Was Qumran a fort in the Hasmonean period?

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Abstract This article considers the recent proposal that Qumran was a Hasmonean fort during Period Ia (c. 140/130–100 BCE). An analysis of the published pottery and coins from Roland de Vaux’s excavations suggests that the earliest post-Iron Age occupation does not antedate the early first century BCE, while comparisons with Hasmonean forts contradict the identification of Qumran as a fort.

In a twist to the alternative theories identifying Qumran as something other than a sectarian settlement, Robert Cargill has proposed that during the earliest phase of post-Iron Age occupation Qumran was a fort. Cargill’s claim is based on a reconstruction of the settlement in Period Ia (c. 140/130–100 BCE), which was generated by a digital model and shows a square structure (the main building) with a tower. The identification of a Hasmonean fort at Qumran is contradicted by various types of evidence, two of which are considered here: the lack of similarities and parallels between Qumran and Hasmonean forts, and the absence of evidence for occupation at Qumran before c. 100 BCE.

Elsewhere I have discussed the tower and square structure (main building), which are key features of Cargill’s claimed Hasmonean fort. The tower does not appear on de Vaux’s plan of the site in Period Ia, and there is no evidence that the square structure existed in the earliest post-Iron Age occupation.


phase at Qumran. Furthermore, I do not believe there is evidence of de Vaux’s Period Ia (see below). However, even if we assume there was a Period Ia (pre-100 BCE) settlement at Qumran consisting of a tower and square structure, this would not prove that the site was a fort, as the tower existed and was used in the later phases, when Cargill agrees the site was sectarian. In other words, the presence of a tower does not necessarily indicate that the site functioned as a fort. Although Cargill’s digital model may suggest that various features existed in different phases (with the outcome depending on the data entered), it does not indicate the function or use of these features. Even if the digital model reconstructs a tower in the earliest post-Iron Age phase, identifying Qumran as a Hasmonean fort because of this tower represents an interpretive leap made by Cargill.

In fact, the presence of miqva’ot, animal bone deposits and a communal dining room indicates that the post-Iron Age settlement was sectarian right from the start. De Vaux assigned the miqva’ot in L117 and L118 to Period Ia, and other miqva’ot were added by the time the settlement was destroyed by the earthquake of 31 BCE, including L48–49, which was split in half. Dennis Mizzi has noted that some of the earliest (‘Period I’) pottery types found at Qumran come from L89 (the pantry adjacent to the communal dining room in L77) and L130, where they were associated with the animal bone deposits, which are a peculiar feature of the sectarian settlement at Qumran. Thus, some of the settlement’s sectarian features — miqva’ot, a communal dining room and the animal bone deposits — are attested in the earliest post-Iron Age occupation phase (which I date no earlier than c. 100 BCE).

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4. For the miqva’ot in L117–118, see R. de Vaux, Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 4. In my opinion, these miqva’ot belong to the pre-31 BCE phase of occupation at Qumran, which began no earlier than c. 100 BCE; see J. Magness, The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 64–5. For the other pre-31 miqva’ot, see de Vaux, Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 9–10, 20; Magness, The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 147–58.
A comparison between Qumran and Hasmonean forts

Cargill cites the following parallels to support his identification of Qumran as a Hasmonean fort in Period Ia:

The layout of the Main Building and its location at Qumran supports [sic] the identification of the settlement as a fort or fortress dating to the Hasmonean period. The rectangular shape of the fortified Main Building at Qumran, as well as other Hasmonean forts, finds its origin in the last Iron Age... Later Hasmonean fortifications followed the design of the late Iron Age fortifications. Contemporary fortresses dated to the Hasmonean period at Dok, Cypros, Alexandrium (Sartaba), Hyrcania (Khirbet el-Mird), Machaerus, and Masada all display some characteristics similar to the structure and location of the fort at Qumran..."6

