi Qumran, overlooking the northwest shore of the Dead Sea (de Vaux 1973: 1–3, Pl. III; Magen and Peleg 2006: 72–79, 101–102). This marked the erection of the first structures at Qumran, and these were destroyed during the tumultuous events of the Babylonian campaign against Judah (de Vaux 1973: 3; Magen and Peleg 2006: 79). Some of the surrounding caves, including ones that had been occupied previously, were utilized as well (de Vaux 1962; Patrich and Arubas 1989; Baruch *et al.* 2002; Ibrahim 2002a; 2002b), although it is unclear whether or not their use was coterminous with the occupation of the buildings or even whether they were utilized by the same inhabitants. The limited remains left behind, however, indicate that the caves were used only briefly or periodically.

The site lay fallow for several more centuries, and then, in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the Iron Age ruins were used as a blueprint for a new, larger settlement. This phase represents the most intensive and extensive occupation of the site, which lasted for around 150–170 years. The settlement was abandoned and subsequently burned

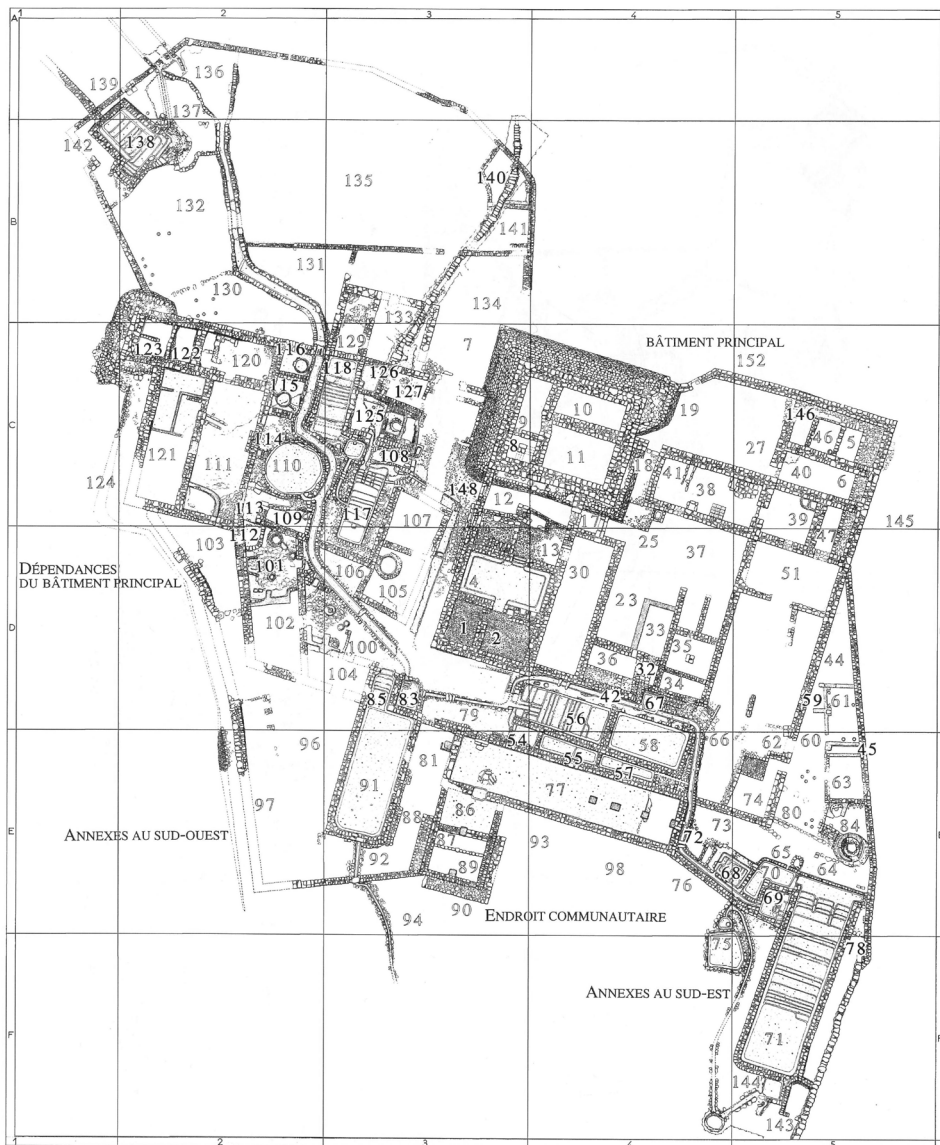


Fig. 1. Plan of the site during the 1st century BCE-CE (courtesy of the École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem).

down during the First Jewish Revolt, around 68 CE.<sup>3</sup> At its zenith, the built settlement consisted of a number of interlinked buildings. The main building comprised a two-storey structure with a central courtyard flanked by rooms and with a tower in its northwest corner. To its east, there was a triangular annexe, which accommodated two pottery kilns (L64 and L84) as well as compartments for the storage of pottery



Fig. 2. Aerial view of Qumran, with the Dead Sea in the background. Looking east. (Reproduced with permission of the Allegro Estate; courtesy of the Manchester Museum, the University of Manchester).

(*e.g.*, L45). To the west of the main building, there was another two-storey structure, the lower part of which was largely used as an industrial complex. Among other features, there were four circular ovens (in L101, L105, and L109), a large furnace (in L125), mill-stones (in L100, and in the nearby fills L102 and L104), cisterns (L110 and L117/118), and plastered installations and compartments (in L100, L101, and L121). To the south of the main building, there were further structures (*e.g.*, L77 and L86/89), cisterns (*e.g.*, L56/58, L71, and L91), a pressing installation (L75), and a cobble-paved esplanade (to the south of L77). The area northwest of the main building was characterized by a series of open spaces and plastered basins (*e.g.*, L130, L131, L132, L135, and L136). One of the most conspicuous features of the settlement was the intricate water system which fed water to over ten stepped and unstepped cisterns scattered throughout the site (Figs 1 and 2).

The inhabitants used an inordinate amount of pottery, thousands of sherds found throughout the ruins of the buildings as well as in designated dumps to the north, south, and east. Together with the pottery, remains of glass, stone, and metal vessels, metal tools and implements, clothing accessories, personal items,



Fig. 3. Cylindrical jar found at Qumran. (Reproduced with permission of the Allegro Estate; courtesy of the Manchester Museum, the University of Manchester).

and a large number of coins (including three hoards of silver coins in L120) reveal important facets of the inhabitants' daily life. The most notable artefacts are perhaps the ovoid and cylindrical jars, which have become synonymous with the site (Fig. 3). Yet, the most enigmatic finds are certainly the animal bone deposits, which comprise animal bones that were placed in the ground either within ceramic vessels or covered by such vessels (for more details on the various archaeological features of the buildings and the excavated finds, see de Vaux 1973: 1–48; Humbert and Chambon 1994; Donceel and Donceel-Voûte 1994; Magness 2002; Hirschfeld 2004; Magen and Peleg 2007; Cargill 2009; Mizzi 2009; Humbert *et al.* 2016).

