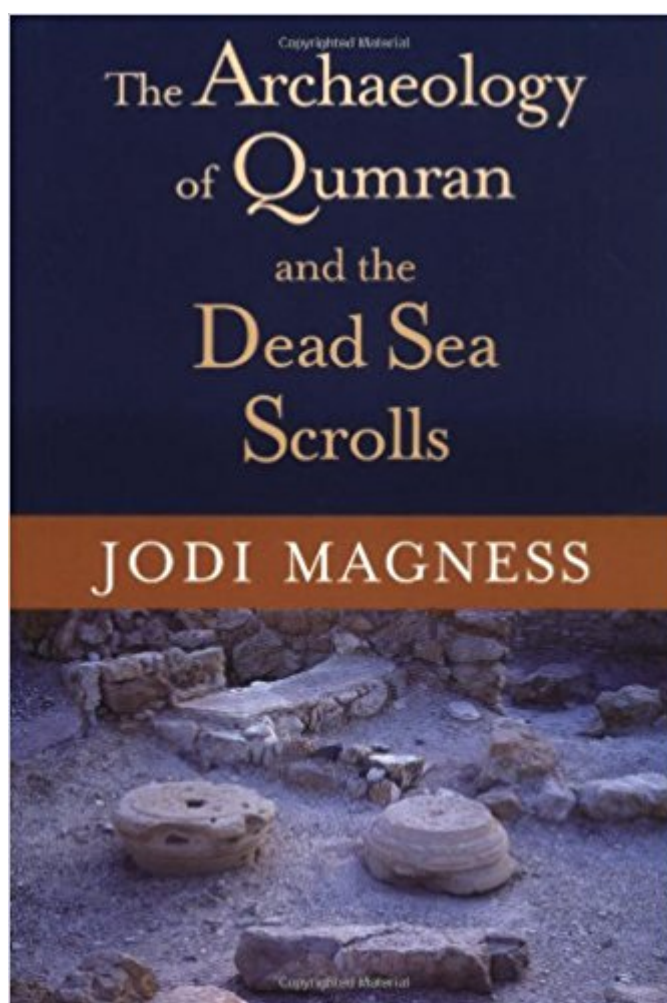


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The Archaeology Of Qumran And The Dead Sea Scrolls (Studies In The Dead Sea Scrolls And Related Literature)



Synopsis

The Dead Sea Scrolls are among the most interesting and important archaeological discoveries ever made, and the excavation of the Qumran community itself has provided invaluable information about Judaism and the Jewish world in the last centuries B.C.E. Like the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, the Qumran site continues to be the object of intense scholarly debate. In a book meant to introduce general readers to this fascinating area of study, veteran archaeologist Jodi Magness here provides an overview of the archaeology of Qumran and presents an exciting new interpretation of this ancient community based on information found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other contemporary documents. Magness's work offers a number of fresh conclusions concerning life at Qumran. She agrees that Qumran was a sectarian settlement but rejects other unconventional views, including the view that Qumran was a villa rustica or manor house. By carefully analyzing the published information on Qumran, she refines the site's chronology, reinterprets the purpose of some of its rooms, and reexamines the archaeological evidence for the presence of women and children in the settlement. Numerous photos and diagrams give readers a firsthand look at the site. Written with an expert's insight yet with a journalist's spunk, this engaging book is sure to reinvigorate discussion of this monumental archaeological find.

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The Dead Sea Scrolls are among the most interesting and important archaeological discoveries ever made, and the excavation of the Qumran community itself has provided invaluable

information about Judaism and the Jewish world in the last centuries B.C.E. Like the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, the Qumran site continues to be the object of intense scholarly debate. In a book meant to introduce general readers to this fascinating area of study, veteran archaeologist Jodi Magness here provides an overview of the archaeology of Qumran and presents an exciting new interpretation of this ancient community based on information found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other contemporary documents. Magness's work offers a number of fresh conclusions concerning life at Qumran. She agrees that Qumran was a sectarian settlement but rejects other unconventional views, including the view that Qumran was a "villa rustica" or manor house. By carefully analyzing the published information on Qumran, she refines the site's chronology, reinterprets the purpose of some of its rooms, and reexamines the archaeological evidence for the presence of women and children in the settlement. Numerous photos and diagrams give readers a firsthand look at the site. Written with an expert's insight yet with a journalist's spunk, this engaging book is sure to reinvigorate discussion of this monumental archaeological find.