Comparisons between these sites and Qumran call into question the claimed similarities. Doq, Cypros, Alexandrium-Sartaba, Hyrcania, Machaerus and Masada all differ from Qumran in being built atop mountains that are difficult to access. The published plans of Cypros, Hyrcania, Machaerus and Masada display little similarity to Qumran.7 Moreover, the lack of architectural remains at Masada antedating Herod’s reign means that it cannot be cited as an example of a Hasmonean fort.8 There is no plan of the remains at Doq because it has never been excavated.9 Hyrcania also has not been excavated; the surveyed remains consist of a monastery on top of a vaulted Herodian substructure.10 I could not find a published plan of Alexandrium-Sartaba, but the description of an ‘elaborate building’ provided by Yoram Tsafrir (who conducted excavations 1981–84) does not suggest a resemblance to Qumran:

The Hasmonean Remains: Stone column drums and large Doric capitals, carefully arranged, were found in the fills beneath the floor of the Herodian peristyle. The drums belong to a structure whose plan remains obscure, but that may have been a magnificent stoa or a monumental façade...11

6. Cargill, Qumran through [Real] Time, pp. 102, 104.
7. For plans, see E. Netzer, The Palaces of the Hasmoneans and Herod the Great (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2001).
Cargill also compares Qumran to Ein et-Tureiba:

The fortress at ‘Ein et-Turaba served as [a] fortified defense on the western shore of the Dead Sea. The structure at ‘Ein et-Turaba is a roughly square (15 × 13 m) building, which has massive double stone walls and an outer revetment, which is a similar design to the Main Building at Qumran.\(^\text{12}\)

In support of this comparison, Cargill cites a 1981 article by Pesach Bar-Adon, who suggested that Khirbet Mazin (Qasr el-Yahud), Rujm el-Bahr, and the initial settlements at Qumran and Ein Feshkha belonged to a line of fortresses established by John Hyrcanus.\(^\text{13}\) I have shown elsewhere that there is no evidence of occupation at Ein Feshkha before the reign of Herod (the settlement apparently was established after the earthquake of 31 BCE).\(^\text{14}\) Even if we accept the existence of Cargill’s Hasmonean fort at Qumran (the square building with tower), it looks nothing like Ein et-Tureiba, which consisted of a square enclosure abutted by a smaller structure.\(^\text{15}\) The square enclosure was entered through a gate with a guard room on one side but no tower. Stone bases along two sides of the enclosure held wooden posts that created a porch. The smaller structure had double walls that were 2.5 m thick (!), with a sloping stone revetment on the outside. An entrance room on the north side of the structure provided access to interior rooms.\(^\text{16}\) Although Cargill compares the design of this structure to the main building at Qumran, presumably he had in mind the tower. But even this comparison fails, as the revetment was added to the tower at Qumran after the earthquake of 31 BCE.\(^\text{17}\) Furthermore, the fortress at Ein et-Tureiba dates to the late Iron Age, not the Hasmonean period.

Bar-Adon found only a small amount of post-Iron Age pottery at Ein et-Tureiba, which he dated to the Hellenistic and early Roman periods.\(^\text{18}\) There is no indication that the post-Iron Age occupation was military in nature.

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\(^\text{17}\) In fact, Cargill, *Qumran through [Real] Time*, pp. 109–10, acknowledges that the revetment is not original but was added to the tower.
\(^\text{18}\) Bar-Adon, ‘Ein et-Turaba’, p. 44; but on p. 48 he describes this pottery as early Roman.
or that the site functioned as a fortress at this time. The only pottery from the post-Iron Age phase illustrated by Bar-Adon consists of rim fragments of three cooking pots and three storage jars, all representing first-century CE types. The published pottery dates the post-Iron Age occupation at Ein et-Tureiba to the first century CE, probably the second half of the first century. This means there is no support for the suggestion that Ein et-Tureiba was part of a line of fortresses established by John Hyrcanus I, in which case it cannot provide a Hasmonean period parallel to de Vaux’s Period Ia settlement at Qumran.