The 1<sup>st</sup> century Qumranites buried their dead in a large cemetery to the east of the built settlement. Here, approximately 1,200 shaft graves were dug and marked on the surface by heaps or outlines of stones. The majority of the graves were laid out in orderly rows and oriented north-south, with a small minority oriented east-west. Not all tombs date to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE–CE, although a good number of them probably do. It is also not implausible that some of the interred individuals

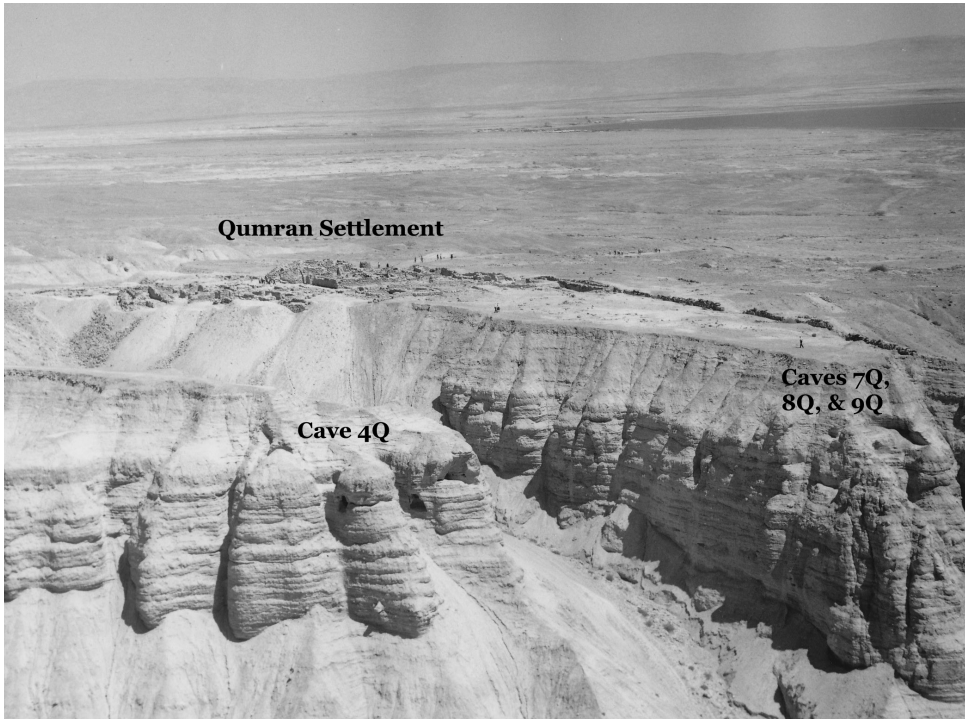


Fig. 4. Rock-cut caves connected with the Qumran settlement. Looking northeast. (Reproduced with permission of the Allegro Estate; courtesy of the Manchester Museum, the University of Manchester).

came from beyond Qumran. Despite the seemingly consistent method of burial, there are a number of possibly significant minor typological variations among the graves (for an overview, see Schultz 2006; Hachlili 2010).

As in previous periods, the caves in the surrounding landscape were exploited as well, and their usage resulted in the deposition of a large quantity of pottery in over fifty of these caves (de Vaux 1962; 1973: 49–52; Patrich 1994; Baruch, Mazor, and Sandhaus 2002; Cohen and Yisraeli 2002; Ibrahim 2002a; 2002b; Itah, Kam, and Ben-Haim 2002). The largest type of pottery consisted of cylindrical jars, paralleling those emanating from the nearby settlement. This is a critical piece of evidence since cylindrical jars were virtually unique to the local settlement, having been manufactured there.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, in all the Judaeen Desert caves, such jars were deposited only in the caves of Qumran. In addition, the inhabitants made use of around fifteen or more artificial caves hewn in the marl bedrock in the immediate environs of the built settlement (Fig. 4). Some of these caves were accessible only through the buildings; others were connected to the settlement by



Fig. 5. Cave 1Q. (Reproduced with permission of the Allegro Estate; courtesy of the Manchester Museum, the University of Manchester).

pathways (de Vaux 1962: 26–31; 1973: 52–53; Broshi and Eshel 1999). In the history of the site, therefore, this is the first time we have clear links between the buildings and the surrounding caves.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in eleven of these caves (Figs 5 and 6). In total, these form a collection of circa nine hundred scrolls containing religious texts, including ‘biblical’ texts, commentaries and interpretations of ‘biblical’ material, hymns and prayers, liturgical material, halakhic works, sapiential literature, eschatological texts, and rule texts which define the life and ideology of one or more sectarian groups. The large majority of these works were written in Hebrew, with others written in Aramaic and Greek. The extant scrolls were copied or composed between the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, and they appear to have been the property of the Qumranites, who then deposited the scrolls—for reasons still not entirely clear—in the caves sometime in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE–CE. Some of the scrolls were placed in cylindrical jars. The other caves could have been used for a wide range of functions, but a good many of the



Fig. 6. The Thanksgiving Scroll (1QHodayot), found in Cave 1Q. (Reproduced with permission of the Allegro Estate; courtesy of the Manchester Museum, the University of Manchester).

limestone caves, most of which were filled with cylindrical jars (plus their lids) and nothing else, probably stored scrolls as well.

Following the revolt, the site was reoccupied by a different group of settlers, who modified the site's layout quite drastically. Only parts of the main building

were rebuilt, and the water channel was diverted to feed directly into L71, the only functional cistern at this point (de Vaux 1973: 41–44). The inhabitants could have comprised a small Roman garrison who occupied the site for a few years, until the end of the revolt (*e.g.*, de Vaux 1973: 41–44; followed by Magness 2003: 62–63). More likely, however, the occupation did not have a military character, and it probably lasted for several decades (*e.g.*, Taylor 2006; Mizzi 2009: *passim*). It is possible that these new inhabitants reused some of the surrounding caves, and it is not implausible that the adjacent cemetery includes burials from this phase of occupation.

This marked the last major habitation at Qumran, but the region continued to witness activity in subsequent centuries. The buildings were used briefly during the Second Jewish Revolt (de Vaux 1973: 45). In later periods, a few late Roman/Byzantine and early Islamic coins were dropped over the ruins of the settlement (Humbert and Chambon 1994: *passim*), implying that the area was visited frequently enough for some coins to be lost in the process. In these same periods, some of the limestone caves were (re)used, probably for brief or periodic visits (see de Vaux 1962; Baruch *et al.* 2002; Cohen and Yisraeli 2002; Ibrahim 2002a; 2002b; Itah *et al.* 2002), and it is possible that new graves were dug in the ancient cemetery adjacent to the buildings (Clamer 2003). Significantly, accounts written in the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE report the discovery of scrolls in jars within caves near Jericho (Driver 1965: 7–15), possibly a veiled reference for the Qumran caves (Stegemann 1998: 68–71, 76–77). Further burials were added to the cemetery in the Ottoman period (Zias 2000), by which time the region had become home to Bedouin tribes. The site continued to experience visitors during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when various travellers and explorers carried out explorations in the region (de Saulcy 1853; Poole 1856; Isaacs 1857; Rey 1860; Conder and Kitchener 1883; Clermont-Ganneau 1896; Masterman 1902; 1903; Dalman 1914). Then, one fine day in late 1946 or early 1947, two young Bedouin shepherds stumbled upon a batch of scrolls placed in a cylindrical jar inside one of the caves—and the rest is history (for detailed account of the discovery and the early history of research on the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Fields 2009).

