

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF QUMRAN

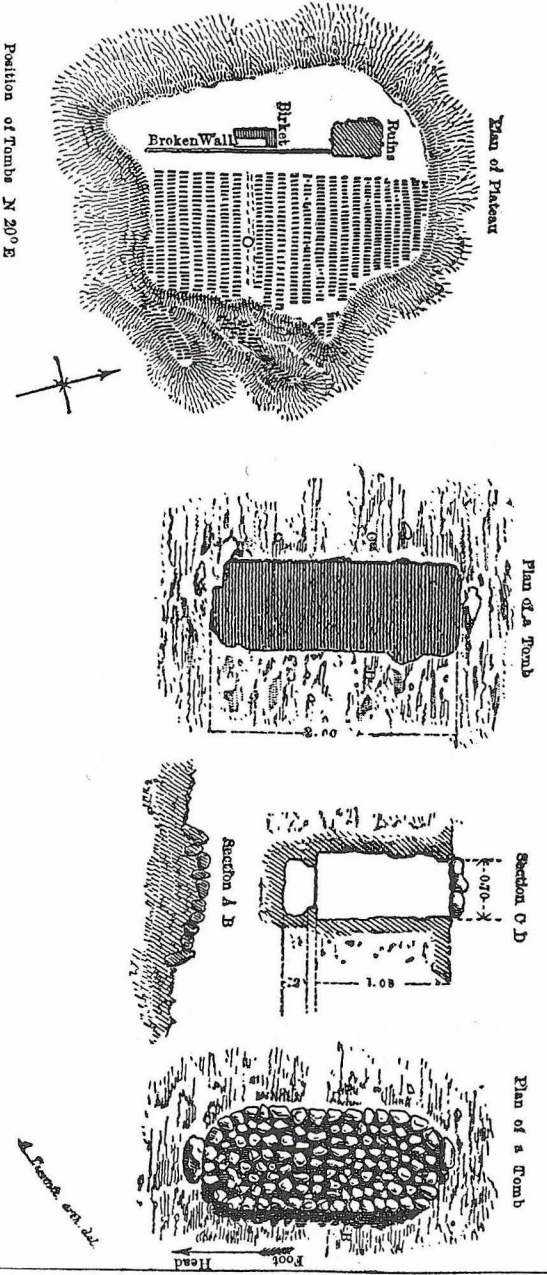
John R. Bartlett

KHIRBET QUMRAN

Khirbet Qumran, the ruin of Qumran, is a small site built on a marl terrace at the foot of the limestone cliffs at the northwest end of the Dead Sea. The cliffs (over 300 m high) are part of the west side of the great rift valley which stretches from Syria to east central Africa; the grey Lisan marl between the cliffs and the Dead Sea is the deposit left by the huge Lisan lake which once filled the Palestinian section of the rift valley; and the Dead Sea is the remaining fragment of that once much larger and deeper lake. The limestone cliffs are a difficult area, full of deep clefts and small caves; the marl is barren wasteland; and the two areas support little but goats; but agriculture is practised round the better springs and especially round the oasis of Jericho, several miles to the north.

Khirbet Qumran was known to and described by several travellers of the nineteenth century. In 1851, Ferdinand de Saulcy travelled south down the west coast of the Dead Sea past Wadi Qumran, where he noticed a square cave 'at an elevation of a hundred yards above our road', down to 'Ain Feshka and Khirbet el-Yahud, and then back again'. His account is very confusing, because at one point he locates Kh. el-Yahoud (as he names it) north of 'Ain Feshka while his map puts it south (see figure 4.1); but north of Kh. el-Yahud he lists in sequence a hill covered with ruins, the skeleton of a large city still called by the Arabs Khirbet Feshkah, a long wall and square enclosure, the opening of wadi Qumran fronted by two mounds of compact sand and a very apparent square ruin particularly called the Khirbet Feshkah, and then 'from the head of the Ouad Goumran, the extensive ruins which we have found on our way bear the name of Kharbet Goumran or Oumran' (which de Saulcy identified with

Goumrân



Position of Tombs N 20° E

Figure 4.2 Clermont-Ganneau's illustration of the 'Cemetery of Goumrân'. From *PEFOS* (1874), 81.

biblical Gomorrah) (de Saulcy 1853: II. 54–63). In 1873 Clermont-Ganneau visited Qumran and noted the ruins: ‘quite insignificant in themselves: a few fallen walls of mean construction; a little birket, into which you descend by steps; and numerous fragments of irregular pottery. . .’ – and numerous tombs, distinguished by their north–south orientation from the Muslim tombs. He drew a rough plan of ‘this enigmatical cemetery’ (figure 4.2) and excavated a tomb, noting the head at the south end, the absence of grave goods, and the clay bricks covering the body (Clermont-Ganneau 1874: 81–3). In 1903, E. W. G. Masterman visited wadi Qumran; he noted that the graves and ruins offered field for speculation as to their origins, and described a carefully built aqueduct running about half a mile from its source where the wadi empties itself over the cliffs through a rockcut channel and a tunnel to the ruins of Kh. Qumran. Masterman saw the carefully constructed aqueduct, the road which he discovered down the north side of the wadi, and the ruins of nearby Kh. Abu Tabaq as evidence of a period when ‘this now entirely deserted corner of the Dead Sea was in no inconsiderable degree inhabited’, but he did not specify when (Masterman 1903: 267). Gustav Dalman (1914: 9f.; 1920: 40) suggested that Kh. Qumran was a Roman fort. In the Hebrew scriptures, Josh 15:61 lists six cities of the Judaeen wilderness: Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah, Nibshan, the City of Salt and Engedi. F.-M. Abel identified Kh. Qumran tentatively with Middin (1938, II, 386), Bar-Adon (1977: 22–3) identified it with Secacah, and Martin Noth (1938: 72) and F. M. Cross (1956: 5–17) with the City of Salt. These identifications presupposed that Kh. Qumran was an Iron Age ruin, at least at one stage of its career, and so indeed it turned out to be.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SCROLLS

Kh. Qumran might never have been excavated had not shepherds of the Ta’amireh tribe accidentally stumbled on some leather scrolls in a cave north of Kh. Qumran in the winter of 1947–8 (for the location of the caves, see figure 4.3). Even this find was not unprecedented. In the reign of Caracalla (211–17 CE) a Greek version of the psalms together with other Greek and Hebrew manuscripts had been found in a jar near Jericho, and in *c.* 785 CE books of the Hebrew scriptures and other books in Hebrew writing were found in a cave near Jericho (Milik 1959: 19, note). What happened to these manuscripts we do not know. But when Mohammed ed-Dhib