The fortress at Horvat Uza in the north-east Negev (not cited by Cargill) provides a more appropriate and instructive comparison with Qumran. This Iron Age fortress was reoccupied in the Hellenistic period (second century BCE) and the early Roman period (first and second centuries CE). The Hellenistic period occupants reduced the size of the Iron Age fortress by about one-third by constructing a new wall on the western side, yielding outer dimensions of $42 \times 33$ m. The Hellenistic period fortress consisted of an enclosure with six rooms along the northern and western sides, including a guard room inside the gate. The Roman period fortress reused the Hellenistic enclosure, but added rooms and platforms around all four sides as well as two large enclosures to the north and east (which were not excavated). Unlike Qumran, the Hellenistic and Roman period fortresses at Horvat Uza had eight solid square towers projecting from the enclosure walls (seven of them reused from the Iron Age and the central one on the west added in the Hellenistic period). The enclosure walls (including the Hellenistic period

19. Bar-Adon, ‘Ein et-Tureiba’, p. 46, Fig. 6.6:20–25. Cooking pots nos 20 and 21 have a very short neck, triangular rim and carination at the base of the neck, resembling Bar-Nathan’s Type M-CP4, which she dates from the first century to the first third of the second century CE (all ten specimens from Masada were found in contexts dating to the time of the First Revolt). No. 22 appears to be a deep casserole corresponding with Bar-Nathan’s M-CS3A, dated from the last third of the first century BCE to the first century CE. Storage jar no. 24 is Bar-Nathan’s Type M-SJ12, dated from the first century CE to the first third of the second century. Storage jar no. 25 corresponds with Bar-Nathan’s Type M-SJ8, dated from the first century CE to the first third of the second century. See R. Bar-Nathan, Masada VII, The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965, Final Reports. The Pottery of Masada (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2006), pp. 160–61 (M-CP4); pp. 167–8 (M-CS3A); p. 62 (M-SJ12); pp. 57–8 (M-SJ8).
22. Ibid., pp. 57–60.
23. Ibid., pp. 62–75.
western wall) are 1.50–1.60 m thick, whereas at Qumran the outer walls of the main building are only 0.90 m thick.\textsuperscript{24} The finds from Horvat Uza include pottery, glass, animal bones and eight coins, two of them Hellenistic and the others Roman.\textsuperscript{25} In contrast to Qumran, there are no \textit{miqva’ot}, no animal bone deposits, no communal dining room and no adjacent cemetery.

Morphologically, a closer parallel to a hypothetical square building at Qumran is the farmhouse at Ein Feshkha, which apparently was established during Herod’s reign. This building measures $24 \times 18$ m, with a central courtyard surrounded by two storeys of rooms on all four sides.\textsuperscript{26} I cite this parallel not to argue that Qumran was a farmhouse, but to highlight several points: (1) morphology alone does not indicate function; (2) comparisons must be comprehensive, rather than focusing on only one or two features; (3) comparisons must be accurate and contemporary. It is important to pay attention to details.

If we pay attention to details, the published plans of Qumran show that there is no evidence of the tower’s existence in de Vaux’s Period Ia, and the south-west corner of Cargill’s square building did not exist in Periods Ia or Ib. The absence of evidence of walls in the south-west corner means that the reconstruction of a square building is hypothetical.\textsuperscript{27} No less important, Cargill’s reconstruction ignores the fact that the majority of remains assigned by de Vaux to Period Ia (including the pair of \textit{miqva’ot} in L117 and L118) are concentrated in the western part of the site, around the Iron Age cistern L110. In fact, Cargill’s Hasmonean fort bears little resemblance to de Vaux’s plan of Period Ia.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., pp. 15, 57; for Qumran, see for example J.-B. Humbert and A. Chambon, \textit{Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrân et de Ain Feshkha I} (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1994), p. 314 (Locus 66).
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Y. Hirschfeld, \textit{Qumran in Context, Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence} (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), p. 62 Fig. 21; p. 89 Fig. 41, reconstructs this wall with a broken line.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Compare Cargill, \textit{Qumran through [Real] Time}, Plate 5.3, with de Vaux, \textit{Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls}, Plate IV.
\end{itemize}
Pottery and Period Ia at Qumran