Qumran is a site of many facets, encompassing a diverse array of archaeological features *and* human occupations. While the site has become synonymous with the Dead Sea Scrolls, the site's archaeological and historical scope is wider by far. Nonetheless, since it is the anniversary of the discovery of the scrolls that we are celebrating, the remainder of this paper will concentrate on issues concerning the general period of their deposition. For this reason the above review emphasised the settlement remains from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

## Seventy Years of Excavations at Qumran

Despite the numerous visits to the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Qumran did not have an iota of the significance it was to acquire after the 1950s. Back in 1853, Louis-Félicien Caignart de Saulcy noted that the ruins at Qumran, which comprised what appeared to be the foundations of a square enclosure, ‘are not easily distinguished, and that it is very probable a hundred successive travellers might pass them by without the slightest idea of their existence’ (de Saulcy 1853: 63). Subsequent explorers did note the remains of various walls, a tower, an aqueduct, cisterns, and a cemetery—from which, one tomb was excavated by Clermont-Ganneau (1896, vol. 2: 15–16)—but otherwise, in the words of G. Lankester Harding, by the early 1950s Qumran ‘has been chiefly notable for its cemetery of more than 1,000 graves’ (Harding 1952: 104). The discovery of the scrolls in various caves close to the ruins changed the trajectory of the site’s history, turning this relatively unknown site into a worldwide phenomenon.

The link between the settlement and the scrolls was not established during the first official campaign, which was undertaken in 1949 by G. Lankester Harding (Department of Antiquities of Jordan) and Roland de Vaux (École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem). During this expedition, only Cave 1Q—as the first scroll cave came to be known eventually<sup>5</sup>—and two graves from the cemetery were investigated, and the adjacent buildings were thought to be the ruins of a Roman fort from the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE. Subsequently, in 1951, a small-scale excavation was carried out, for the first time, within the ruins of the buildings, leading Harding and de Vaux to make significant modifications to their previous conclusions. Not only was the chronology of the site revised, in light of newly found evidence for a 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE–CE occupation, but a cylindrical jar paralleling those discovered in Cave 1Q was discovered in one of the rooms, thus creating an apparent link between the settlement, the caves, and the scrolls. Consequently, Harding and de Vaux postulated that the inhabitants of Qumran must have been the very people responsible for writing and depositing the scrolls found in Cave 1Q (Harding 1952: 105; de Vaux 1953a: 105).

Eventually, the convergence of various pieces of evidence led to the conception of the so-called Qumran-Essene hypothesis, whose basic tenet is that Qumran was an Essene/sectarian settlement during the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE and CE.<sup>6</sup> The evidence included the presence of scrolls in the area of Qumran and their apparent connection to the settlement there; the existence of so-called sectarian texts among these scrolls, including the *Community Rule* (1QS), which seemingly portrays some of the practices and beliefs of a Jewish group which

called itself the Yahad; the occurrence of considerable similarities between the group depicted in 1QS and descriptions of the Essenes in Flavius Josephus (*War* 2.119–161; *Antiquities* 18.18–22), Philo of Alexandria (*Every Good Person Is Free* 75–91; *Apology for the Jews* 11), and Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 5.17); and Pliny's placement of the Essenes in the northwest shore of the Dead Sea, roughly corresponding to the geographic location of Qumran. These connections between the Qumran settlement, the scrolls, and the Essenes provided de Vaux with an impetus to embark on four further seasons of excavations, which were conducted between 1953 and 1956 (de Vaux 1954; 1956), and which resulted in the exposure of most of the built settlement and the unearthing of thousands of artefacts. Circa four km to the south, de Vaux also excavated a small farmhouse at 'Ein Feshkha, which he considered to be a satellite settlement of Qumran (de Vaux 1959; 1973: 58–87). To this day, the results of de Vaux's campaigns remain the backbone for any study of Qumran.

Meanwhile, in 1952, circa two hundred and seventy caves along the limestone cliff west of the settlement were surveyed and/or partially excavated, and a few artificially hewn marl caves in the immediate environs of the buildings were investigated. This expedition yielded important evidence about the use of the caves in their respective periods of occupation, and more scrolls were discovered—partly by Bedouin and partly by de Vaux's expedition—in what came to be known as Caves 2Q–10Q (de Vaux 1953b; 1962; 1973: 50–53; 1977). Four years later, in 1956, the eleventh scroll cave, Cave 11Q, was discovered by Bedouin and eventually excavated by de Vaux (1956: 573–574).

Following these initial campaigns, Qumran continued to attract the attention of a number of investigators. In the early 1960s, John Allegro conducted a number of expeditions in the northwest part of the Judaean Desert as part of his quest to find the treasures of the *Copper Scroll*—probably, the most enigmatic of the Dead Sea Scrolls—which reads like a treasure map. Allegro's work included stints in caves above 'Ein Feshkha and near Cave 11Q as well as within the ruins of the Qumran settlement (Allegro 1964: 7, 162; Brown 2005: 113–151). In the mid-1960s, conservation and restoration work was carried out at the site by Awni Dajani on behalf of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, and this resulted in the excavation of some material from cistern L110, including a number of stone vessels (Donceel and Donceel-Voûte 1994: 11). Later in the 1960s, ten further graves were excavated by Solomon H. Steckoll (1968; 1969).

The 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s were characterized by a resurging interest in the Qumran caves. Surveys and excavations were undertaken in various limestone caves—including ones which de Vaux's team had already explored—by Pesach Bar-Adon (1989), Joseph Patrich (Patrich and Arubas 1989; Patrich

1994), and the Israel Antiquities Authority (Baruch *et al.* 2002; Cohen and Yisraeli 2002; Ibrahim 2002a; 2002b; Itah *et al.* 2002), supplementing further data on the use and function(s) of the natural caves. In 1995–96, 2001, and 2002, Magen Broshi and Hanan Eshel carried out excavations in a few newly discovered marl caves to the south and north of the settlement as well as in the cemetery, which they also mapped with the aid of ground-penetrating radar (GPR; Broshi and Eshel 1999a; 1999b; 2004a; Eshel *et al.* 2002; Eshel and Broshi 2003). Between 1993 and 2004, Yizhak Magen and Yuval Peleg directed the biggest campaign of excavations at Qumran since de Vaux's, during which they investigated areas within the ruins of the built settlement and excavated more graves as well as various refuse dumps, which yielded thousands more potsherds and numerous other finds (Magen and Peleg 2006; 2007). Minor excavations as well as a GPR survey were conducted on the plateau by James F. Strange in 1996 (Strange 2006), and a few squares were opened on the same plateau in 2002 by Randall Price (2005).

Following this spate of campaigns, there was over a decade-long break. Then, in late 2016 and early 2017, two new excavations were carried out in two previously investigated caves. Oren Gutfeld and Randall Price reinvestigated Cave XII/53, which was formerly explored by the Israel Antiquities Authority. The excavation made headlines worldwide, with the media dubbing it (rather misleadingly) as the twelfth scroll cave, despite the fact that no scroll fragments bearing writing were actually found.<sup>7</sup> The other excavation was directed by Marcello Fidanzio and Dan Bahat, who returned to Cave 11Q with the intention of clarifying the archaeological, historical, and geological profile of the cave as well as de Vaux's work in it.<sup>8</sup>

Appropriately, therefore, seventy years after the discovery of the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls, there has been renewed interest in returning to the site and the caves that made it famous. The above account simplifies what is a very complicated history of excavations, one that has been entangled with regional political events and intricately intertwined with research on the scrolls. Indeed, in one way or another, the latter have often dictated the archaeological agenda of Qumran, and they have been the primary impetus behind most of the excavations undertaken there. This reality (and its possible ramifications) has to be acknowledged in any assessment of the methodology and results of these campaigns.