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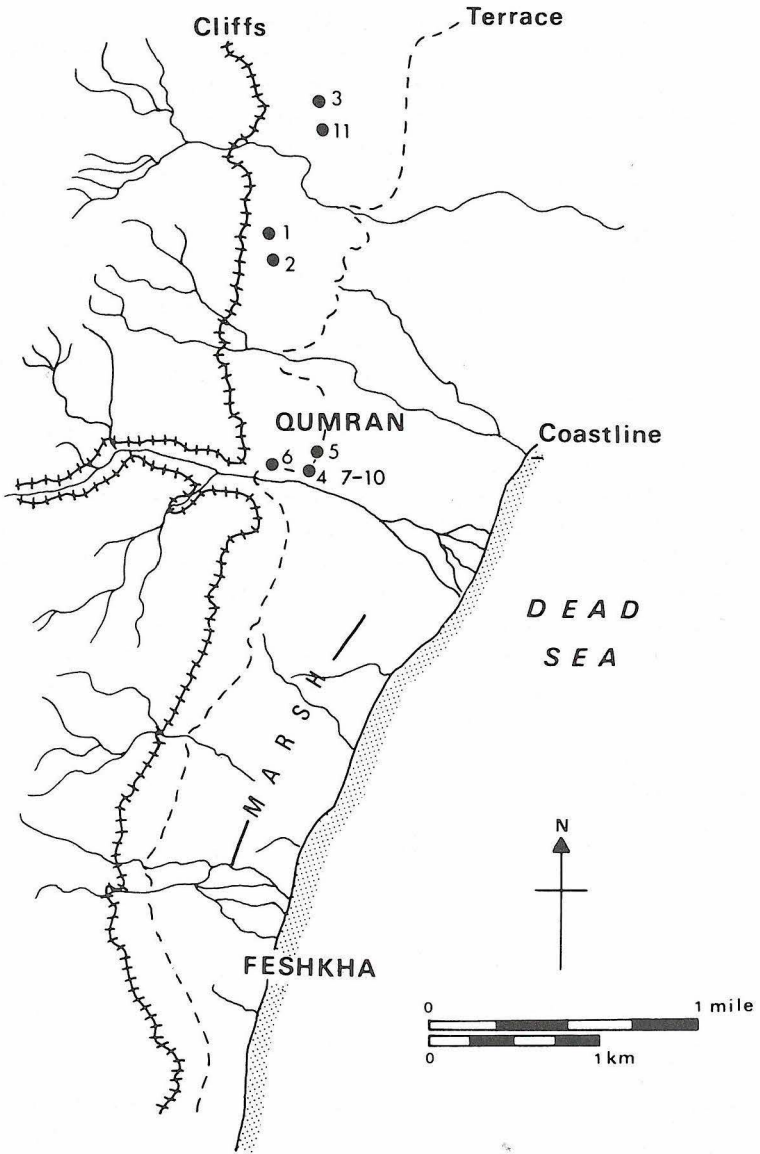


Figure 4.3 Map of Qumran area, showing Caves 1-11.
From Davies (1982).

explored what we now call Cave 1 and extracted three scrolls which soon found their way to a dealer in Bethlehem, he began a major industry which changed the lives of many scholars and others. Further excavation in the cave by the Bedouin brought to light four more scrolls; and of these seven, three were acquired by the Hebrew University (the War Scroll [1QM], the Hymn Scroll [1QH] and the second, fragmentary, Isaiah Scroll [IQIs.b]). The other four – 1QS (the Community Rule/Manual of Discipline), 1QIs.a, 1QpHab, 1QGenAp – were bought by the Syrian Metropolitan in Jerusalem, Mar Yeshue Samuel, who showed them to John Trevor and William Brownlee at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, and later sold them in America. The actual adventures of these scrolls are not our present business, but their discovery and recognition as ancient Jewish documents began a serious search for more. The cave from which they came was found about 1 km north of Kh. Qumran by Arab Legion soldiers in January 1949 and systematically excavated by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities with the Ecole Archéologique and the Palestine Archaeological Museum between 15 February and 5 March 1949. They found Hellenistic/Roman period pottery and some linen, which was dated by the then newly discovered Carbon-14 technique to 33 CE (+/- 200); a first-century CE date was thus suggested, and confirmed by the style of the weaving, which suggested late first century.

The first cave was in the cliffs, and in February 1952 the Bedouin discovered a second cave. It contained only small fragments of scrolls, but in March the Palestine Archaeological Museum, the Ecole Archéologique, and the American School combined to clear it and explore the cliffs for 4–5 km north and south of Qumran. They examined 270 caves and crevices, finding twenty-six with pottery like that found in Cave 1; and they discovered Cave 3, which held fragments of hide, papyrus, thirty cylindrical jars of the kind in which the first scrolls had been discovered, and, its most important yield, a copper scroll in two parts. Meanwhile the bedouin had switched the search to the marl terraces. They made the important discovery of Cave 4, artificially hollowed out of the terraces opposite Kh. Qumran, and full of fragments of manuscripts, the remains of several hundred scrolls. This cave was professionally excavated in September 1952, when the excavators discovered Cave 5 nearby. Cave 6, containing a small wad of fragments, was found by the bedouin at the foot of a cliff. Caves 7–10 were discovered by the excavators in 1955 in the side of the marl terrace beneath Kh. Qumran; they contained only a

few fragments of manuscripts. The final cave discovery was of Cave 11, discovered by the bedouin in 1956, with an important group of manuscripts (for example 11QMelch, a psalm scroll, a targum of Job, and perhaps originally the famous Temple Scroll). Thus Caves 1, 2, 3, 6, 11 were natural caves in the cliffs; Caves 4, 5, 7–10 were artificially hollowed out, probably originally for domestic habitation, in the marl terraces. The greatest manuscript discoveries were made in Caves 1, 3 (the copper scroll), 4 and 11; but pottery of the kind associated with the scrolls and identical with that found at Kh. Qumran was found in some twenty-six of the 270 caves examined.

THE OCCUPATION OF THE SITE

From a very early stage the scrolls were associated in the minds of many scholars with the Essenes, a Jewish group described at some length and in some detail by Josephus in the first century CE (*Jewish War* II.viii.2–13 [119–61]; *Antiquities* XIII.v.9 [171–2], XV.x.4–5 [371–9], XVIII.i.5 [18–22]). The Roman first-century author Pliny the Elder (Pliny published his *Natural History* in 77 CE, and died in 79 CE, caught in the famous eruption of Vesuvius which smothered Pompeii) described a group of Essenes living on the western shore of the Dead Sea, with palm trees alone for company, above Engedi (*Nat. Hist.* V.17.4 [73]). In fact Pliny said that Engedi lay ‘infra’, ‘below’, the Essene community, a phrase which has caused much debate, but it is generally accepted that Pliny meant that Engedi lay south of the Essenes rather than ‘lower down the mountainside’. These connections led the archaeologists to turn again to examine Kh. Qumran with its aqueduct and its ‘enigmatic’ cemetery of some 1,100 graves. After a preliminary reconnaissance, Lankester Harding of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and Roland de Vaux of the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem made an initial sounding of the ruin in December 1951, and discovered pottery identical to that found in the caves (de Vaux 1953: 83–106). This was taken to reinforce the guess that the scrolls and caves were associated with Kh. Qumran, and led to the complete excavation of the site in four seasons from 1953–6.

