

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF QUMRAN AND THE PERSONALITY OF ROLAND DE VAUX

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Introduction

Let me introduce my short paper about the personality of Roland de Vaux with a quotation of Kathleen M. Kenyon (1906-1978) important English archaeologist and excavator of Jericho from 1952 to 1958. In her foreword to the revised English edition of Roland de Vaux's Schweich Lectures she wrote: "*This publication of his lectures is a monument to his skill as an excavator, as a historian, and as an authority on the Scrolls themselves.*"¹ De Vaux was very closely connected with the Dead Sea Scrolls and Qumran site and it is not possible to avoid this fact. Let's have a look at this person, his role and impact on the archaeological site of Qumran.

Life and Work

Roland Guérin de Vaux was born on December 17 , 1903 in Paris. In 1929 he entered the Dominican Order and became a priest. For 38 years - from 1933 till his death in 1971 - he lived in Jerusalem. From the academic year of 1934-1935 onwards he was teaching at the École Biblique various subjects including history, exegesis and archaeology. His work and teaching led him to publishing a lot of books and articles. In 1958-1960 he published *Les Institutions de l'Ancient Testament* translated into English in 1961; in 1949, the Book of Genesis was printed in fascicle form; in 1951, the Books of Kings and in 1953 the Books of Samuel.²

His main domain of research was in that time the Syro-Palestinian archeology. De Vaux conducted several excavations. In 1938 at Ma'in, in 1944 at Abu Ghosh³; in 1945-1946 at

¹ De Vaux, R., *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London 1973, vi.

² Cf. *Le père Roland de Vaux*, in: *Revue biblique* 1972 (LXXIX), 5.

³ The Second World War disturbed a lot of archaeological activities, but since Palestine was in the Western Allied camp, the Fathers who were liable for military service were able to stay at home. Thus it happened that

Ma'moudiyeh; in 1946-1960 at Tell el-Far'ah (9 campaigns); from 1951 till 1958 de Vaux excavated the site of Qumran (5 campaigns); in 1953 at Murabba'at; in 1958 at 'Ain Feshka and in 1961-1963 at Jerusalem together with Kathleen Kenyon.⁴

It is important to mention other activities that demonstrate thinking and leadership of father de Vaux. From 1945 until 1965 he was the director of the *École Biblique*, which is the oldest research institute in the Holy Land founded in 1890 by the Dominican Marie-Joseph Lagrange (1855-1938) within the framework of the Dominican Monastery of St. Stephen, Jerusalem (which had come into being in 1882). The new institution was called *L'Ecole Pratique d'Etudes Bibliques*, „The Practical School of Biblical Studies“. From the beginning, teaching and publications were combined with archaeological research as a basis. In 1920, its name was changed to *L'Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française*, „The French Biblical and Archaeological School“. The institution during first few years of its existence formed a group of excellent biblical scholars and archaeologist: Marie-Antonin Jaussen (1871-1962), Louis-Hugues Vincent (1872-1960), Antoine-Raphaël Savignac (1874-1951), Felix-Marie Abel (1878-1953), Edouard-Paul Dhorme (1881-1966) etc. Beginning in the 1930's, the second generation of biblical scholars began to appear at the Ecole Biblique among them: Roland de Vaux (1903-1971), Raymond Tournay (1912-1999), Pierre Benoit (1906-1987) in 1965 he succeeded de Vaux as the director of the *École Biblique*, Marie-Emile Boismard (1916-2004) and others.⁵

During the first fifty years of its existence, the *École Biblique* produced 42 major books, 682 scientific articles and over 6200 book reviews.⁶

After the Second World War, father de Vaux as the Director of the *École* was entrusted with the task to work on more ambitious excavations. He needed to be not only a good scholar but also a clever diplomatist.

In 1892, the periodical *Revue Biblique* was founded by father Lagrange – which has been a very distinguished quarterly publication. It is the oldest French biblical periodical. De Vaux served as its director from 1938 to 1953. From 1954, a “Chronique archéologique” was inaugurated in the *Revue Biblique*, where an account of excavations by the *École* was given

working with the French General Consulate in Jerusalem de Vaux in 1944 could undertake an archaeological exploration of the church in Abu Gosh.

⁴ These digs were constantly interrupted by obstacles of a political nature.

⁵ Cf. Slivka D., *Biblické miesto: Lithostrotos – Gabatha*, in: *Theologos*1/2007 (ročník IX), 167.