Unfortunately, despite this rich history of excavations, a large part of the material remains unpublished or only partially published. At present, therefore, scholars are unable to generate truly holistic interpretations of the site, having to rely on a limited body of selective evidence available through reports of varying depth and quality. In many ways, seven decades later, the field remains stuck in its adolescent years. There is much to learn still, and many more discussions to be had and discoveries to be made. Meanwhile, the publication of a new volume on

de Vaux's excavations (Humbert *et al.* 2016) represents a welcome step forward towards the field's continued growth.<sup>9</sup>

### Debating Qumran

In his famous Schweich lectures, delivered in 1959, de Vaux produced a synthesis of his findings at Qumran. This was subsequently published in French (de Vaux 1961) and in English (de Vaux 1973), and the publication remains a landmark study, particularly because de Vaux never managed to oversee the final report on his excavations. On the basis of archaeological and textual evidence (*i.e.*, the scrolls and classical sources on the Essenes), de Vaux concluded that the buildings at Qumran served as a communal centre for a rather large religious (quite possibly Essene) community, the members of which lived in the various caves around the site as well as in tents. The buildings themselves were used for the carrying out of joint activities, such as work, study and prayer, and the partaking of communal meals. According to de Vaux, the Qumranites comprised a celibate male community who led an austere lifestyle, deprived of sumptuousness, and who were, for the most part, cut-off from general society; members of this community were buried in individual graves in the adjacent cemetery. Some of de Vaux's most renowned conclusions include his interpretation of L77 as a dining room (de Vaux 1973: 11–12, 111) and L30 as a *scriptorium*, where some of the scrolls were written or copied (de Vaux 1973: 29–33, 104–105). Crucially, for de Vaux, the scrolls found in the caves constituted the library of this Qumran community. De Vaux reckoned that this settlement was established in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, although it did not reach its fully fledged plan before the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. He also concluded that, around 31 BCE, Qumran was abandoned following the devastating earthquake that struck Judaea (*cf.* Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.121), only to be reoccupied by the same inhabitants at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. The site then remained in use till 68 CE, when it was abandoned and subsequently destroyed by the Romans.

Although the basic tenets of de Vaux's interpretation were and remain widely accepted by the scholarly community, scholars have challenged and debated a number of its points. A major point of contention has been the chronology of the site and the architectural development of its buildings (*e.g.*, Laperrousaz 1976; Humbert 1994; Humbert *et al.* 2016; Magness 2002; Hirschfeld 2004; Magen and Peleg 2006; Cargill 2009; Stacey and Doudna 2013; Mizzi and Magness 2016; and *cf.* Mizzi 2015). It is now widely accepted that the settlement was established in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and that there was no thirty-year-long occupation gap following the earthquake of 31 BCE. However, many other

details remain contested, and there are several competing models outlining the chronology and architectural development of the buildings. This is the result of a number of factors, among them the absence of a complete publication of de Vaux's field documentation (although great strides have been made in this regard), the lack of stratigraphic precision during his excavations (which means that we have little to no dateable material from critical contexts), and the fact that the site was continuously occupied throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE and CE (which means that much of the evidence from the earliest phases of the buildings was disturbed by later activity). As a result, many of these hypotheses rely on several assumptions, leading to the creation of entire narratives that are as unstable as a house of cards (see the discussion in Mizzi 2015). Sometimes, we may have to acknowledge the limits of our data and the parameters of interpretation permissible, while realizing that some stories can never be told in full.

The disagreements do not stop there, and challenges have also been directed at the interpretation of several aspects of the site as well as its general character. For instance, some scholars have suggested that, before becoming an Essene/sectarian settlement, Qumran was a villa (Humbert 1994; 2003a; 2003b) or a fortress (Cargill 2009). Others have posited a different take regarding the religious or ritual character of the site, arguing that Qumran was not merely an Essene/sectarian settlement but also had a cultic dimension (Humbert 1994; 2006; and recently Magness 2016), or that it was a ritual purification centre (Cook 1996), or that it was a centre for the production of parchment and scrolls (Stegemann 1998: 51–55), or that it was a scroll-burial centre (Taylor 2012). The enigmatic animal bones deposits, unparalleled at any other site from the period, have attracted countless interpretations with varying nuances concerning their possibly ritual character (*e.g.*, van der Ploeg 1957; Milik 1959; Gärtner 1965: 10–13; Laperrousaz 1976: 218–219; Duhaime 1977; Schiffman 1994: 337–338; Cross 1995: 65, 85–86; Magness 2016; Mizzi 2016b).<sup>10</sup> The question of celibacy, or whether or not there were women at Qumran, has had its fair share of discussion as well, and often this has been tied with debates concerning evidence for women in the cemetery (*e.g.*, Taylor 1999; Zias 2000; Zangenberg 2000; Magness 2002: 163–185; White Crawford 2003; Röhrer-Ertl 2006; Sheridan and Ullinger 2006). There is also an ongoing conversation regarding the population size at Qumran, linked with debates concerning the function(s) of the Qumran caves: how many people lived at Qumran, and did they live within the built settlement or in caves? Proposals have ranged from as few as ten to fifteen inhabitants, to well over a hundred or more (*e.g.*, Milik 1959: 97; Laperrousaz 1976: 99–107; Wood 1984; Broshi 1992: 114; Patrich 1994: 76; 2000; Stegemann 1998: 49; Broshi

and Eshel 1999a; 1999b; Magness 2002: 69–71; Mizzi 2016a). This in turn has implications for the characterization of the Qumran settlement, classified variously as a one-of-a-kind site and home to a breakaway community, as the central settlement or headquarters of a widespread sectarian movement, or simply as one of many sites that formed a network of sectarian settlements (e.g., Metso 1999; 2006; Regev 2003; Collins 2003; 2006; 2010; Hempel 2008; 2013; Schofield 2009; Taylor 2012; Mizzi forthcoming). There are also divergent views on the relationship between Qumran and ‘Ein Feshkha (e.g., Magness 2002: 210–223; Hirschfeld 2004: 183, 185, 209; Humbert 2006: 24–27; Taylor 2007: 256), and a wide range of opinions concerning the history and processes of deposition behind the scrolls in the Qumran caves (e.g., Doudna 2006; Doudna in Stacey and Doudna 2013; Stökl Ben Ezra 2007; Pfann 2007; Schofield 2009; Collins 2010; García Martínez 2010a, 2010b; Taylor 2012: 272–303; Popović 2012; White Crawford 2012; Hempel 2013: 303–337; Mizzi forthcoming). The above are only a few select examples of the divergent views on Qumran—there are many more, some focusing on questions regarding the site’s connectivity or on issues of trade, economy, industry, and wealth, or on the function of specific rooms and installations, or on notions of ritual purity, or on other matters—and many of these have been put forth by advocates of the Essene/sectarian hypothesis.

Therefore, despite its seemingly monolithic status as the so-called consensus view, there are actually many variants of this hypothesis.<sup>11</sup> Scholars who reject it altogether give the impression of a dissolving consensus, but the reality is there barely ever was one to begin with. In fact, there is no unanimously dominating view of Qumran, even though Magness’ monograph on Qumran remains the most popular and most influential treatment of the site (Magness 2002). Consequently, with the exception of archaeologists who deal with specific issues of the site’s archaeology, the majority of scholars tend to accept or allude to the Essene/sectarian hypothesis in very general terms, rarely clarifying which variation of the hypothesis they accept. One could say that the field has been in a permanent state of fluctuation.