De Vaux and his team found that the earliest building on the site (figure 4.4) was a courtyard with evidence of rooms on the north, east and south sides, with a smaller outbuilding on the west enclosing a round cistern. The associated pottery was Iron Age II; a stamped jar-handle inscribed ‘for the king’ and an ostrakon in the early

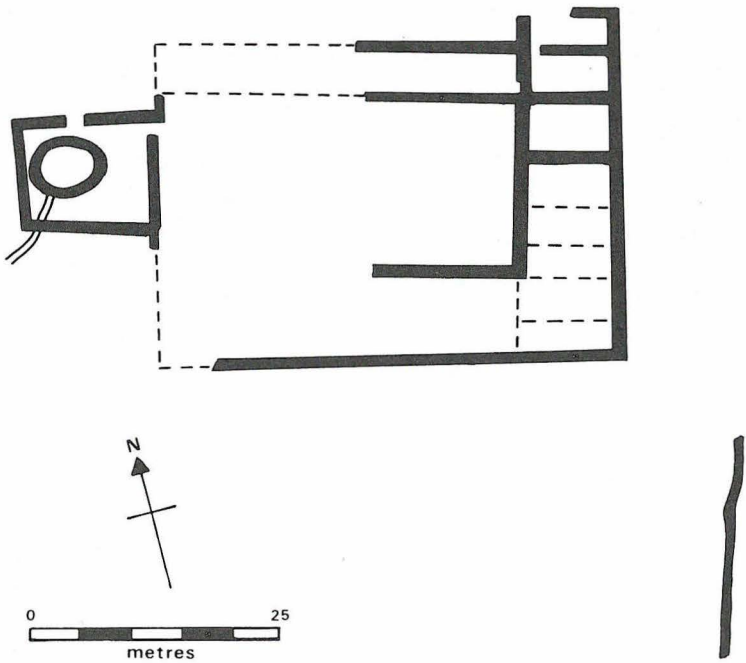


Figure 4.4 Plan of Qumran, Period I (seventh century BCE): courtyard with surrounding rooms and cistern to the west. From Davies (1982).

Hebrew script confirmed that this building probably belonged to the period between the ninth and seventh centuries BCE (de Vaux 1973: 1–3). F. M. Cross and J. T. Milik associated this building with similar buildings of about the same size in the Buqeah plain to the west, and with the list of cities ‘in the wilderness’ in Joshua 15.61; they were perhaps the work of the ninth-century king Jehoshaphat of Judah (c. 870–848 BCE; cf. 2 Chronicles 17:12) or the eighth-century king Hezekiah of Judah (c. 781–40 BCE; cf. 2 Chronicles 26:10) (Cross and Milik 1956: 5–17). This early building at Kh. Qumran was hardly a ‘city’ or even a village, but probably some sort of military garrison fort. The building was destroyed by fire, perhaps at the end of the Judaean monarchy. There is no reason to link this building with the scrolls.

The next occupation of the site, known as Period Ia, re-used the earlier building (now some six or seven hundred years old) by adding

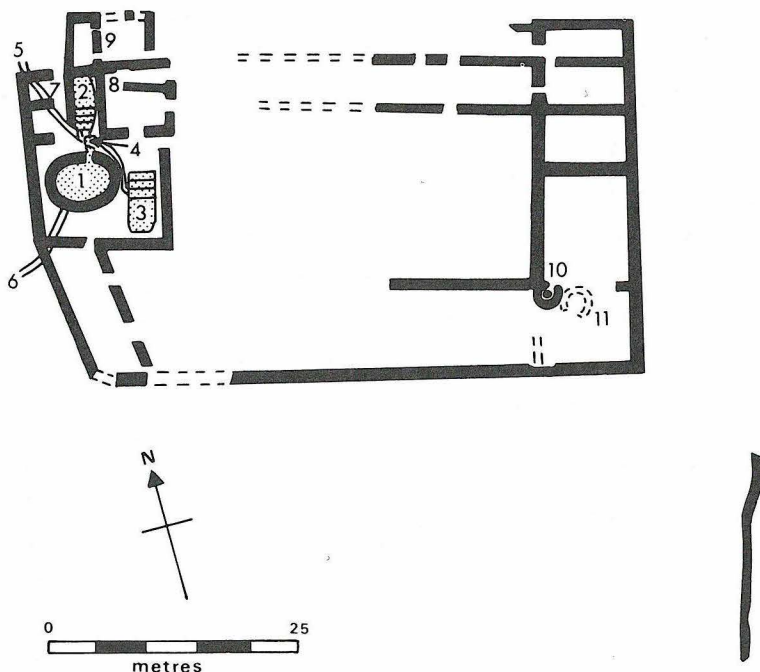


Figure 4.5 Plan of Qumran, Period Ia (second century BCE): water channel, rectangular cisterns, and potters' kiln added. From Davies (1982).

a water channel to collect water from the area north of the ruin, two rectangular cisterns and a decantation basin and some more rooms on the northwest side, and two potter's kilns in the eastern corner (figure 4.5). There seems to be virtually no dating evidence for this period, what little attributable pottery found being the same as that known from the following period Ib, which at least suggests that Ia and Ib were virtually continuous (de Vaux 1973: 3–5). But the concern for a water supply and the need to make pottery is also suggestive; people lived here in some organised form of society.

Period Ib (figure 4.6) saw a dramatic development in the site (de Vaux 1973: 5–24). Periods Ib and II constitute the main history of the settlement, whatever it was. The round cistern and the two associated rectangular cisterns remain. The site has been extended to the north by a large open courtyard and a decantation tank receiving water from an aqueduct coming from the wadi Qumran; west of

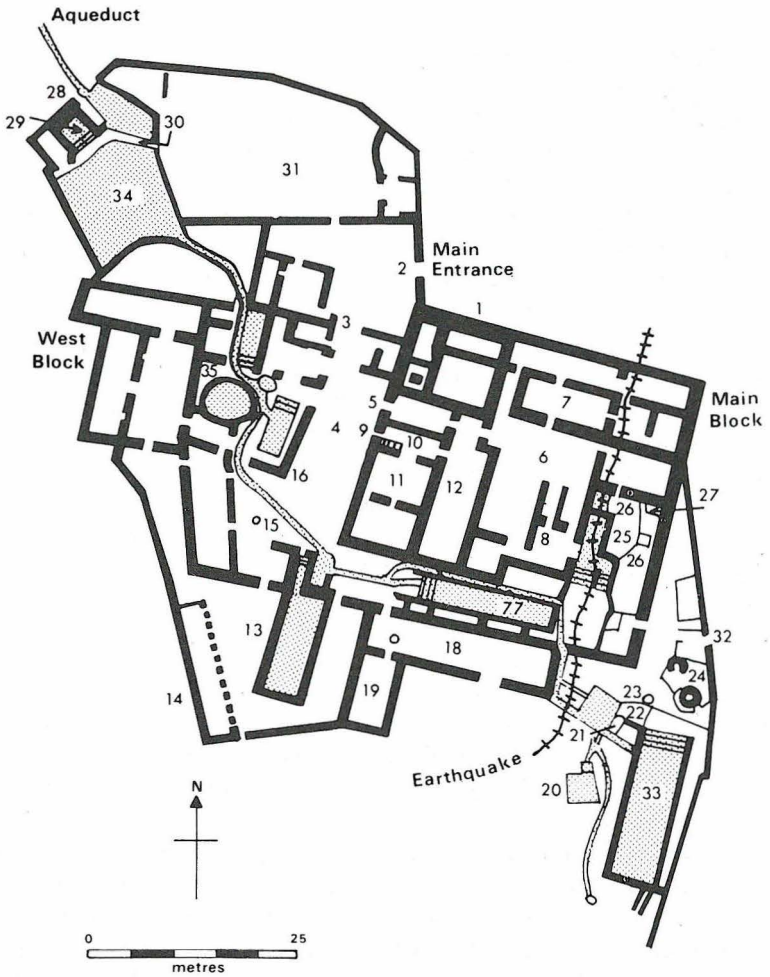


Figure 4.6 Plan of Qumran, Period Ib (first century BCE): major expansion, with tower (1), major rooms, and developed water system and cisterns. From Davies (1982).