⁶ Cf. Osiek C., *Catholic or catholic? Biblical Scholarship at the Center*, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 1 (2006), 10.

periodically. The archaeologists themselves presented written reports accompanied by illustrations of their latest works.⁷

During the years of the Second World War, the idea of the new translations of each book of the Bible came into being, equipped with footnotes explaining the text and with inner-biblical cross-references in the margins. Each book was to have an introduction, in which literary history, historical context and theology would be presented. The project was directed by the École Biblique and de Vaux was one of the responsible persons. Between 1945 and 1955, the various books of the Bible were published in fascicle form. Finally, in 1956 the entire Bible appeared in one volume. Its original title was simply “La Sainte Bible” (“The Holy Bible”), but, because of the connection with Jerusalem, it quickly became known as “La Bible de Jerusalem” (“The Jerusalem Bible”), which is now its official name. In English, The Jerusalem Bible was first published in 1966.

The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the spring of 1947 opened a new chapter of de Vaux’s life described in more detail below.

In 1964, he left Jerusalem for an academic year and became Stillman Professor of Roman Catholic Studies in the Divinity School of Harvard University and gave lectures also at the other academic institutions in North America.⁸

In 1970, the École Biblique decided to restart the archaeological activities and de Vaux himself chose the site of Tell Keisan near Akko and led the first season of excavation in summer of 1971.

His last large work *Histoire d’Israël* remained unfinished. Roland de Vaux died of a heart attack on September 10, 1971, at the age of 67. Nine days later, another great archaeologist and orientalist William Foxwell Albright died.

During his career de Vaux received honorary doctorates from many institutions including the universities of Aberdeen, Dublin, Louvain, Notre Dame, Yale, etc.

De Vaux – the Archaeologist

According to his own words Roland de Vaux did not want to become initially an archaeologist. He came to Jerusalem to teach biblical theology. During his first year of teaching at the École Biblique he even studied the Cajetan's commentaries on Thomas

⁷ Cf. *Archeological activities of the French Biblical and Archaeological School in Jerusalem between 1890 and 1990*, in: <http://ebaf.edu>.

⁸ Cf. John Strugnell, *In Memoriam: Roland Guerin de Vaux, O. P.*, in: *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 207 (Oct., 1972), 3.

Aquinas. But than the École Biblique accepted the request from the cultural section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to begin the excavations in Palestine a part of Jordan in that time.⁹ In this way de Vaux - theologian became de Vaux - archaeologist.¹⁰

De Vaux possessed a gift of understanding the nature. He observed the sun, winds and rains and that is why the excavation camp was always arranged with the quality of a peasant. He loved animals and he was very interested in insect behavior. He was even a member of an entomological society. He always began to work early in the morning before sunrise and continued until sunset. But the real archaeological work started in the afternoon after the tea-time when the results of excavation were evaluated and catalogued.

In his archaeological excavations de Vaux cooperated with local Arab workers. He knew classical Arabic and he also spoke Palestinian dialect. Later he was accused to be decidedly pro-Arab scholar. It is true that he cultivated friendly relations with Palestinians, but friends who knew him differ as to whether he was anti-Semitic. We have no quotations from him on this matter.

During the examination of the archaeological findings, no conclusion was made by himself without an agreement of all. The discussion about findings and the possibility to present one's own opinion or position was opened to all.

De Vaux was well aware that his way of doing archaeology was rather simple and that the methods of others were more scientific and more methodical. He often said he had begun digging too early. Step by step he learnt how to use archaeological techniques to work well at the site.¹¹

In 1998, the article written by Philip R. Davies in *Biblical Archaeologist* appeared who even called into question the archaeological competence of de Vaux. Davies assessed his excavation of Qumran as an example of how archaeology should not be conducted.¹²

Recently, Jodi Magness in her book *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* demonstrated that Roland de Vaux was a competent archaeologist who used the standard techniques in his time. Some scholars criticized de Vaux for digging in an unstratified way and for not changing locus numbers even when he dug through several floors. But in reality, it is possible to see the presence of stratigraphy when reading de Vaux's

⁹ Tommaso de Vio Gaetano Cajetan (1469-1534) was an Italian Dominican cardinal, philosopher, theologian and exegete. Cajetan was the author of the officially approved commentaries on the Summa of Thomas Aquinas. He is the founder of Neothomism.

