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Review of Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*

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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF QUMRAN AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS, by *Jodi Magness*. Pp. xxxvi + 238, figs. 60. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2002. \$26. ISBN 0-8028-4589-4 (cloth).

This volume by Jodi Magness is part of a series entitled *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature*, edited by Peter W. Flint, Martin G. Abegg, Jr., and Florentino García Martínez. The purpose of the series is “to make the latest and best Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship accessible to scholars, students, and the thinking public” (i). Magness has designed her book with that general readership, not the specialist in the field, in mind. It contains no footnotes, very few quotations from the scholarly literature, and its bibliography is gathered and annotated at the end of each chapter. The opening chapter, “An Introduction to the Archaeology of Qumran,” introduces the reader not only to the subject of Qumran archaeology, but contains a subsection titled “What is Archaeology, and What Excavation Methods do Archaeologists Use?” In this subsection Magness introduces her readers to the methods of archaeology (e.g., pottery chronology) and explains why archaeologists use these methods when reconstructing the history of a particular site such as Qumran. Thus, while the specialist will find the present volume useful since it collects and synthesizes the latest research, its primary audience will be found in the undergraduate classroom, the library of the archaeology buff, and, most importantly, the shelves of Dead Sea Scroll specialists who are not archaeologists and need a clear and concise guide through the sometimes tortuous pathways of Qumran archaeology.

Throughout her book Magness operates under an assumption that will cause consternation among some archaeologists but with which this reviewer wholeheartedly agrees. She assumes that the texts associated with the site of Qumran are legitimate sources of data that may be used to help interpret the site. These texts include both the scrolls discovered in the 11 caves in the vicinity of Qumran and the ancient historical sources Flavius Josephus, Philo Judaeus, and Pliny the Elder (11). This is an especially controversial position in Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship because it has been argued that the original excavator of Qumran, Father Roland de Vaux of the *École Biblique et Archéologique Française* in Jerusalem, allowed his knowledge of the scrolls (discovered prior to and during the excavations) to skew his interpretation of the site.

As Magness points out, however, there are good archaeological reasons for assuming a connection between the scrolls discovered in the caves and the site, the chief being that the same ceramic types were found in the caves and in the ruins (43). Further, Magness argues against those who point out that no scroll fragments were found at the site itself, that Qumran was destroyed by fire twice (in 9/8 B.C.E. and in 68 C.E.), leaving behind almost no organic materials (44). Finally, the scroll caves lie in close proximity to the site (44). Therefore, Magness chooses to use the scrolls as part of her evidence for reconstructing the site. That this is a sound decision is proved throughout the book, for, while material in the scrolls casts some light on anomalies at the site, the archaeological data also illuminate otherwise obscure pas-

sages in the scrolls. An example of this synergy occurs in Magness's discussion of the ceramic repertoire. She notes that a large number of cylindrical and ovoid wide-mouthed storage jars with bowl shaped lids was recovered at Qumran, both at the site and in the caves. They are almost unique to Qumran, with only a very few examples found elsewhere in the region. Magness explains the preference at Qumran for these particular storage jars on the basis of the *halakhic* concerns found in the scrolls; the lids allowed the jars to be opened on the Sabbath, circumventing the sectarian prohibition against the breaking of clay seals on the Sabbath (found in *Damascus Document* 11:9). Also, the wide mouths enabled the inhabitants to remove the liquid contents by means of a dipper, avoiding the possibility of contaminating a pure vessel by pouring into it liquid from an impure vessel (4QMMT B55-8; 82-5). Magness's willingness to use the scrolls as a source of data enables her to explain the ubiquity of the cylindrical and ovoid jars at Qumran, while the archaeological data explain how, in this instance, the inhabitants of Qumran carried out their own regulations.

Magness covers the various topics of Qumran archaeology in chapters 3-9; chapter 10 covers the nearby settlements at Ein Feshkha and Ein el-Ghuweir. In her reconstruction of Qumran, Magness accepts the main outline of de Vaux's original reconstruction: the site of Qumran was inhabited in the late Second Temple period by a group of Jews living a communal lifestyle that revolved around the study of the Law according to a particular exegetical perspective, and involving stringent purity regulations; the inhabitants of the site were mostly male; and the site was destroyed in 68 C.E. by a Roman legion in the course of the Great Jewish Revolt. She does, however, introduce changes and refinements to de Vaux's reconstruction, particularly in the area of chronology. De Vaux proposed that the site was inhabited briefly during the Iron Age, then abandoned until approximately 135 B.C.E., when the Essenes settled there (Period 1A). Period 1B began around 100, when the site was expanded. An earthquake and fire in 31 brought Period 1B to an end, and the site was abandoned. It was resettled by the same group ca. 4 B.C.E. (Period 2), and was destroyed by the Romans in 68 C.E. A brief period of Roman occupation followed (Period 3), then the site was permanently abandoned.

Magness argues that there is no evidence for a separate Period 1A; rather, occupation at the site began ca. 100 B.C.E. and continued without interruption through the earthquake in 31 until the site was destroyed by a violent conflagration in 9/8. She bases this revised chronology on the coin evidence and pottery types. After the destruction in 9/8, the site was briefly abandoned but then rebuilt by 4-1 B.C.E. The Romans then destroyed the site in 68 C.E. (68). Magness's chronology gives a better interpretation of the numismatic evidence and should become generally accepted.

One complaint that may be made concerns the layout of the book; all the illustrations are gathered at the beginning of the volume, forcing the reader to flip back and forth between the chapters and the figures. Even putting the illustrations in the middle of the book would alleviate this minor annoyance. The chief weakness of the book is one that bedevils all attempts at a synthetic

study of Qumran archaeology: the lack of a final publication of de Vaux's excavations. Magness discusses this problem in her introduction, and concludes by saying "most of the interpretations and conclusions presented in this book are tentative" (4). However, it is unlikely that the broad conclusions Magness reaches will be substantially changed by the final publication. All in all, Magness has produced an excellent volume on the archaeology of Qumran, one that deserves wide consideration and readership.

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