the cisterns are new storerooms or workshops, and to the south of them in the corner of the outer wall what look like stables. Just south of the early cisterns are a flour mill and an oven. East of the earlier cisterns the main block has been developed; its north-west corner has become a solid tower (the ground-floor walls are more solid than other walls of the building, and apparently had no

windows or doors; access was from the first floor). The room opening onto the courtyard from the north was perhaps a kitchen. The south-western corner of the main complex is taken up with a small meeting room with a bench round it, and next door a long rectangular room (Davies 1982: 43 plan 3 no. 12; de Vaux 1973: plate xxxix no. 30) which may have been some sort of larger meeting or working room. On the eastern side of the courtyard are basins. In the south-east corner of the main complex a large new stepped cistern has been built. Stepped cisterns are a feature of this complex; from the old circular cistern the water channel goes south-east to service a new and large cistern, turns east for another stepped cistern on the south side of the main complex, and then divides to service both the new eastern cistern and the pottery makers, as well as another large stepped cistern at the very south-east corner of the complex. I suspect that this is the cistern seen by Clermont-Ganneau (1874: 82-3). On the south side of the complex, south of the cistern, lies a meeting or dining hall (no. 77 on de Vaux's plan; no. 18 on Davies's), with a pantry attached. This dining hall is conveniently close to the water system, and could apparently be washed out by a stream of water directed by sluices from the main channel.

The end of Period Ib is marked, according to de Vaux (1973: 21), by a fire in the buildings. The evidence for this lies in the ash deposits of burnt reed in the open spaces round the buildings (ash inside would have been cleaned out when the buildings were re-used in Period II). The major cracks in the cisterns on the east side of the building, the cracking of the eastern wall of the tower, and the collapse of the southern pantry wall burying a lot of pottery, have been taken to indicate that Period Ib was ended by an earthquake, and the most obvious candidate (though not the only candidate; the earthquakes of 64 BCE and 24 BCE have also been suggested) has been the earthquake described by Josephus as terrifying Herod's soldiers in the plains of Jericho in 31 BCE. However, it has also been suggested that it was not an earthquake that destroyed the eastern cisterns but the weight of water on the unstable marl Lisan below; other scholars have pointed out that the fire might have been quite independent of any earthquake (for more detailed discussion of the relationship between Periods Ib and II at Qumran see Callaway 1988: 44-9). Neither the destruction of a cistern nor the outbreak of fire need in themselves have caused any long break in occupation of the settlement. De Vaux argues that the waterlaid sediment found overlying the ash in the courtyard on the north suggests a damaged

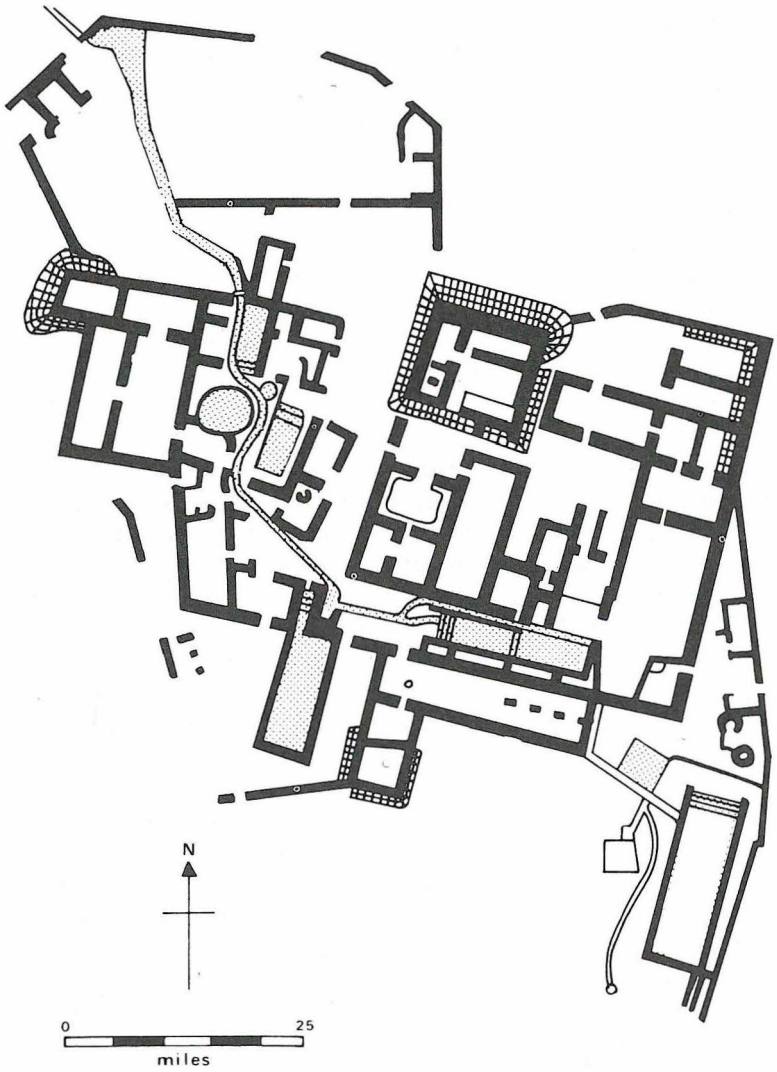


Figure 4.7 Plan of Qumran, Period II (first century BCE–first century CE):
buttressing added round tower, and other modifications.
From Davies (1982).

water-system and a period of abandonment. But there seems no suggestion that sediment from a major flood extended over the site as a whole, and 75 cm of sediment in part of this courtyard, which might have been deposited over a period of time if the decantation tank regularly overflowed, does not seem sufficient evidence to suggest any major break in occupation, evidence for which really depends on one's interpretation of the coinage found at the site. To this we shall return.

Period Ib was followed, at whatever interval, by Period II (figure 4.7). Major buttressing was added round the tower, and to the store-rooms at the north-west corner of the site, and to the pantry on the south. The north-east corner was modified. Various rooms were subdivided. The main decantation basin went out of use and was replaced by a smaller one. The central cistern between the main block and the dining room/meeting room on the south was divided into two, and the former eastern cistern, cracked, went out of use. These changes are modifications rather than major structural alterations, and general working of the complex cannot have been much affected. Period II ended, according to de Vaux, with violent destruction; iron arrowheads and evidence of burning and collapse of ceilings and superstructures suggest military action, and 'since the last coins of Period II are Jewish coins from the first revolt, it is reasonable to conclude that the destruction took place during the Jewish War' (de Vaux 1973: 36). De Vaux argues for June 68 CE, on the grounds that the last coins in Period II's stratigraphy are four Jewish coins from the third year of the revolt, and the earliest coins of Period III are Gentile coins of 67/8 CE from Caesarea and Dora, probably used by Roman soldiers. He agrees that the Jewish coins do not prove that the Jews left Qumran in 68 CE, and that the coins from Caesarea and Dora do not prove that the Romans installed themselves in 68 CE immediately after the expulsion of the Jews, but since the two groups of coins are distributed so precisely between the two successive levels, the obvious answer is the right one.