¹⁰ Cf. Laperrousaz E. M., *Qoumrân et les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte. Un cinquantenaire*, Paris 1997, 41.

¹¹ Cf. Laperrousaz E. M., *Qoumrân et les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte. Un cinquantenaire*, Paris 1997, 46.

¹² Cf. Davies P. R., *How Not to Do Archaeology. The Story of Qumran*, in: *Biblical Archaeologist*, December 1988, 203- 207.

notes in which he describes the levels he is going through. Yigael Yadin (1917-1984), who excavated Masada ten years after de Vaux's excavation of Qumran, used the same methods assigning a single locus number throughout the excavation of a room.¹³

The Excavation of Khirbet Qumran

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the excavations of Khirbet Qumran belong among the most exciting and the greatest archaeological discoveries of the 20th century. The first scrolls were discovered by Bedouins possibly in the winter of 1946 or in the spring of 1947. The cave where the scrolls were found was subsequently dubbed Cave 1 to distinguish it from other manuscript caves in the same area. With the creation of the State of Israel in May of 1948 the British Mandate ended and the area where the scrolls had been found became part of the Kingdom of Jordan. Political situation and military struggles made it impossible for scholars to visit the area. Only about two years after this discovery the Jordanian Government authorized the Arab legion to comb the area and on January 28, 1948, cave 1 was located by Captain Akkash el-Zebn of the Arab Legion and a Belgian observer on the United Nations, Captain Phillippe Lippens.¹⁴ Once the cessation of hostilities permitted access to the cave where the Bedouins had discovered the first scrolls of manuscript, all care was taken to explore what the clandestine excavators had left behind. The first archaeological excavation of the cave took place from February 15 to March 5, 1949, by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, whose director was Lancaster Harding, by the Palestine Archaeological Museum of which de Vaux was President of the Trustees, and by the École Biblique of which he was the director. Aside from jars, bowls, pieces of linen cloth they found fragments of additional manuscripts. Some of them belonged to the manuscripts, which the Bedouins had removed from the cave. De Vaux and Harding surveyed building ruins about a half-mile to the south and excavated two graves in the cemetery. For Roland de Vaux it was his first touch with the scrolls and with Khirbet Qumran. At the time they concluded that the ruins had no evident connection with the discoveries in the cave.¹⁵

At the end of 1951 archaeologists decided to conduct a full-scale excavation at the Qumran site. Harding was often tied to Amman by his responsibilities; therefore, de Vaux was in fact the principal director of excavations. The first campaign took place from

¹³ Cf. Magness J., *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids 2002, 7

¹⁴ Cf. Magness J., *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids 2002, 27.

¹⁵ Cf. Vaux de R., *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London 1973, vii.

November 24 until December 12, 1951, under the direction of Harding and de Vaux with the help of about 15 workers.¹⁶ While the archaeologists were excavating at Qumran, the Bedouins found manuscripts dating to the time of the Second Jewish Revolt against the Romans (132-135 C.E.) in caves in Wadi Murabba'at. After de Vaux and Harding rushed to explore those caves, the Bedouins returned to Qumran and discovered a second cave (Cave 2) containing scrolls. This was a beginning of the unspoken competition between the archaeologists and Bedouins, who scrambled to find other scrolls hidden in the hills and cliffs and caves near Qumran. The Bedouins most often won.

Between 1953 and 1956, four further campaigns took place in which de Vaux uncovered the whole area of the Khirbet Qumran ruins.¹⁷ The sixth and last campaign surveyed another complex of buildings of 'Ain Feshka about 2 miles to the south from Qumran and occurred from January 25 until March 21, 1958. De Vaux accounted for these excavations of Khirbet Qumran in his preliminary reports in the *Revue Biblique* 1949, 1953, 1954, 1956, 1959, then in the Schweich Lectures of the British Academy in 1959.¹⁸ Until recently, these popular lectures, first issued in French with the title *L'archéologie et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte*, London 1961, and later printed in an expanded and revised English edition with the title *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London 1973, has served as the primary source for scholars seeking to understand Khirbet Qumran's occupational history because Roland de Vaux never wrote a final excavation report.¹⁹

De Vaux's unpublished material was "inherited" by the archaeologists who succeeded him at the Ecole Biblique and is now in the hands of de Vaux's successor at the Ecole Biblique, the archaeologist Jean-Baptiste Humbert. In the late 1980's, Humbert invited two Belgian archaeologists, Robert Donceel and Pauline Donceel-Voute, to work with him on the final

¹⁶ Cf. Vaux de R., *Fouille au Khirbet Qumran*, in: *Revue biblique* 60 (1953), 83-106.