Cargill dates the establishment of the supposed Hasmonean fort at Qumran to c. 140–130 BCE, citing the ‘archaeological and numismatic evidence’. I have argued elsewhere that the earliest pottery published by de Vaux does not appear to antedate the first century BCE. Because this point is central to the claim of a fort in Qumran’s earliest post-Iron Age phase, it merits closer consideration. Unfortunately, de Vaux published no Period Ia assemblages. Instead, most of the published pottery comes from Period Ib and Period II destruction levels (c. 9/8 BCE, and 68 CE), and much of it consists of whole or restorable vessels rather than sherds. According to de Vaux, Period Ia ended not with a destruction but with an expansion of the settlement. Another problem is that the pottery consists of local types, mostly coarse wares. In contrast to imports, local types typically display little change over long periods, sometimes hundreds of years. Nevertheless, changes can be distinguished, especially when considering the entire corpus rather than individual pieces. There are visible differences between assemblages dating to the second century BCE and the first century BCE. Although some of the earliest types published by de Vaux have a second-to-first-century BCE range, as a corpus the pottery indicates a first-century BCE date. De Vaux’s observation that the pottery of his Period Ia ‘is indistinguishable’ from that of Period Ib supports the assignment of this material to the first century BCE.

Mizzi has discussed early remains that were found under L30 (the ‘scriptorium’). This room was filled with fragments of stuccoed benches and tables from the second story, which collapsed when the settlement was destroyed in 68 CE. According to de Vaux’s notes, an oven and plastered installation were discovered under the Period II floor on the south-eastern side of the room:

On ouvre une tranchée contre le mur oriental: sous le sol, environ 20 cm, apparaissent au sud, un four et un curieuse installation plâtrée. Pour mieux la comprendre, on enlève tout le sol supérieur.

29. Cargill, Qumran through [Real] Time, p. 211.
31. See ibid., p. 63.
32. De Vaux, Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 5.
34. The following citations in French are from Humbert and Chambon, Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrán, p. 302.
Enlèvement de tout le hérisson du sol de la période II.
On continue. Il semble que toute la pièce soit vide, sauf au sud où nous avons commence.

Next, de Vaux noted an ash deposit at a slightly lower level than the oven, which seemed to continue under the east wall of L30:

On achève le nettoyage. Près du four et un peu en contrebas, la cendre semble passer sous le mur oriental.

The final cleaning indicated that the ash deposit penetrated only slightly under the wall:

Nettoyage de l’intérieur du four et du trou à cendre entre le four et le mur. La cendre ne descend guère plus bas et pénètre un peu sous le mur.

Under the oven, a cooking pot was found:

On enlève la marmite (romaine) qui était sous le four.

Mizzi illustrates the cooking pot and an assemblage consisting mostly of plates and bowls which might come from the same level in L30, all of which he dates correctly to the first century B.C.E. 35 The cooking pot corresponds with Rachel Bar-Nathan’s Type J-CP1 from Jericho, which has a tall, vertical neck, narrow mouth, simple rim, sharp transition from the neck to the shoulder, and large, globular, baggy body. Although this type appeared at the beginning of the second century, Bar-Nathan notes that it is especially characteristic of the early first century B.C.E., with small quantities still produced during Herod’s reign. 36 Another example of this type is published from L130–135 at Qumran, although its smaller and rounder body points to a slightly later date than the specimen from L30. 37

Mizzi concludes that the ‘oven, the cooking pot, and the tablewares suggest cooking activity which predates the construction of L30’. 38 He proposes that initially the central courtyard was larger, giving the main building a more symmetrical plan, and notes that cooking typically was done in open