In Period III (figure 4.8) the site was considerably simplified. The western buildings, and even the cisterns, were abandoned, and a ditch dug along the west side. The tower was reinforced, and the water channel made to serve only the large south-eastern cistern (the one that Clermont-Ganneau found 1,800 years later). The potter's kiln became a store for lime. One bread oven was set up at the base of the tower. There is little pottery, and apart from one coin of Agrippa II from 87 CE, there are no coins after 72/3 CE.

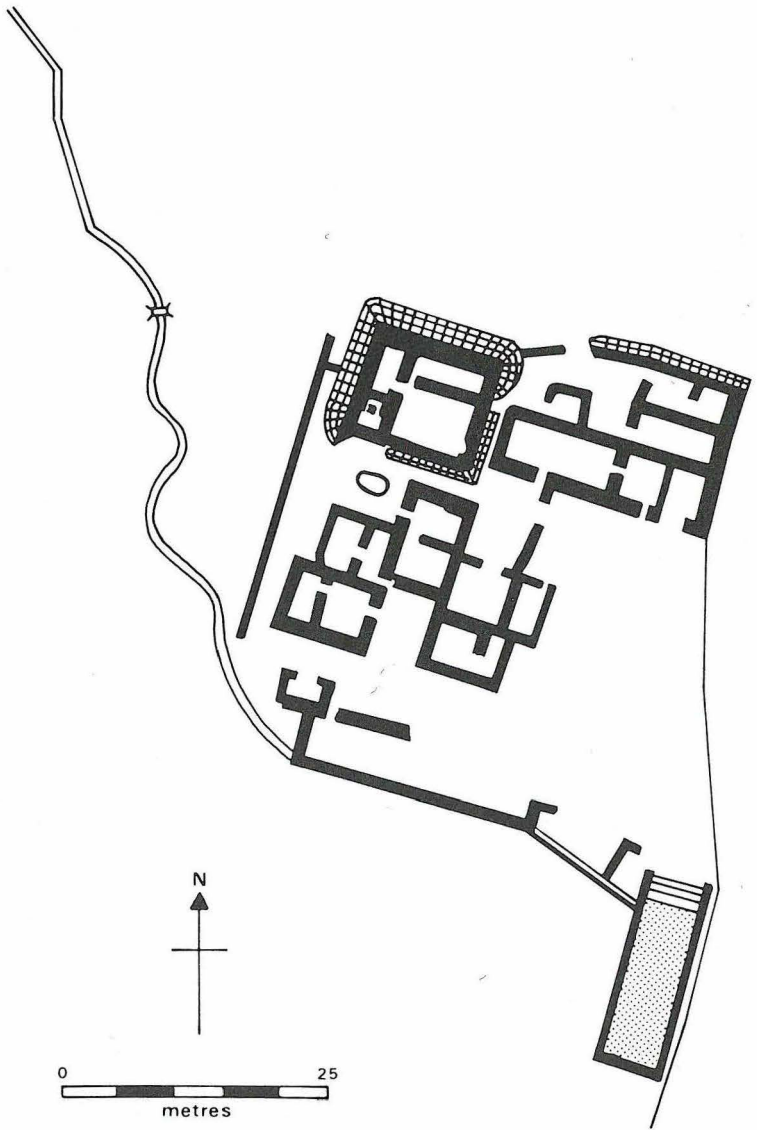


Figure 4.8 Plan of Qumran, Period III (late first century CE): Roman simplification. From Davies (1982).

De Vaux suggests that perhaps after the fall of Masada in 73 CE this military garrison was abandoned (de Vaux 1973: 44).

So much for the outlines of this ancient settlement; we can now turn to the more interesting questions. What dates can we ascribe to Periods Ia, Ib and II? What kind of settlement or building is this? What was the purpose of the elaborate water system? What are we to make of the use of certain rooms? What can be learned from the associated cemeteries? What do we make of the burials in various courtyards of animal bones? What is the relationship with the local caves? And what is the relationship with other nearby sites – ‘Ain Feshka, ‘Ain el-Ghuweir, Kh. el-Yahud, Kh. Mazin, Hiam el-Sagha, and others? And lastly, how should the archaeological evidence be related to the scrolls and their contents?

DATING

There is no certain evidence for Period Ia, which is distinguishable from Period Ib only with difficulty, and probably immediately precedes it. From Period Ib we have some silver coins from the years between 132 and 129 BCE (Antiochus VII) (which might have had a long life in circulation), one Jewish coin which might be ascribed to John Hyrcanus (if he minted coins), one of Aristobulus (104/3 BCE) (if he minted coins), 143 from Jannaeus (103–76 BCE), one from Salome and Hyrcanus II (76–67 BCE), five from Hyrcanus II (67, 63–40 BCE), four from Mattathias (40–37 BCE), and ten coins from Herod the Great (though from ‘mixed levels’, and therefore uncertain evidence for Period Ib). The bulk of the evidence is clearly from Jannaeus’s reign, with some evidence for subsequent decades to the end of the century. There are sixteen coins of Herod Archelaus (4 BCE–6 CE), ‘and

from this point on the numismatic sequence of Period II continues uninterrupted. It includes ninety-one coins of the procurators (thirty-three of which were struck under Nero), and seventy-eight coins of Agrippa I (41–4 CE), and continues until the important group of coins belonging to the First Revolt’.

(de Vaux 1973: 34)

It looks, on the face of it, as if Periods Ib and II can be dated from early in the first century BCE to 68 CE. The break between these two periods, if there is one, comes some time in Herod’s reign,

because a large hoard of 561 Tyrian silver coins, in three pots, with dates ranging from *c.* 116 to 9/8 BCE, was discovered dug into the Period II levels, but above the remains of Period Ib. Clearly this hoard was buried after 9/8 BCE, and probably before 1 BCE/1 CE, because no new Tyrian coins were issued between those years, and the hoard contains nothing after the turn of the era. If this hoard was buried after the beginning of Period II, Period II begins sometime in this decade, and for de Vaux, a coin of Herod Archelaus found in the debris of Period Ib cleared away for Period II confirms this dating. That is, Period II began in Archelaus's reign but before 1 BCE/1 CE. This could be right; but I see no reason to believe that there was any major break between the occupation of Periods Ib and II. The important evidence here must be the stratigraphy, not the coins or the cracked cistern.

If for the moment we assume a direct connection between the manuscripts found in the caves and the buildings of Kh. Qumran, the date of the manuscripts is important evidence. F. M. Cross (1993: 23) grouped the manuscripts on palaeographic grounds into three types:

- 1 a small group of 'archaic' biblical manuscripts from *c.* 250–150 BCE, all from Cave 4;
- 2 a large number of manuscripts from the Hasmonaean period; and
- 3 a group of manuscripts in 'Herodian' style, from *c.* 30 BCE–70 CE.