This has been exacerbated by various critical challenges levelled against the Essene/sectarian interpretation as a whole. The first break from the consensus emerged quite early. Henri del Medico (1957) and Karl Rengstorf (1960) questioned the idea that the scrolls had any connection with the buildings at Qumran, with Rengstorf specifically claiming that the scrolls came from a temple library in Jerusalem. The view was popularized by Norman Golb (1995), who went further and argued that the buildings at Qumran were actually the remains of a fortress rather than the abode of an Essene community.<sup>12</sup> Once the link between the scrolls and the settlement had been fractured, the site invited

further interpretations, among them that Qumran was a villa or a wealthy manor estate (Donceel and Donceel-Voûte 1994; Donceel-Voûte 1994; Hirschfeld 2004), a waystation (Crown and Cansdale 1994; Cansdale 1997), a pottery-production centre (Magen and Peleg 2006; 2007), or a seasonal, multi-industrial site related to the Hasmonaean and Herodian royal palaces in Jericho (Stacey 2007; 2008; Stacey and Doudna 2013), among others.<sup>13</sup> What unites these diverse interpretations is the notion that the inhabitants of Qumran had no intrinsic connection to the scrolls.

It is worth exploring, albeit briefly, some of the catalysts behind this plurality of views. Naturally, alternative interpretations of specific aspects of the site result from the nature of archaeological evidence in general, which tends to be multivalent, although some interpretations are, of course, more probable than others. The fact that Qumran is an ‘overexposed’ site in the scholarly world further explains the myriad of studies specifically about it, each of which inevitably comes with its own set of perspectives. The key catalyst behind the state of the field, however, is a methodological conundrum specific to the archaeology of Qumran. As already signalled above, at the very centre of the whole Qumran debate is the very issue of the relationship between the settlement at Qumran, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Essenes. Generally, scholars who reject the Essene/sectarian hypothesis argue that the relation between the scrolls and the settlement, on the one hand, and the Essenes and Qumran, on the other, is questionable. In the following pages, I focus largely on the case of the scrolls since the question of the Essene identity is mainly a textual one.<sup>14</sup>

Hirschfeld (2004: 41, 43) emphasizes the fact that the only archaeological link between the scrolls and the settlement is the pottery, particularly the cylindrical jars within or alongside which some of the scrolls were discovered. At most, this indicates that those who deposited the scrolls in the surrounding caves might have obtained ceramic jars from the local inhabitants. Therefore, according to this perspective, the proximity of the caves to the settlement and the presence of the same types of pottery in these two contexts are somewhat irrelevant. On the basis of parallels with cylindrical jars from Masada, Rachel Bar-Nathan has also claimed that the jars in the Qumran caves actually date to the period between 66–68 CE and 74 CE, and concludes that ‘there is no necessary link between the jars found in the caves and those found at the site’ (Bar-Nathan 2006: 275, 277).

In principle, the argument that the archaeological evidence does not create an explicit link between the scrolls and the inhabitants of Qumran is not incorrect; archaeology can only take us so far. However, the evidence does not exclude a more intrinsic connection between them either. One needs to look at the larger picture to determine the extent of this connection, and in doing so one would see that there is a significant convergence of evidence that actually underpins

arguments in favour of an intrinsic relationship (on the contrary, hypotheses that divorce the scrolls from the built settlement create more problems than they solve). First, there is an overall thematic and ideological unity across several different texts found in different caves, which suggests that the scrolls largely belonged to a specific group; the contents of various scrolls do not seem to be congruent with what one would expect from a temple library. Secondly, some of the scroll caves (Caves 7Q–9Q) were only accessible through the built settlement; therefore, unless the material in these caves was deposited after 68 CE, it is hard to divorce them from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE–CE inhabitants of Qumran. Thirdly, it seems quite implausible that someone would have travelled all the way to Qumran to hide scrolls in the caves there, when the area of Jerusalem and Jericho is replete with natural caves; critically, the two caves that constitute Cave 4Q, which are located right across from the built settlement, contained the largest concentration of scrolls, exceeding five hundred. Fourthly, the claim that the cylindrical jars in the caves probably date to 66–73/4 CE is misleading. This claim is based on a typological argument, which is precarious, since the same types of pottery could have had different histories of use at different sites; therefore, the fact that analogous cylindrical jars are attested in post-68 CE contexts at Masada does not mean that they could not have already been in circulation decades earlier. In addition to these, one could also add various other pointers which underscore the connection that must have existed between the settlement, the caves, and the scrolls, such as the geographical proximity of the scroll caves to the settlement; the existence of ceramic links between the caves and the settlement (keeping in mind that cylindrical jars have been found in the Qumran caves but in no other caves in the Judaean Desert); the roughly analogous chronological timeframe of the settlement's occupation in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE–CE and the dating of the majority of the scrolls;<sup>15</sup> and the evidence for a scribal culture at the site, attested by (among other things) the presence of numerous inkwells, which also happen to be very rare finds in 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE–CE contexts elsewhere.

On their own, many of these pointers constitute circumstantial evidence; but taken altogether, they create a very strong argument for the connection between the Qumran settlement, the caves, and the scrolls—however this relationship is defined (see below). The burden of proof really rests on those who question this link; those who ask for more proof expect the impossible from archaeology, which deals in probability rather than certainty. As far as archaeological arguments go, this is as strong as they come, and it is exceedingly more plausible than arguments which divorce the scrolls from the site's inhabitants. Thus, interpretations of the site that ignore the scrolls or, else, consider them as extraneous to the site are essentially based on selective archaeological evidence, and they overlook an important piece of the puzzle.

Of course, this does not mean that Qumran, or specific features of the site, should therefore be interpreted through the lens of the textual sources, a frequent criticism levelled against variants of the Essene/sectarian hypothesis. For methodological purposes, it is important not to conflate the textual content of the scrolls and the archaeology of Qumran at the first stage of the research process. Texts and archaeology are two very specialized fields—written and material evidence cast light on different facets of the past, and both are characterized by a number of particular limitations and shortcomings concerning the kind of information they can provide; therefore, texts and archaeology need to be subjected to various forms of analyses which are specific to the respective disciplines, and scholars have to ask different questions through each body of evidence. Accordingly, text and artefact should ideally be studied separately at first—even if the relationship between them is strong, as is the case with the scrolls and Qumran—so that one source does not influence the interpretation of the other. Any integration of texts and archaeology has to happen at a secondary stage in the research process and, even then, it is the *interpretations* of textual and archaeological data that should be brought into dialogue with each other and not the *data* themselves (cf. Frendo 2011).