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37. See R. de Vaux, 'Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrán, Rapport préliminaire sur les 3e, 4e, et 5e campagnes', Revue Biblique 63 (1956), p. 557 Fig. 3.9.
courtyards in antiquity.\textsuperscript{39} Mizzi believes that the larger central courtyard is military in nature: ‘This does not necessarily mean that Qumran was a fort, but it could have served as a military outpost, forming part of the Hasmonaean military programme in this region.’\textsuperscript{40} I do not understand why a larger courtyard is military in nature, especially since other sectarian features existed in this phase, as we have seen. Furthermore, the oven does not seem to antedate the construction of L30. It is true that de Vaux’s description suggests that the ash deposit penetrated slightly under the east wall of L30 and therefore antedates it.\textsuperscript{41} Presumably the ash came from and was associated with the oven, although de Vaux does not say so. However, photographs from de Vaux’s excavations show the plastered installation built up against the east wall of L30, which means that it postdates the wall.\textsuperscript{42} The oven is located next to the installation and lies at about the same level. The bottom of the oven’s interior and the bottom of the plastered installation appear to be at about the same level, and de Vaux described them together. This means that the oven and plastered installation postdate the construction of the east wall of L30. In fact, had the oven antedated the wall, it would have been damaged or covered over during the wall’s construction.

Mizzi is correct that the cooking pot provides a first-century BCE \textit{terminus post quem} (probably in the early first century) for the oven and plastered installation. However, the photographs contradict the assumption that these features antedate the construction of the east wall of L30 and therefore were located in an open courtyard. Furthermore, not all cooking was done in courtyards. For example, a room on the north side of the central courtyard at Qumran (L38–41) was used for cooking in Period II (late first century BCE to 68 CE), as indicated by the presence of four ovens.\textsuperscript{43} Large numbers of cooking installations (stoves and ovens) were installed in the casemate rooms at Masada by Jewish rebels at the time of the First Revolt.\textsuperscript{44} Returning to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 69.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 70 n. 219. Mizzi does not define the differences between a fort and a military outpost and does not cite examples of other Hasmonaean military outposts that would be comparable to Qumran.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Humbert and Chambon, Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrân, p. 302.
\item \textsuperscript{42} See Humbert and Chambon, Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrân, p. 63, Photos 122–123.
\item \textsuperscript{43} See de Vaux, Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls, p. 27; Humbert and Chambon, Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrân, p. 305.
\item \textsuperscript{44} See Y. Yadin, Masada, Herod’s Fortress and the Zealots’ Last Stand (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 156–61.
\end{itemize}
Qumran, there is also evidence of changes in L30 over time. De Vaux noted that the large bay window in the north wall of the room was blocked in Period II, apparently when the plastered tables and benches were installed on the second floor.\(^\text{45}\)

Other early ceramic types published by de Vaux are consistent with the first-century BCE date of the cooking pot from L30. Mizzi notes that one early assemblage comes from L10A, a room on the ground-floor level of the tower that was buried in the collapse of the earthquake of 31 BCE.\(^\text{46}\) This assemblage contained a storage jar that corresponds with Bar-Nathan’s Type J-SJ3, which appeared at the end of the second century BCE and disappeared by the time of Herod.\(^\text{47}\) Fourteen more storage jars of this type, still sealed with clay, were discovered by Yitzhak Magen and Yuval Peleg in two graves at Qumran, demonstrating that the cemetery was in use by the first century BCE.\(^\text{48}\) Another early storage jar – Bar-Nathan’s Type SJ4 (variant A2) – is published from Trench A. This type dates from the last quarter of the second century to the last decade of the first century BCE, and is common in Hasmonean contexts of the first century BCE.\(^\text{49}\)

**Coins and Period Ia at Qumran**

This review indicates that the published pottery does not support a date before the early first century BCE for the establishment of the settlement at Qumran. Pottery has greater chronological resolution and is a better indicator of date than coins, due to the short lifespan of ceramic vessels compared with coins. Nevertheless, de Vaux’s assignment of Period Ia to the second century BCE was based on numismatic evidence, despite the fact that no coins were found in Period Ia contexts:


\(^\text{46}\) Mizzi, *The Archaeology of Khirbet Qumran*, p. 84.