Philip Callaway refines this a little (1988: 199–200); he dates 1QS, 1QSa,b and 4QTest, all from the same hand, as from *c.* 100–75 BCE; CD from 75–50 BCE; and 1QpHab, 4QpNah, 4QpPs37, 1QM, 1QH as being copied in the Herodian period, these last being the documents that refer or allude to the history of the sect. The oldest copy of a sectarian document is thus dated to Jannaeus's time, and the younger copies of sectarian documents from Herod's reign. Recent radio-carbon dating of some of the manuscripts (Bonani and others 1991: 27–32) tends to support this general picture; thus some of the biblical manuscripts from Cave 4 are dated to the second century BCE (4Q365, 4QSam), and sectarian documents such as the Temple Scroll (11Q Temple) and the Genesis Apocryphon (1QApGen) to the first century BC, and 1QH to 21 BCE to 60 CE). If we could prove any of these to be autograph copies, of course, we would have some very significant dating evidence. But this work suggests that the group that copied these

documents was active throughout the first century BCE and perhaps into the first century CE, and could be associated with Kh. Qumran's Period Ib–II. The import of their evidence for the early history of the group, perhaps in the second century BCE, is of course a matter for another lecture.

NATURE OF THE SETTLEMENT

De Vaux, identifying the occupants of Kh. Qumran as the Essenes mentioned by Pliny and Josephus, thought of the ruins as a monastic settlement. Many have criticised him for jumping too easily to conclusions based more on presuppositions than on evidence, and so referring to refectories and scriptoria more appropriate to a Christian monastery than to a first century BCE Jewish settlement, but, as S. Goranson (1991: 110–11) pointed out, the word *monasterion* first appears in Philo. The earliest settlement at Qumran may have had a military purpose; and P. Bar-Adon (1981: 349–52) thinks of Kh. Qumran Ia as a Hasmonaean fortress built by Hyrcanus, along with Qasr el-Yahud and Kh. Mazin. But Period Ib, with its greatly improved water system and its pottery and large rooms and stables and its extended grouping of buildings, seems to have had a wider purpose, even if the thicker-walled tower building suggests a certain amount of self-defence against casual raiders. Some have suggested that this was a villa, a well-watered residence, perhaps, or winter palace retreat from Jerusalem. The buildings, with their many stepped cisterns, might bear some comparison with the wealthy first-century CE house excavated in Jerusalem by Avigad, but there is little evidence of wealthy furnishings, unless the 'scriptorium' is a 'coenaculum' as Pauline Donceel-Voûte suggests (1992: 61–84), and little comparison with the Hasmonaean or Herodian villa in the Wadi Qelt.

PURPOSE OF THE WATER SYSTEM

The original Iron Age building or fortress obviously needed water for drinking purposes. B. G. Wood (1984: 45–60) asks why the builders of Period Ia, using the same ground plan, needed to increase the capacity so greatly, providing much more water than was needed for the normal requirements of life, and why full width steps were built into the cistern. Such wide steps reduce the capacity of the cistern, and one might expect narrow steps along one side. Period

Ia had two stepped cisterns and one unstepped cistern; Period Ib added a better water supply and more cisterns, ending up with five stepped, and two unstepped cisterns, together with small baths and industrial installations (for example for potters). Period II lost the use of the eastern cisterns but subdivided the large cistern (de Vaux locations 56/58 on plan, 1973, plate xxxix) along the southern side of the main block, creating a stepped cistern for ritual purposes and an unstepped one for functional purposes. Dividers were built at the top of the cistern steps, a device used for *miqua'oth*, to distinguish between unclean and clean, entrance and exit. In short, Kh. Qumran arranged its water supply for ritual purposes; or, conceivably, for industrial purposes of some kind demanding large quantities of water (one notes the large cistern complex at 'Ain Feshka). When the Romans took over in Period III, they had no need for such a complex water system and reduced it to one large cistern.

THE 'SCRIPTORIUM'

Kh. Qumran has become famous not least for its 'scriptorium', the upper chamber of de Vaux's locus 30 in which were found among the debris of Period II two inkwells and what de Vaux interpreted as tables and benches for scribes. The reconstruction of these benches and tables is well known. B. M. Metzger pointed out (1959: 509–15) that no one could ever sit on such benches at such a table; the shapes and heights were all wrong. Ancient scribes stood or sat on the ground; possibly they sat on these tables with their feet on the benches. Others have suggested (Poole and Reed 1961: 114–23) that the tables were surfaces for the preparation of skins, their slightly concave shape allowing for the tanning process; but that would be a very messy business, and the preparation of parchments for writing (as distinct from skins for other purposes) does not require tannin, but scraping and dehairing and stretching and rubbing with lime and pumice, which is a little easier to envisage. Pauline Donceel-Voùte from Louvain (1992: 61–84) has argued that the 'scriptorium' was a dining room (figure 4.9), the 'tables' being couches on which those attending a dinner in Hellenistic times lay while being waited on. The 'benches' were the podium, or a 'trottoir', for the couches. The shallow plaster tray with two circular depressions on its upper surface is construed as a stand for wine jars (figure 4.10). This ingenious idea is attractive until one asks whether such plaster benches would stand the weight or whether they are wide enough (half a

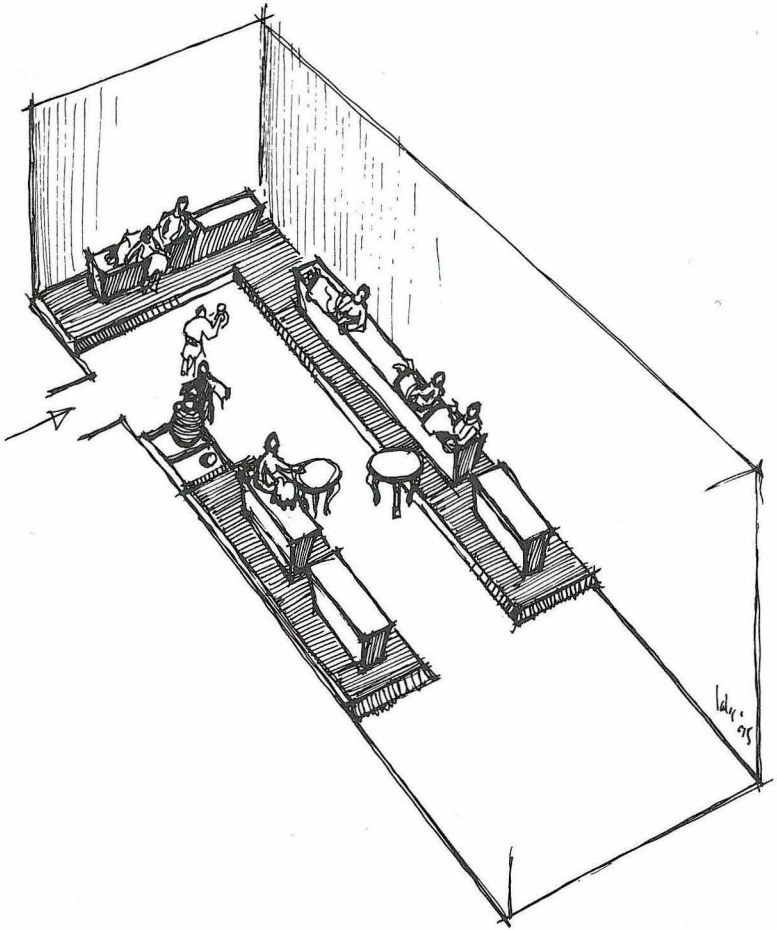


Figure 4.9 The 'coenaculum' as proposed by P. Donceel-Voûte. B. Lalor after P. Donceel-Voûte (1992: 82, figure 12).

metre) to take a body comfortably. If the hypothesis were correct, it would support the identification of Kh. Qumran as a villa of a wealthy man rather than the home of an Essene group devoted to an ascetic way of life. If Kh. Qumran is to be associated with the scrolls in the local caves, the idea of a scriptorium remains an important possibility, even if the tables were used for purposes other than writing.