¹⁷ The second season of excavations at Qumran was conducted from February 9 to April 24, 1953. During this time the tower and central buildings were excavated. The third season of excavations at Qumran took place from February 13 to April 14, 1954. The refectory and potter's workshop were excavated. The fourth season of excavations at Qumran took place from February 2 to April 6, 1955. The western quarter was opened and the water system revealed. The fifth season of excavations at Qumran took place from February 18 to March 28, 1956.

¹⁸ The British Academy currently has twenty-three established lecture series. The Leopold Schweich Trust Fund was founded in 1907 in memory of Leopold Schweich as a gift of his daughter Constance. It provided for three public lectures on subjects related to Biblical Studies.

¹⁹ The English translation was made while the author was still living and he was able to write a preface in June of 1971.

publication of the Qumran material. Within a few years, the team split up, and the Donceels returned to Belgium without producing a final report.²⁰

In 1994, Humbert and Chambon of the École Biblique collected de Vaux's field notes and published the first volume of the projected series of Qumran excavation reports *Fouilles de Khirbet Qumrân et de Aïn Feshkha, Vol. I, Album de photographies, Répertoire du fonds photographique, synthèse des notes de chantier du P. de Vaux* (Fribourg 1994).²¹ This volume contains de Vaux's summary of each of the 144 loci that he excavated at the site of Qumran.²² In 2003, the second volume *Khirbet Qumran et 'Ain Feshkha II: Studies of Anthropology, Physics and Chemistry* (Fribourg 2003) edited by J.-B. Hubert and J. Gunneweg was published. While the volume I provided a report of the archaeological excavations and a list of the findings at Khirbet Qumran, the volume II seeks to clarify them by applying the latest scientific techniques.

What we now have is a reliable version of de Vaux's work on Qumran, but we still don't have the final result. It requires every piece of evidence to be looked at again and a new reassessment based on all the currently available data.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

De Vaux was primary archaeologist. The relationship of de Vaux with the Scrolls was different from that of other areas that he dealt with. He did not write on the content of the Dead Sea Scrolls in detail and he did not translate any of the Scrolls. Nor did he edit any of the texts themselves. However, in 1953, he became the chairman of the international team of 8 scholars responsible for the publication of the Scrolls: from the U.S.: Frank Moore Cross and Patrick Skehan; from U.K.: John Allegro and John Strugnell; from France: Dominique Barthélemy and Jean Jean Starcky; from Germany: Claus-Hunno Hunziger; from Poland: Josef T. Milik. This was the first generation of the scroll scholars. Most of the research of these fragment was conducted in the so-called scrolery of the Palestine Archaeological Museum (later renamed the Rockefeller Museum) in East Jerusalem by the Kingdom of Jordan. Israeli scholars had no access to this material, not even any non-Israeli Jew. It may be

²⁰ They published several articles in which they interpret the site as a Roman *villa rustica*, main activity of which was agriculture, and which probably belonged to a rich Jerusalemite family. Cf. Magness J., *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids 2002, 2.

²¹ The English translation and revision was made by Stephen J. Pfann. There are indeed corrections of misprints and mistakes that had occurred as de Vaux's notes were being transcribed. Pfann went back to de Vaux's original text. Cf. Humbert J.-B., Chambon J., *The Excavations of Khirbet Qumran and Ain Feshka: Synthesis of Roland de Vaux's Field Notes*. Translated and revised by Stephen J. Pfann, Fribourg 2003.

²² Cf. Hirschfeld Y., *Qumran in Context. Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence*, Peabody 2004, 49.

interesting to note, that, formally, the Palestine Exploration Society, later renamed as the Israel Exploration Society, was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Palestine Archaeological Museum which was a private museum. After 1948, however, the political situation prevented the Israeli Society's representatives from attending the board meetings.²³

The fragile state of Israeli/Palestinian/Jordanian political situation always factored into the scrolls' fate; first the scrolls came under the control of the Christian leaders in East Jerusalem.