\(^\text{47}\) See R. de Vaux, ‘Fouilles au Khirbet Qumrân, Rapport préliminaire sur la deuxième campagne’, *Revue Biblique* 61 (1954), p. 215 Fig. 1.2; Bar-Nathan, *Hasmonean and Herodian Palaces at Jericho*, pp. 278.


\(^\text{49}\) See de Vaux, ‘Fouilles au Khirbet Qumrân, Rapport préliminaire sur la deuxième campagne’, p. 215 Fig. 1.4; Bar-Nathan, *Hasmonean and Herodian Palaces at Jericho*, pp. 28–31.
This pottery [of Period Ia] is indistinguishable from that of Period Ib, and there are no coins associated with it. For this reason the chronology can be established only approximately by its relation to the better documented period which follows. As we shall see, the coins indicate that the buildings of Period Ib were certainly occupied under Alexander Jannaeus, 103–76 BCE, and that they may have been constructed under John Hyrcanus, 135–104 BCE. This construction marks the concluding date of Period Ia.  

Cargill relies heavily on the numismatic evidence to support his identification of a Hasmonean period fort at Qumran established around 140–130 BCE. De Vaux discussed the coins in great detail in relation to Period Ib. I cite his observation in full due to its importance:

Those [coins] of Period Ib begin with eleven coins of the Seleucids. There are six silver coins, of which three are dated precisely as falling within the reign of Antiochus VII in 132/131, 131/130, 130/129 BCE. Three others do not bear any legible date but two of them can be attributed to Antiochus VII (one uncertain) and the third to Demetrius II (uncertain). It must be remembered that the silver coins remained in circulation over a long period, and are of little use for dating an archaeological level apart from providing a vague terminus post quem. But there are five small Seleucid bronzes from the reigns of Antiochus III, Antiochus IV, and Antiochus VII without any precise date. It must be remarked at this point that it was not until the reign of John Hyrcanus I (135–104 BCE) that the Seleucid currency was replaced in Palestine by a Jewish currency, that John Hyrcanus himself only began to strike his own coins at a fairly late stage in his reign, and that even then the Seleucid coins continued in circulation. On the other hand the finds of Khirbet Qumran include only a single coin which can certainly be assigned to the reign of John Hyrcanus I… The finds include one coin of Judas Aristobulus (104–103 BCE) but 143 coins of Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE), the Hasmonean for whom by far the largest number of coins were struck.

The interpretation of the coin evidence is a delicate matter. It is certain that the buildings of Period Ib were occupied under Alexander Jannaeus. It is possible that they were already built under John Hyrcanus. Arguments might be drawn from the Seleucid coins, which continued to circulate during his reign, but these coins could have survived from Period Ia even though we have not been able to assign them definitively to that phase. In any case the fact that there are so few Seleucid bronzes makes it very difficult to regard Period Ib as beginning before John Hyrcanus.

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The coin profile at Qumran – consisting of a small number of Seleucid issues, few or no coins of John Hyrcanus I, and large numbers of coins of Alexander Jannaeus – is paralleled at contemporary sites around the Dead Sea. Ehud Netzer’s excavations at Jericho yielded one bronze coin each of Antiochus IV (175–164), Alexander Balas (150–145), and Alexander II Zebina (128–123); over 500 issues of Alexander Jannaeus; and fewer than 15 coins of John Hyrcanus I. The coins from Yigael Yadin’s excavations at Masada include twelve bronze Ptolemaic coins of the third century BCE, five Seleucid coins of the second century BCE, four coins of John Hyrcanus I, and approximately 80 issues of Alexander Jannaeus. Yizhar Hirschfeld’s excavations in the ancient village at Ein Gedi yielded three Ptolemaic coins, three Seleucid issues, two coins of John Hyrcanus I, and 24 coins of Alexander Jannaeus.