Everywhere I turn, I hear the name "Jodi Magness." She is highly respected in the field of biblical archaeology, and for good reason. She is a scholar who knows what she is talking about and generally can put her understanding into English that can be understood by the average layperson. I have studied the scrolls for many years, even walking into Cave 1 three different times. I love the stories, history, and mystery. Professor Magness lays out the details and comes to conclusions that are reasonable and honest. Perhaps this is not the first book a newbie picks up to get an introduction, but it certainly ought to follow soon after. Thus, I do recommend this book.

Jodi Magness points out in the introduction to her book that there are two reasons why fringe theories about the Dead Sea Scrolls are numerous. The second is that "we tend to side with the underdogs." The first reason is that controversy sells. Magness shows why the available archaeological evidence supports the basic conclusions of Roland de Vaux. The scrolls and the Qumran settlement are related. The scrolls were owned by a sectarian group. The settlement is not a villa rustica. Etc. Yet Magness does not rubber stamp the work of de Vaux. For example she sets forth her own chronology of the settlement. This book is not for people who subscribe to fringe theories. There are no Christian writings found among the scrolls. Nor are the scrolls a depository of the Temple either in 62 BCE or 68 CE. There used to be a sect known as the Essenes who lived at Khirbet Qumran...

Since this is only the second work concerning Qumran that I have read I am not sure how helpful this review will be. However, I found this book to be a great read for the most part and informative concerning the matters surrounding Qumran. The first thing that I noticed about this book was the accessibility of it. Although, I have not studied Qumran in detail I minored in anthropology and this gave me an edge into the language used in the field. Most people reading this book may not have the same background but Dr. Magness takes time to explain a few things about dating methods and always tries to make sure that she explains archaeological terms in clear non-technical language. In other words, Dr. Magness is not merely interested in talking to academics, or hearing the sound of her own voice, but she wants to talk to general audiences. The work that she does here surveys the archaeological findings of De Vaux who excavated the site but did not publish a detailed analysis of his finds. She examines his findings and attempts to interpret what this community looked like. She makes a very good case for the idea that Qumran was not a military fort or a private villa. There seems to have been a community there and like Stegemann she thinks that this community was responsible for the production of the scrolls themselves. Her history of the finding of the scrolls by the Bedouins was scant compared with Stegemann who gave more detail to the matter. This is of course a trivial matter as her main goal had nothing to do with providing the background to the finding of the scrolls. I think she does well interacting with historical texts such as "The Community Rule" and established a solid case for the unique style of pottery assemblages at Qumran. She explains the strange purification rituals of the Essenes showing that many of the finds such as the "miqva'ot" (bath) and the style of the pottery lend themselves as evidence for Essene occupation. I found the purification process and the community meal to be interesting and especially in comparing with Biblical texts. Many of the habits described seem to resemble (imperfectly) some of the statements and ideas found in the writings attributed to the Apostle John. It certainly raises questions as to what kind of contact the biblical writer might have had with the Essene population. I also thought she gave a fair argument for the dating issue which I cannot say is necessarily correct without further study. De Vaux thought there were 4 periods of occupations. Period IA ca. 130-100 B.C.E. was thought to be the first occupation but due to a number of problems such as almost complete lack of coinage and pottery shards (among others) Magness believes this period did not exist. Period Ib De Vaux dated from ca. 100-31 B.C.E. but Magness suggests that the community was inhabited 100-50 B.C.E. and after the a massive Earthquake was uninhabited till 31 B.C.E. After this period both scholars agree on Period III and IV. Overall, I think the book was well done. She made a fair argument for women as part of the Qumran community but it was not necessarily quite convincing (Although, I am inclined to agree.) Despite some boring spots the book was overall

very engaging and enlightening.