Thus, for instance, the complex literary history of some of the so-called sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls, such as the *Community Rule* (cf. Murphy-O'Connor 1969; Alexander 1996; Metso 1997; Alexander and Vermes 1998; Schofield 2009) and the *Damascus Document* (cf. Davies 1983; Baumgarten 1996; Hempel 1998) as well as the uncertain relationship between these two documents and the groups depicted therein (cf. Regev 2003; 2007; Collins 2003; 2006; 2010; Hempel 2013) preclude one from applying, uncritically, the data inferred from these scrolls onto the archaeological remains at Qumran. These two literary traditions have often been used to reconstruct the history, social structure, organisation, and lifestyle of the community believed to have lived at Qumran. But do the *Community Rule* and the *Damascus Document* legislate for different branches within the same larger group, do they diachronically represent the same group at two different points in time, or do they reflect two separate but closely related groups? Accordingly, which tradition are we to relate specifically to Qumran? And what if neither is actually representative of the group living there? And even if they do relate to Qumran, which of these texts' many literary strata do we relate with the settlement? What if the archaeological remains at Qumran and the descriptions in the *Community Rule* or the *Damascus Document* pertain to different chronological realities? More importantly, how can we ascertain whether or not these texts are direct windows onto daily practices at Qumran or any other related settlement? As Charlotte Hempel (2013: 8) has aptly noted, the rule texts from Qumran are not 'candid camera[s] producing 'reality literature' [but] complex literary artefacts whose own claims need to be treated with caution'. The same holds true for the use of the classical sources on the Essenes (to

introduce them back into the discussion), which have their own set of issues—like the scrolls, the different portrayals of the Essenes have to be filtered through a critical lens first; moreover, the exact nature of the Qumran-Essene connection remains somewhat unclear, which means that any historically reliable insights we gain on the Essenes through a critical reading of the classical sources cannot be taken as applicable directly to Qumran or the Qumranites. Finally, there are also outstanding questions regarding the history and processes of deposition of the scrolls, despite the presumed strong link between them and the Qumran inhabitants. When did the scrolls get to Qumran? Who brought them there? Why were they deposited in the caves, and when exactly? Was the deposition a singular event or a long, drawn-out process? Was there a ‘library’ at Qumran? Were all the scrolls used (or read) at the settlement? Or did some come from other related ‘sectarian settlements’?

The way we address the above issues affects the dynamic between the scrolls, the Essenes, and the Qumranites in profound ways, and this will in turn impinge on how we would integrate text and artefact. In the end, we must acknowledge that it is entirely possible that the scrolls and the sources on the Essenes might tell us very little on the settlement at Qumran or its inhabitants, and *vice versa*. In other words, it may be the case that there is little to no overlap between texts and archaeology in the case of Qumran, despite the presumed correlations between the human subjects of our sources and despite the fact that the scrolls, as physical artefacts, are an integral part of the site’s archaeology. But this also means that a thorough archaeological analysis of Qumran might elucidate further the world *behind* the scrolls—that is, the socio-cultural world of the people who collected, used, and deposited these textual artefacts—and, possibly, what stands behind the literary portrayals of the Essenes. Qumran, therefore, could have the potential to cast new light on at least one settlement that was related to the group(s) depicted in the Dead Sea Scrolls and (perhaps) the Essenes with regard to facets that might have been ignored by the texts; the archaeology of Qumran could also provide an important contrast to the idealized (and ideological) world of the texts by presenting a picture that is untainted by such flourishes or the dynamics of cultural memory. In many ways, contrast, rather than identification or correspondence, is epistemologically more rewarding. Seeming contradictions between texts and archaeology do not necessarily disprove the Essene/sectarian hypothesis.

In view of all the above issues, it is evident that the integration of sources cannot be characterized by the use of texts as ciphers to explain and interpret archaeological features; rather, texts and archaeology should be seen as analogies, the intersection of which could create a context in which their respective interpretations could be compared and contrasted, in the process leading to the formulation of new insights. The outcome would be a much richer understanding of Qumran, the world of the scrolls, and the Essenes than that which would be achieved if we were to just aim at

establishing an identification or correspondence between text and artefact. Indeed, the latter would be a very narrow approach to the sources and one which limits considerably the potential to which they could be put to use.<sup>16</sup>

As far as the field of Qumran studies is concerned, it is perhaps time that the methodological debate ceases to focus on whether Qumran, the scrolls, and the Essenes are related or on whether or not Qumran was a ‘sectarian settlement’. Instead, we could concentrate on how actually to relate the archaeology of Qumran with the textual sources in a methodologically sound manner (*cf.* Mizzi 2017a).

Beyond the question of the scrolls connection, there are a number of other important methodological considerations to highlight, some of which arise from the previous points. An important issue that many proponents of the non-Essene/sectarian perspective raise is that of the regional context (*e.g.*, Zangenberg 2004). Approaching Qumran through a contextual framework, various scholars emphasize the many similarities between the archaeology of Qumran and that of other regional sites, such as Jericho, Masada, ‘Ein ez-Zara, ‘Ein Gedi, and ‘Ein Boqeq. Consequently, they argue that Qumran appears to have been well integrated within the regional economy, that there is little evidence for a group with peculiar practices, and that, therefore, it is quite unlikely that a sectarian group inhabited the site. The fact that the archaeology of Qumran is not as unique or peculiar as scholars used to think is more or less correct. However, this does not mean that the site could not have been inhabited by a group related to the scrolls. To state otherwise is a logical fallacy and assumes that a sectarian group—even one that may have been viewed as peculiar by outsiders—would have necessarily left behind a peculiar archaeological record. Similar logical fallacies underlie arguments which state that the evidence for females at Qumran (still debatable as noted above) or for wealth is incongruent with an Essene/sectarian presence at the site. These arguments tell us more about modern perceptions of ancient Jewish sectarianism than they tell us about the actual groups themselves. In fact, none of this evidence is really incompatible with what we know about the group(s) depicted in the scrolls or the Essenes. Even if there were incongruences, they would prove nothing. As argued above, there could have been a chasm between literary constructs and real life.

The tendency of interpreting the character of the Qumran settlement on the basis of its plan represents another methodological fallacy. For example, the fully developed plan of the settlement has been compared to that of a fortress or of a semi-luxurious fortified manor, and the site’s function at this stage in its architectural history has been interpreted accordingly, as noted above. In theory, one could even argue that the site’s architectural layout resembles that of sites identified as waystations. However, if there is anything that these similarities tell us, it is that the Qumranites were using the same architectural

metaphors and designs prevalent at the time. Indeed, the fact that the buildings at Qumran can be positively compared to different types of sites cautions us that we have to go beyond superficial similarities. Thus, for example, the fact that Qumran is not located near a major trading route puts a serious dent in the hypothesis that the settlement was a waystation (Broshi 1999; Taylor and Gibson 2011). The lack of proper architectural decoration makes it hard to classify Qumran as a semi-luxurious fortified manor (Magness 1994),<sup>17</sup> whereas the plan of the settlement is simply too cluttered for it to have served as a fortress, at least once it achieved its fully fledged form. At most, one could argue that the presence of various industrial installations shows that Qumran was an industrial site, but does this mean that, therefore, Qumran could not have been inhabited by the same people who owned the scrolls? Absolutely not, for this would assume that there was such a thing as a ‘sectarian building’ and that a ‘sectarian settlement’ would have had a fundamentally different layout than other types of settlements. Although there are specific archaeological features which could reflect specific sectarian practices, we cannot say that there is such a thing as an archaeology of sectarianism; a sectarian group, whatever its affiliation, would not necessarily have left a distinct pattern in the archaeological record.

This brings us to another important point, which relates to another common methodological pitfall that one often encounters in the Qumran debate—namely, the propensity for one interpretation to be ruled out on account of another. Essentially, this tendency eliminates the possibility that two or more interpretations could be sustained simultaneously, without necessarily being mutually exclusive. Contrarily, I think that it is crucial that we adopt a multi-functional approach to the archaeology of Qumran. After all, sectarians had to earn a living too. Therefore, there is no reason why an industrial site, for example, could not have also been, simultaneously, a ‘sectarian settlement’.