This evidence indicates that small numbers of Ptolemaic and Seleucid coins continued to circulate during the Hasmonean period, a conclusion that is confirmed by the coins from Nahman Avigad’s excavations in Jerusalem’s Jewish Quarter. In Area E, the buildings of Stratum 3 were sealed by an extensive stone pavement that was laid during the reign of Herod (second half of the first century BCE). Nearly every sealed Stratum 3 locus contained one or two Ptolemaic or Seleucid coins, indicating that small numbers of bronze coins minted centuries earlier were still in circulation in Herod’s time: from L706, one coin of Antiochus III; from L707, one Ptolemaic coin and one Seleucid coin; from L710, one Seleucid coin; from L711, one Seleucid coin; from L712, a coin of Antiochus III; from L713, one coin of Antiochus IV; from L719, one Seleucid coin; from L720, one Seleucid coin; and from L727, one coin of Antiochus III.

Donald Tsvi Ariel, who published the coins from Area E, remarked on another phenomenon: although the pavement dates to Herod’s reign, the overwhelming majority of the coins in circulation at the time – represented

by nearly 700 specimens – are issues of Alexander Janneus. In contrast, there are only 10 coins of John Hyrcanus I and 51 coins of Herod. Ariel notes that the coins of Alexander Jannaeus ‘constitute more than thirteen times the number of coins of Herod from Area E’.\(^{58}\) In other words, not only are coins of Alexander Jannaeus found in large numbers, but they remained in circulation for decades after his death, through the reign of Herod.

The fact that Seleucid coins and issues of Alexander Jannaeus remained in circulation for decades and even centuries is demonstrated by the finds from the so-called ‘Burnt House’ in Area B in Jerusalem’s Jewish Quarter.\(^{59}\) The destruction level in the house, which is securely dated to the year 70 CE, yielded two Seleucid coins (one each of Antiochus III and Antiochus IV), which, as Ariel notes, ‘were still circulating in Jerusalem over two centuries after having been issued’.\(^{60}\) There are also coins of Alexander Jannaeus, as Ariel remarks: ‘Coins of the Hasmoneans … remained current until the Jewish War.’\(^{61}\)

The coins from Yitzhak Magen and Yuval Peleg’s more recent excavations at Qumran reinforce de Vaux’s finds. They mention recovering seven Ptolemaic and Seleucid coins, no specimens of John Hyrcanus I, and 80 Hasmonean coins, mostly issues of Alexander Jannaeus.\(^{62}\) Thus, Qumran’s numismatic profile is consistent with other Judean sites. The few Seleucid coins and single coin of John Hyrcanus I do not, by themselves, constitute evidence of second-century BCE occupation at Qumran, especially as all of these coins were discovered in later contexts. Instead, they reflect a common phenomenon whereby even some bronze issues remained in circulation for centuries after being minted. Furthermore, the coins of Alexander Jannaeus do not necessarily date associated remains to the reign of that king, since large numbers continued to circulate through the reign of Herod and even later.

To conclude, the published ceramic and numismatic material suggests that the post-Iron Age settlement at Qumran was not established before the first

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61. Ibid.
century BCE. This means there is no evidence of occupation — military or sectarian — in the second century BCE. If Period Ia did exist, the published evidence points to a date not before the early first century BCE. Furthermore, comparisons between de Vaux’s plan of the site in Period Ia and Hasmonean forts contradict the identification of Qumran as a fort. Hopefully, the future publication of de Vaux’s excavations will help clarify our understanding of the settlement’s earliest post-Iron Age phase.