The archaeology and scriptural/textual studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls have held the public imagination for much of the past half-century. Since the first Scrolls were discovered not far from the ancient site of Qumran in the late 1940s, there has been an air of mystery and intrigue around them unlike almost any other archaeological find. This is largely because of the association with the text of the Bible and the undeniable impact it has had on modern culture. The book *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* is a welcome addition to the ranks of basic introductory texts on the topic. The author, Jodi Magness, is on the faculty of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. Her professional interests centre largely on early Judaism, and include such topics as ancient pottery, ancient synagogue architecture and construction, the role of the Roman Army in the Eastern Empire, and, of course, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumrani settlement. An experienced field archaeologist, she has participated in twenty different excavations in the Middle East and Greece, including work at Masada, the great fortress in the south of Israel that was a 'last stand' spot during the Jewish revolt against the Romans. An Introduction to the Archaeology of Qumran In her first chapter, Magness looks at the basics of Qumran. Not a tourist hot-spot until fairly recently, for much of its excavation history it has been a desolate and remote location. One problem Magness highlights is that the primary person associated with archaeological excavation of Qumran, Roland de Vaux, who was also part of the controversial scroll research and translation team, never published a final report on his archaeological studies. There were several preliminary and introductory reports (not all of which have been made available in English translation to this day), but de Vaux died before finishing. Truth be told, this is not a problem unique to de Vaux or to Qumran, and publications such as *Biblical Archaeology Review* have highlighted the problem of archaeologists who do not follow through with their research by putting it into publication. Magness cautions against looking at her work as anything definitive. This is more of an introduction and overview of the current state of affairs. She gives further in this chapter a brief introduction for the untrained in archaeological methodology, a survey of dating techniques, and a look at why Qumran is controversial. Archaeology is far from an exact science; dependent upon interpretation and knowledge of ancient human behaviours, it is subject to multiple interpretations and constant revision in the light of new finds. Qumran is awash in multiple interpretations as to the nature of the community there and the use of rooms and artifacts found there. Subsequent chapters cover the following topic in some detail, outlining continuing areas of question and controversy, as well as Magness's own theories. -The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Exploration of

Qumran-The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Community at Qumran-The Buildings and Occupation
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Qumran-The Temple Tax, Clothing, and the Anti-Hellenizing Attitude of the SectariansThe
Settlements at Ein Feshkha and Ein el-GhuweirMagness concludes by looking at two settlements
also at the north end of the Dead Sea that have a relationship with Qumran. She describes the
layout and buildings, as well as some of the finds associated with them. Magness is wary of direct
connections being assumed between Qumran and these other nearby settlements. In some cases
time frame conflicts, and in others simply a lack of any direct evidence leads to her suspicion.
However, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence and she allows that there might have
been relationship between the three sites.Extra stuffAt the beginning of the book is a brief
introduction followed by a series of plates, maps and line-art drawings. Sixty-six figures in all, these
are all placed up front for ready reference, as many will be useful and referred to again and again
throughout the text of the chapters.In addition to these chapters, Magness includes indexes in
several different categories. There is an index by Author and Contemporary Historical Figures; there
is an index of Scrolls, Biblical Books, Extrabiblical Books, and Historical Figures; and there is an
index of Sites and Place Names. These, in addition to the general index, make this a very practical
and useful book for ready research.At the conclusion of each chapter, Magness has a narrative
bibliography directing the reader/researcher to more broad and in-depth information about the topics
discussed. Given the recent publication date, this information makes this text a great
ready-reference resource for further Dead Sea Scroll and Qumran research.

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