I specifically mention this type of site because the various industrial installations at Qumran suggest that *one of* the primary functions of the settlement was agro-industrial. In view of the fact that the date palm was one of the most important and precious resources in the region, it is most likely that the Qumranites were involved in the date industry. This is corroborated by the discovery of large quantities of dates and date pits (Magen and Peleg 2007: 5, 7, Figs 9–10); sealed jars containing date honey (Magen and Peleg 2007: 45, Figs 46–47); a press (L75) that was probably used for the production of date wine; and possibly by the discovery of an ostrakon which appears to suggest, on Yardeni’s (1997) reading, that the Qumranites possessed palm groves. Furthermore, the function of various plaster installations scattered around the site may be related to the production of date products (Mizzi forthcoming).

At the same time, a detailed contextual approach to the archaeology of Qumran reveals the existence of some idiosyncratic features. Above, it was noted that similarities to other sites are not particularly decisive, but differences certainly are. Indeed, the presence of an adjacent cemetery and the phenomenon of the animal bone deposits remain quite distinctive. These features remain unparalleled at other sites, whether they are fortresses, villas, estates, waystations, or farmsteads, and none of the alternative hypotheses have explained these features convincingly. The archaeological evidence also reveals a heightened focus on matters of ritual purity, usually at a level that goes beyond what was typical at most other contemporary settlements (Mizzi 2009). This is a clearly distinct aspect of the archaeology of Qumran, which becomes all the more significant when one considers the fact that the group(s) depicted in the scrolls and the Essenes appear to have espoused strict purity practices.

The force of the evidence as a whole makes it impossible to ignore the strong probability that Qumran was inhabited by a group related to the scrolls and the Essenes, but without excluding the fact that this community cultivated palm groves and produced date products, and that it engaged in other industries at the same site. The two interpretations are definitely not mutually exclusive. The problem, in fact, lies in the use of the term ‘sectarian settlement’, which tells us very little about the site’s functions, not to mention that the term does not describe an architectural category or settlement type and gives the false impression that the settlement was exclusively ‘religious’ in nature.

### **Towards an Archaeology of the Dead Sea Scrolls**

Above, I underlined the fact that the scrolls are an integral component of the archaeology of Qumran. Yet, for most of the past seventy years, the scrolls have been approached mainly as disembodied texts, with the focus placed squarely on the scrolls’ contents and matters of textuality. This is not to say that there have not been studies which recognize the material dimension of the scrolls, but the study of the scrolls as archaeological artefacts remains in its infancy, with most of the advances having been made in the last decade or so. In these last few pages, I make some brief reflections on the way forward towards an archaeology of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Like other artefacts, the scrolls have to be studied as objects, with the aim to learn more about their physical properties. Much work has already been done in this regard. Of particular note are the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series (in which most of the scrolls have been published), which includes detailed physical descriptions of the scrolls and their scripts, and Emanuel Tov’s magisterial study on scribal practices (Tov 2004a). Science is particularly helpful for this stage of the research, and indeed a number of scientific studies have been carried out on

the scrolls, including investigations on the preparation and characterization of the leather or parchment (e.g., Poole and Reed 1962; Rabin *et al.* 2010), radiocarbon dating (e.g., Bonani *et al.* 1992; Tull *et al.* 1995), DNA analysis (Bar-Gal 2001), compositional analysis of the ink (e.g., Nir-El and Broshi 1996; Rabin *et al.* 2009), and digital palaeography (e.g., M. A. Dhali *et al.* 2017).<sup>18</sup> The potential of these approaches is immense, and they can shed valuable light on the production techniques, typology, and provenance of inks, parchment, and papyrus as well as on the dates of production or composition of the scrolls and scribal material culture in general. Nonetheless, at present, most of the completed studies have been limited in scope, and further work is therefore required to assess the validity and reliability of the results, and exploit their full potential. For instance, recent claims that the water composition of ink pinpoint the Dead Sea as the place of writing of at least one scroll (Rabin *et al.* 2009) need to be tested within the context of a much larger sample. In particular, it is imperative that a 2<sup>nd</sup> century scroll is tested to see if it reveals the same results, keeping in mind that Qumran lay uninhabited in this period. It is key that scientific results are ‘calibrated’ by archaeological evidence, a point that is often forgotten.<sup>19</sup>

Studying the scrolls as objects is not enough. The primary aim of archaeology is to learn more about ancient peoples through the material traces they have left behind; in other words, the focus of archaeology is on people rather than objects *per se*. Accordingly, the study of the scrolls as human artefacts should strive to unravel information on ancient religious and intellectual life, economy and trade, daily practices and lifestyle, general historical processes or events, and more. In this sense, scrolls should be treated no differently than pottery, glass, stones, metals, or other categories of artefacts. Again, important strides have been made, with a number of critical studies seeking to identify scroll depositional patterns and their historical import, or assess the significance of the type and quality of scrolls present at Qumran relative to other locales in the Judaean Desert, or understand the Qumran corpus within the context of ancient book collections, or explore how the scrolls could have been used and handled (e.g., Tov 2004a; 2004b; 2016; Lange 2006; Stökl Ben Ezra 2007; Pfann 2007; García Martínez 2010a, 2010b; Popović 2012; Taylor 2012: 272–303; White Crawford 2012; 2016; 2017; Hempel 2013; Falk 2014; Brooke 2016; 2017; and see the various contributions in White Crawford and Wassen 2016). Further studies on other aspects of ancient daily life that the scrolls could illumine would be most welcome.

One further step is necessary, however, for an archaeology of the Dead Sea Scrolls to be fully realized. The scrolls need to be placed back in their archaeological context and analysed as part of an assemblage, without them being prioritized over other artefacts. Where were scrolls placed inside the cave? Were there other associated artefacts? What were the conditions of the respective caves at the time

of deposition? Were the caves blocked, inaccessible, or relatively hidden from view? Were there later visits made to the caves? To what extent, and how, were caves affected by natural and cultural post-depositional processes? And therefore, what were the conditions like at the time of excavation, circa seventy years ago? Scholars have only begun asking these questions (*e.g.*, Popović 2012; Taylor 2012: 272–303; Zangenberg 2016; White Crawford 2017; Mizzi forthcoming). Indeed, it is significant that no book to date on the archaeology of Qumran dedicates a chapter to the archaeology of the caves and the scrolls.

An especially important development in this regard is the launching of the Qumran Caves Publication Project—headed by Jean-Baptiste Humbert and Marcello Fidanzio—whose aim is to publish a series of final reports on de Vaux’s excavations of the Qumran caves, with a view to contextualizing the artefacts inside the respective caves. The first volume, which will focus on Cave 11Q, is expected to be out in the coming year or so. Also of note is the launching of the Leverhulme-funded International Network for the Study of Dispersed Qumran Cave Artefacts and Archival Sources, a project run by Joan Taylor, Marcello Fidanzio, and the present author. The project seeks to retrace and study several archaeological artefacts from the Qumran caves which have been dispersed in museums and collections worldwide, with the aim to make such data easily accessible via a website ([www.dqcaas.com](http://www.dqcaas.com)) and publications (*e.g.*, Taylor *et al.* 2017), thus facilitating holistic approaches to the subject matter. The network also aims to study archival and photographic sources pertaining to the early excavations in the caves, which could shed valuable light on the context of certain artefacts, including the scrolls. The network investigators are therefore very keen to hear from anyone with access to early photographs relating to the Qumran caves or the general region.