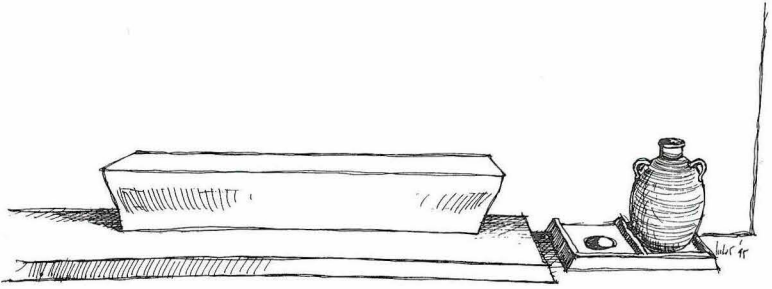


Figure 4.10 Couch, base and wine-jar stand as proposed by P. Donceel-Voûte. B. Lalor after P. Donceel-Voûte (1992: 67, figure 7).

ASSOCIATED CEMETERIES

De Vaux describes a vast cemetery of 1,100 graves in ordered rows and three main sections 50 m to the east of Kh. Qumran; it was first described by Clermont-Ganneau (1874: 83), who excavated one grave on 29 November 1873, and found beneath the oval surface mound of stones a pit about 1 m deep, at the bottom of which was a row of mudbricks covering the corpse, whose head lay to the south. There were no grave goods. De Vaux (1973: 45–7) excavated twenty-six tombs from different sectors of the cemetery, and corroborates this picture, though finding that the loculus at the bottom was a cavity dug into the side of pit. One rectangular grave contained a woman; four women and one child were found ‘in the extensions of the cemetery over the hillocks to the east’ (de Vaux 1973: 47), though S. H. Steckoll (1969: 33–40) sees the cemetery as one unified cemetery and believes that women and children were not an irregularity in it. Steckoll in 1966 opened a number of graves, and argued from deformations of the skeletons that one occupant was a scribe by profession, another a labourer who carried heavy weights on his shoulders (Steckoll 1968: 323–44); de Vaux caustically and perhaps a little unfairly remarked (1973: 48) that the Israeli authorities had forbidden this Sherlock Holmes of archaeology to continue his researches. The presence of women raises questions in the light of Pliny’s remark that that the Essenes lived near the Dead Sea *sine ulla femina*, and Josephus’s comment that the Essenes were mostly unmarried, but the Community Rule (1QS_a) and the Cairo Damascus

document (CD) imply that the Essenes were married and make no reference to celibacy. P. Bar-Adon excavated a similar cemetery 800 m north of 'Ain el-Ghuweir, some 15 km south of Qumran (1970: 398–400; 1977: 1–25); here out of twenty tombs excavated there were twelve males and seven females and one boy, all oriented north–south with heads to the south; N. Haas (1968: 345–53) noted that these people had been less healthy than their Qumran contemporaries. Hanan Eshel (1993: 252–9) excavated a similar cemetery at Hiam el-Sagha on the mountain between 'Ain el-Ghuweir and 'Ain et-Turaba, and noted that similar burials had been recorded at Jericho (C.-M. Bennett 1965: 514–46, espec. 537). Eshel suggested that such graves might be those of nomads living between the Wadi Murraba'at and Wadi Turaba, with a burial ideology similar to that of the Qumran sect. Yet the link between these places and Qumran remains unclear. N. Golb (1993: 53–7; 1985: 68–82) suggested that the burials at Qumran were the graves of troops killed defending the site, which he sees as a fortress; but such a carefully dug and well laid out cemetery seems unlikely for the losers in 68 CE; P. Bar-Adon (1981: 349–52) refined this by suggesting that the Qumran cemeteries were a central burial ground for military personnel occupying the Hasmonaean citadels or fortresses of the area, but there seems no positive evidence that these were the graves of soldiers, and M. Broshi (1992: 103–15 [113]) pointed out that it is unlikely that the Qumran people would co-operate with the Hasmonaean rulers, with whom there seems to have been mutual hostility.

BURIALS OF ANIMAL BONES

Also puzzling are the interments of collections of animal bones (never a whole skeleton), mostly of goat or sheep but occasionally of cows or calves, in cooking pots or jars in open spaces between buildings at Kh. Qumran. De Vaux (1973: 12–14) attributes thirty-three to Period Ib, and twenty-six to Period II. They perhaps represent the remains of meals (though some of the bones buried would not have had much flesh on them); they seem to have been treated in a special manner and so were presumably important; they were hardly seen as unclean or they would have been buried outside the buildings, so perhaps they were sacred in some way. There are not a great number; should one think of some annual ceremony, perhaps of covenant renewal? They do not seem to have been buried very deeply,

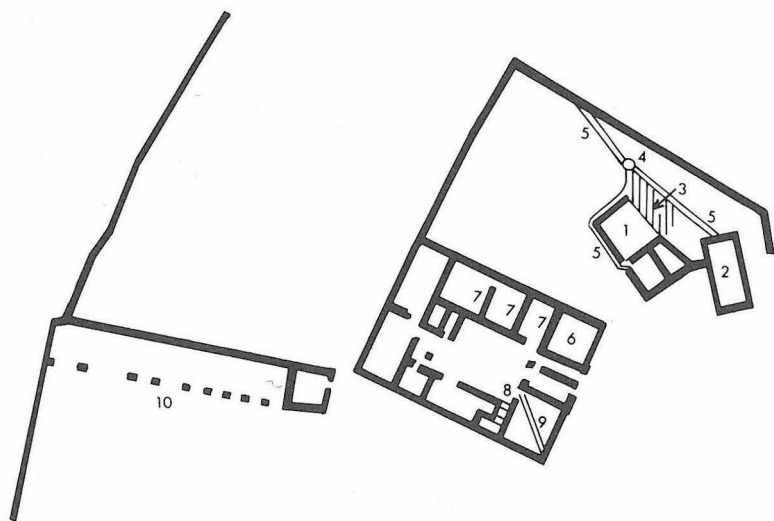
so why have they survived? Laperrousaz (1978: 569–73) suggests that they are the remains of festival meals eaten outside the dining room/refectory by those not senior enough to have a seat there, and that the community was attacked on the feast day, and the meals left where they fell. This seems unlikely enough, but Laperrousaz hypothesises further that because such remnants are preserved from both Period Ib and Period II, the same thing happened twice, by coincidence, in 63 BCE (Pompey) and 68 CE (Vespasian). It may be coincidental, and not illogical (Laperrousaz 1978: 573), but it remains unlikely.