The government of Jordan, which had original authority over nearly all the documents, imposed the system of restricting access limited only to team members.²⁴ Unfortunately, the decision to entrust the scrolls to eight scholars, all Westerners and Christians, had enormous impact on subsequent scroll scholarship and fueled speculation in the media, among the general public, and even among some scholars that the scrolls must contain something that must be hidden. But this speculation was proved to be incorrect.²⁵

These first scholars began the task of transcribing, editing, and publishing the rapidly increasing number of manuscripts. Oxford University Press agreed to publish the material in a definitive multivolume series entitled as *Discoveries in the Judean Desert (DJD)*. The first volume of the *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* series was prepared by Barthélemy and Milik and published in 1955.

After de Vaux's death in 1971, Pierre Benoit (1906-1987) succeeded him as the director of the international team and chief editor of the Judean desert texts. Unfortunately, in the fifteen years of Benoit's leadership very little was published on the scrolls. The British biblical scholar John Strugnell (1930-) was appointed to lead the team in 1987 but served for only a brief period (till 1990).

In 1990, the Israel Antiquities Authority appointed Emanuel Tov (1941-), professor of biblical studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as the new editor-in-chief. Tov subsequently formed a new team that eventually grew to nearly sixty members. The last, 39th volume provides a general overview of and introduction to the 38 volumes of the *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* series. Over the four decades when the previous editors were in charge, only eight volumes of the texts were published. Under the guidance of Emanuel Tov thirty volumes appeared in 1992-2005, including the overall concordance.

²³ Cf. Ullmann-Margalit E., *Out of the Cave: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Dead Sea Scrolls Research*, London 2006, 136.

²⁴ Even after Israel assumed control of the Palestine Archaeological Museum and the scroll fragments, the Israeli archaeological authorities guaranteed the rights assigned previously, including the exclusive rights to publication of the Qumran manuscripts and allowed to de Vaux's team to continue their work on the scrolls.

²⁵ In 1991, Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh published *The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception*. Two British journalists put forth a conspiracy theory that the delay in scrolls' publication was to suppress information that would undermine the Christianity.

On October 28, 1991, the Israel Antiquities Authority decided to give scholars free access to photographs of the Dead Sea Scroll including those not yet edited. This decision became inevitable after the Huntington Library announced on September 22 of the same year that its collection of 3,000 photographs of the scrolls would be made available to all scholars.

It was inexperience which caused the initial group of eight scholars to believe that they would be able to publish all these fragments themselves, without involving additional scholars. Had their approach been more open from the outset, many outcries would have been avoided.

De Vaux's Interpretation of Qumran

To this day, the most influential model with respect to the settlement and its inhabitants was formulated by de Vaux who based his work on trying to achieve the coherence between the site, the text from the caves and the history. Two points remained fundamental for the French scholar:

1. The Qumran site and the scrolls found in eleven caves nearby must be linked.
2. The inhabitants of Qumran had been community of Essenes.

The best evidence of the connection between the settlement at Qumran and the scrolls is provided by the pottery belonging to the same ceramic type.²⁶ It is true that no scrolls were discovered in the settlement. The absence of scrolls at Qumran is possible to explain by fire which destroyed the site twice (in 9/8 B.C.E. and in 68 C.E.).²⁷ De Vaux rejected the hypothesis that the manuscript caves were *genizôt* without any connection with the occupation of Khirbet Qumran.

According to de Vaux Khirbet Qumran is not a village or a group of houses, but it is the establishment of a community. The principal characteristic of the buildings at Qumran is the fact that they were designed for community (water system, assembly room, the corpus of ceramic vessels, miqva'ot, etc.)²⁸

De Vaux established that the utilization of the caves was contemporaneous with and dependent upon the inhabitation of Khirbet Qumran by the community. The caves were used either as living quarters or as a storage or hiding place for the members of the community.

²⁶ Apart from the eleven manuscript caves some other caves contained the identical type of pottery. Cf. Vaux de R., *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London 1973, 53-54. The same position defends J. Magness.

²⁷ Cf. Magness J., *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids 2002, 43-44.

²⁸ There is some preliminary evidence about the placement of the latrines at Qumran, 2000 cubits "outside the camp," that would point to a religious sect. In: Siegel J., *Stringent religious purification practices proved lethal for the Essene*, Jerusalem Post, November 14, 2006.

Eleazar Sukenik (1889-1953) was the first scholar to propose that the scrolls might have a connection with the Essenes. He made this identification before Khirbet Qumran was excavated, and even before any connection was established between that site and Cave 1 or the caves that were to be subsequently discovered.