It is fitting that seventy years later, we are going back to the caves, where it all started, to reconstruct the assemblages there in such a way that we can understand better both the processes behind the deposition of the scrolls and the history of the caves, which appear more complex and multifaceted than scholars tend to assume. Indeed, despite the high probability that the scrolls had an intrinsic connection with the local settlement and its inhabitants, there remain several open questions as to the exact nature of this relationship, as noted above. An archaeology of the scrolls—one which integrates the three general approaches outlined above—will hopefully clarify a few of these outstanding matters.

### **Qumran at Seventy and Beyond**

Seventy years later, the work has barely started. There remain several unanswered questions—some have not even been referenced here—and there are plenty

of details to refine. Moreover, the field is currently in a process of resurgence and rejuvenation, with a spate of new publications having come out or in the pipeline, including the continuation of the final reports on the site and the caves. Undoubtedly, this will force us to go back to the drawing board and reconsider a number of issues from new perspectives.

Still, the Essene/sectarian hypothesis, in its general formulation, has withstood the test of time and remains the interpretation that best explains the extant evidence. It is highly doubtful that new data will seriously undermine this interpretation of the site—which is not to say that it is flawless or that there is no room for further modifications or refinements. But seeming discrepancies or shortcomings do not invalidate the hypothesis. In this age of post-truth and ‘alternative facts’, it is especially easy to dismiss critical pieces of evidence and selectively trump up other data to support alternative narratives at the expense of explanations that work better. In the constant drive to come up with something new and different, or maybe original, there also seems to have developed a taboo against championing older ideas—often dubbed, somewhat patronizingly, ‘traditional’—which is counterintuitive to scholarship. If an idea works, it works.

So, where do we go from here? My wish is to see Qumran more fully integrated within wider fields dealing with classical antiquity. Often, the study of Qumran and the scrolls operates within two bubbles: that of the subject’s own specialty and that of the larger fields of ancient Judaism and biblical studies. However, Qumran—and all other Jewish sites of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, for that matter—was essentially part of an interconnected Mediterranean world (*cf.* Mizzi 2017b). In this sense, Qumran is also a classical site, and thus its interpretation should be contextualized accordingly. It is also in the field’s interest to promote its work among other disciplines, which could stand to learn from the unique characteristics the site and its scrolls have to offer. Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the field’s continued growth necessitates that we stop considering it a distinct field. Its future, in other words, lies beyond Qumran.

## Notes

- 1 This is an updated and revised version of my ‘60 Years of Qumran Archaeology’ (Mizzi 2011). I thank David Milson, editor of *Strata*, for inviting me to contribute the paper to this issue.
- 2 Although the ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ as a term is often used with reference to the manuscript discoveries made at Qumran, it in fact encapsulates a larger category of texts emanating from around the Dead Sea (*e.g.*, Jericho, Wadi Murabba‘at, ‘Ein Gedi, Masada, and others), texts which come from different social milieus and chronological contexts. In this paper, the focus is on the scrolls from Qumran.

- 3 The chronology and architectural development of the site during the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE and CE is one of the hotly debated issues. For a critical overview of the various competing hypotheses, see Mizzi 2015. Here, I base my narrative on Magness 2002: 63–69; Mizzi 2015; Mizzi and Magness 2016.
- 4 Although cylindrical jars are attested beyond Qumran, the number is negligible compared to the large quantity and variety of types present at the site. This phenomenon, therefore, is truly unparalleled elsewhere. See further Mizzi 2016a: 148–149, n. 77.
- 5 Early on, the cave was referred to as the ‘Ein Feshkha cave, which was, at the time, the closest landmark to Cave 1Q (Taylor *et al.* 2005: 159).
- 6 The identification of the sectarian group mentioned in one of the Cave 1Q scrolls (*i.e.*, the *Community Rule*) with the Essenes had already been made earlier by various scholars, such as Eleazar Sukenik (1948–50), William H. Brownlee (1950), and André Dupont-Sommer (1950).
- 7 Most of the major international newspapers carried a report on the discoveries of the renewed investigations. See, for example, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/08/world/new-dead-sea-scrolls-cave-discovered/index.html> [last accessed July 2017]; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-38916687> [last accessed July 2017]. As for the misleading nomenclature, see the brief note in Fidanzio 2017.
- 8 See the press release at <http://www.teologialugano.ch/uploads/4/1/6/6/41664437/iscab-press-release-2017-03.pdf> [last accessed July 2017]. The results of the excavation will be published in the forthcoming final report on Cave 11Q, edited by Jean-Baptiste Humbert and Marcello Fidanzio.
- 9 This is the third volume in the series, and it deals with part of the site’s stratigraphy and the ceramic lamps. The first volume (Humbert and Chambon 1994) reproduces de Vaux’s field notes and photographs from the excavation (see also Rohrhirsch and Hofmeir 1996 [German edition]; Humbert *et al.* 2003 [English edition]). The second volume (Humbert and Gunneweg 2003) contains various scientific, anthropological, and archaeological studies on the site’s architecture, the cemetery, pottery, inscribed artefacts, and textiles.
- 10 There are then interpretations which see the bone deposits as nothing but remnants of a variety of possible utilitarian or industrial practices (*e.g.*, Hirschfeld 2004: 106–111; Magen and Peleg 2006: 94–96; Taylor 2012: 286; Stacey and Doudna 2013: 55).
- 11 The alternative perspectives listed above are limited to those that somehow deal with the site’s archaeology. There are also a number of studies that engage with the textual dimension of the hypothesis. These accept that Qumran was inhabited by a sectarian group but question its Essene identity (*e.g.*, García Martínez 1988; 1990; Schiffman 1990; Goodman 1995; Baumgarten 2004).
- 12 For such an interpretation pertaining to an earlier phase of the site, see Hirschfeld 2004; Magen and Peleg 2006; 2007; Cargill 2009.
- 13 For a brief discussion of various theories that have been proposed with regard to Qumran, see further Broshi and Eshel 2004b.
- 14 The most recent and systematic analysis of the classical sources on the Essenes has been carried out by Taylor (2012), who makes a strong case for an identification of the Qumranites as Essenes.

- 15 See the comprehensive table listing the palaeographic dates of all the scrolls in Webster 2002. The chronological range of the Qumran scrolls spans from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE till the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, but the largest majority of scrolls date to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.
- 16 These brief reflections on the interface between texts and archaeology have been extracted from a much longer discussion in a forthcoming publication (Mizzi forthcoming). Many studies inform the expressed views, important among them Kosso 1995; Andrén 1998; Galloway 2006; Frendo 2011; Davies 2011.
- 17 The few decorative elements discovered at Qumran were found in secondary contexts and the evidence is very erratic, which might suggest that these elements were imported from elsewhere and used as building material rather than as decorative elements; the fact that, at Qumran, we have *opus sectile* tiles but no negative impressions of an *opus sectile* floor (a feature which occurs commonly in the Herodian palaces) corroborates further this conclusion (cf. Mizzi 2015: 30–40).
- 18 This is part of an ongoing ERC-funded project headed by Mladen Popović. See [http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/197239\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/197239_en.html).
- 19 The same situation appears with provenance studies on ceramics, for instance. These studies can only trace the source of the clays used not the place of the pottery's production since clays could have been traded. Thus, provenance studies which show that some of the cylindrical jars were manufactured with Hebron, Jerusalem, or Jericho clays (e.g., Gunneweg and Balla 2003) do not prove that the jars were produced in these locales. If this were the case, one would expect large numbers of such jars to surface in excavations in these regions, which is not at all the case. Therefore, the archaeological evidence helps in 'calibrating' the scientific results, indicating that it was the clay (not the jars) that were imported to Qumran.

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