KHIRBET QUMRAN AND THE CAVES

What is the relationship between Kh. Qumran and the local caves? N. Golb (1993: 53–7) has denied that the scrolls found in the caves were written at Qumran, which was a fortress, not a monastery, and not to be identified with the location of the Essenes referred to by Pliny. The scrolls came from the heterogeneous collection in the Temple library at Jerusalem on the eve of the Roman siege of Jerusalem; they show various religious connections, and only a few can be said to reflect Essene ideas. The Qumran writings are not the work of a single sect, but the remnants of a large Jewish literature. But Qumran makes a poor fortress, and probably is to be identified with the Essene site described by Pliny. The archaeological links between Kh. Qumran and the caves are secure – the same pottery from the same periods appears in both; Qumran has inkwells as evidence that writing was done there, whatever the tables were for – and it is hard to avoid the notion that a considerable amount of writing happened at Qumran (even if Qumran, with 600–800 manuscripts known from the caves, produced more than was strictly necessary for its own internal use) (Goranson 1991: 110–11).

‘AIN FESHKA

About 2 km south of Kh. Qumran, where the mountains reach the Dead Sea, is the spring of Feshka, and just beside it a complex of buildings (figure 4.11). The main block of about 25 m by 20 m comprises a courtyard with surrounding rooms. To the south of it there is a long building or shed fronted by pillars, and to the north a water channel and set of basins or cisterns. The area was almost certainly used then as now for watering flocks of sheep and goats,



FESHKHA

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Plastered basin | 6. Store |
| 2. Basin | 7. Low dividing walls |
| 3. Paving | 8. Stairs to 1st floor |
| 4. Tank | 9. Drain |
| 5. Channel | 10. Pillars |

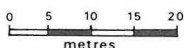


Figure 4.11 Plan of 'Ain Feshkha: roomed courtyard, with water channels and basins to the north. From Davies (1982).

and probably for growing dates and cutting the reeds which grew in the salt marshes. What the basins were used for is much debated. De Vaux (1973: 79–80) suggested a tannery, but no trace of hair or tannins has been found in the basin sediments, and F. E. Zeuner (1960: 27–36) suggests that these installations were used for fish farming. J. B. Poole and R. Reed (1961: 114–23) suggested the preparation of flax for linen; these basins would then be retting pits, but there is no material evidence for this. The problem remains unresolved. What is clear is that these buildings were in use contemporaneously with those of Periods Ib and II at Kh. Qumran. The

architecture is similar, the pottery and coinage basically the same. De Vaux distinguishes two periods of occupation at Feshka as at Kh. Qumran, but there is no sign of any fire or earthquake damage at Feshka between them; they can be distinguished only by secondary modifications to the building and some piles of discarded rubble apparently cleared out of the building at some stage. The evidence of a gap in occupation is even less secure here than at Kh. Qumran. The second period ended, however, as at Kh. Qumran, with fire and was followed, as at Kh. Qumran, by a third period of occupation at the end of the first century or early in the second, perhaps during the Jewish Revolt of 132–5 CE.

OTHER NEARBY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

We should finally mention the other archaeological sites in the region of Kh. Qumran, sites which may have been related in some way. P. Bar-Adon excavated a building 43 m by 19.5 m with a hall, kitchen, and store rooms at 'Ain el-Ghuweir, 15 km south of Qumran on the Dead Sea shore (Bar-Adon 1977: 1–25). Coins found suggested its occupation under Herod, Archelaus and Agrippa I; the pottery was typical first century BCE/CE. Eight hundred metres north was the cemetery of the Qumran type already mentioned (de Vaux 1973: 88–9). Two kilometres to the south-west Hanan Eshel (1993: 252–9) excavated another similar cemetery, Hiam el-Sagha. One kilometre south of Kh. Qumran itself de Vaux explored a large building 60 m by 64 m, perhaps originally from the Iron Age; this is probably the barely distinguishable square enclosure noted by de Saulcy (1853: II. 63) just south of Kh. Qumran. De Saulcy also noted and described Kh. el-Yahud (= Kh. Mazin) south of 'Ain Feshka (1853: II. 58); its foundations were 'of enormous blocks of unhewn stone, forming . . . cyclopean walls, a yard in thickness'. It appears, from de Saulcy's description, to have consisted of a courtyard with pavilions 6 yards square at intervals around it. P. Bar-Adon (1981: 349–52) mentions this site, identifying it as another Hasmonaean fortress built by Hyrcanus, together with Rujm el-Bahr north of Qumran. De Vaux, however, dated this rectangular building to the Roman period, tentatively associating it with the salt trade of the Dead Sea (de Vaux 1973: 88). Thus, to sum up, while those buried at el-Ghuweir and Hiam el-Sagha may have had some connection with the people of Kh. Qumran, sharing the same burial rites, other connections are much less clear; the building at 'Ain el-Ghuweir

might have provided for the needs of a group similar to those at Qumran. However, it should be noted that it is only at Qumran and in caves to the immediate north of Qumran that scrolls were found; there is no certainty that the people of Qumran were active south of 'Ain Feshka, unless one locates Pliny's Essenes immediately above Engedi rather than north of Engedi.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SCROLLS

I have deliberately kept to the archaeological evidence, for that was my brief, but it is time to mention some of the major problems of the relationship of the archaeological findings to the fact and contents of the scrolls, in the hope that subsequent research will throw light on them. The archaeological evidence by itself is reasonably clear and straightforward; there are problems like the precise dating of the beginning of Periods Ia, Ib and II at Kh. Qumran, the precise function of certain rooms at Kh. Qumran, and the implications of the cemetery for the population of Qumran. But we should note how tempting it is to let the contents of the scrolls, and more particularly one's favoured interpretation of those scrolls, influence one's interpretation of the ruins. Those who want to connect the Wicked Priest of the scrolls with either Jonathan or Simon Maccabee would like to push the foundation of Kh. Qumran Ia back into the second century BCE; those who want to disconnect the scrolls from Kh. Qumran interpret de Vaux's locus 30 as a coenaculum rather than a scriptorium. The big question, therefore, is the relationship of Kh. Qumran with the caves and the literature found in them. Was the literature produced and copied by the people who occupied Kh. Qumran, or did it come from elsewhere, for example the Temple library? The fact that the scrolls are associated with pottery jars apparently made at Qumran does not prove that the Qumran people did more than make the pottery for them; but the evidence of inkwells at Qumran, and the fact that the scrolls were concealed in caves apparently occupied by the Qumran people, does make the obvious solution the most likely. If that is the case, what can the scrolls tell us about Kh. Qumran and its occupants? Perhaps strangely, the literature does not mention Kh. Qumran by name (unless some such code name as 'Damascus' is used), though the reference to the Teacher of Righteousness's place of exile may refer to Qumran. The literature probably tells us more (however cryptically) about the history of one particular group of Jews than

it does about the particular history of Kh. Qumran; for that we have to base ourselves firmly on the archaeological evidence and not be misled by less substantial hypotheses. If Kh. Qumran was the home of a group or sub-group of the Essenes, the site began its Essene life not earlier than about 100 BCE, and it probably ended in 68 CE. This fits well with the dating given by other means for the sectarian documents, the oldest, 1QS, probably being written *c.* 100–75 BCE. But from this point we are in the hands of the textual critics and the literary critics and the historians.

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