According to de Vaux's own words "*clearly archaeology cannot prove that the people of Qumran were Essenes or were related to them.*"²⁹ He used the literary evidence of the connection between Qumran and the Essenes. The classical literary sources of Philo Judaeus, Pliny the Elder and Flavius Josephus all talk about a Jewish group called the Essenes.³⁰ The organization, communal life and customs described in the relevant sources manifest strong similarities between the Essenes and the Qumran community. Despite of this de Vaux's voice is measured and guarded: "*If Pliny was not mistaken and if we are not mistaken, the Essenes of whom he speaks are the community of Qumran.*"³¹

De Vaux proposed to divide the Qumran occupation into six chronological phases:³²

- I. Israelite remains (8th – 7th century B.C.E)
- II. Period Ia: During the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.E)
- III. Period Ib: Expansion of the site prior to the earthquake in the spring of 31 B.C.E.
- IV. Period II: Reoccupation of the site between 4-1 B.C.E to 68 C.E.
- V. Period III: The site taken by the Romans during the First Revolt (68-74 C.E.)
- VI. The Second Revolt (132-135 C.E.)

De Vaux's influence on the study of Qumran and the scrolls has been great and long-lasting. His hypothesis went unchallenged for decades. It was only in 1980's and 1990's that archaeologists and other scholars began to question de Vaux's conclusions and reinterpret the archaeological remains. Donceel and Donceel-Voute suggested that Qumran was a *villa rustica*, or wealthy manor house, that may have been a winter or year-round second home to some wealthy family from Jerusalem. Norman Golb proposed that the Qumran settlement may not have been established as a sectarian residence, but was actually a Hasmonean fortress. Lena Cansdale, along with Alan Crown, argued that the settlement was a fortified road station and a port town on the shores of the Dead Sea. Yizhak Magen and Yuval Peleg accepted that the site was originally a fortress, but they argue that the site was repurposed as a

²⁹ Vaux de R., *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London 1973, 128.

³⁰ Josephus mentioned three schools of thought – Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. He devoted the longest description to the Essenes who were the smallest of these three groups. Cf. *The Essenes. According to the Classical Sources*, Vermes G., Goodman M. D. (eds.), Sheffield 1989, 56-57.

³¹ Vaux de R., *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London 1973, 136.

³² Cf. Hirschfeld Y., *Qumran in Context. Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence*, Peabody 2004, 53.

pottery production plant.³³ Jean-Baptiste Humbert proposed a hybrid solution that the site might have been originally established as *villa rustica*, but than the site was abandoned, and was reoccupied by Essenes.³⁴

Most recent reevaluations of the archaeology of Qumran by Jodi Magness have proposed a revision of the chronological framework, but she defends the traditional form of the Essene hypothesis.³⁵

De Vaux's Contribution to the Archaeology of Qumran

De Vaux integrated archaeological data into a comprehensive interpretative model. His “communal” interpretation of Qumran still remains as the most influential theory though there have been proposed alternative interpretations of the site.

De Vaux's vocabulary of the archaeology of Qumran was influenced by his background of the Dominican monk. He applied the Latin names of the monastery rooms to the rooms of Qumran such as a “refectory” and “scriptorium” conjuring up the imagery of an early Christian monastery.³⁶ Despite a lot of criticism from many scholars for using such Christian terminology for a clearly Jewish site, there is actually some usefulness in many of the names he chose and above all his archaeological interpretation of the site is basically correct.

Today we have about 10 theories on what Qumran is, ranging from a military fort through a library to a religious cult center. De Vaux's original evaluation of Qumran and the Essenes remains the most accepted interpretation of the site.

³³ Magen Y., Peleg Y., *Back to Qumran: Ten Years of Excavations and Research, 1993-2004*, in: *The Site of the Dead Sea Scroll: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, Vol. 57)*, Galor K., Humbert J.-B., Zangenberg J. (eds.), Leden 2006, 55-113.

³⁴ Cf. VanderKam J. C., *The Dead Sea Scroll Today*, Grand Rapids 1994, 92-98.

³⁵ „Although I believe that de Vaux was correct in identifying Qumran as a sectarian settlement, I disagree with him on some matters such as the dating of the occupation phases of the site.“ Magness J., *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids 2002, 16.

³⁶ De Vaux interpreted locus 30 as a scriptorium and locus 77 as a refectory or a community dining hall, based on the discovery of numerous sets of bowls in the nearby pantry of locus 89.