Essene Ethnicity
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Abstract:

Ethnicity is a sociological construct that has immense value if placed within the field of archaeology. By defining the Essenes as an ethnic group, two purposes are served: to provide further evidence that may link the Essenes to the Qumran community, and to display the usefulness of other, less acknowledged concepts for archaeology. In addition, this paper argues for a fluid definition of the Essenes as a solution to discrepancies between the Essenes found in classical literature and the archaeological remains of the Qumran settlement. The tendency to assign the Essenes by default to the Qumran community and whether there are sufficient grounds for this identification is also examined.

L'Ethnicité Essénienne

Résumé :

L'ethnicité est une conception sociologique qui a une grande valeur lorsque située dans le domaine de l'Archéologie. En définissant les Esséniens en tant que groupe ethnique, on satisfait deux objectifs: apporter une preuve supplémentaire qui pourrait relier les Esséniens à la communauté de Qumrân, et démontrer l'utilité d'autres concepts moins reconnus dans l'Archéologie. De plus, cet article supporte une définition fluide des Esséniens comme la solution aux disparités entre les Esséniens de la littérature classique et les restes archéologiques de la colonie de Qumrân. On y examine également la tendance à assigner les Esséniens à la communauté de Qumran par défaut et s'il y a suffisamment de fondement pour faire cette identification.

Etnografía Esenia

Resumen:

La Etnografía es una idea sociológica que tiene inmenso valor si se coloca dentro del campo de la Arqueología. Al definir a los Esenios como un grupo étnico se sirven dos propósitos: el de proveer una evidencia adicional que pudiera conectar a los Esenios con la comunidad de Qumran, y el de mostrar la utilidad de otros conceptos menos aceptados por la Arqueología. Este artículo aboga además en favor de una definición fluida de los Esenios como una solución a discrepancias que se encuentran en la literatura clásica y en los restos arqueológicos del establecimiento de Qumran. Se examina también la tendencia de asignar a los Esenios a la comunidad de Qumran, ya sea por omisión o por negligencia, y también si existen suficientes razones fundamentales para hacer dicha identificación.

Etnicidade Essênia

Sumário:

A etnicidade é uma construção sociológica que tem um grande valor se colocado dentro do campo da arqueologia. Definindo os Essenes como um grupo étnico, duas finalidades são servidas; para fornecer a evidência adicional que pode ligar os Essenes à comunidade de Qumran, e para indicar a utilidade de outros conceitos da arqueologia não muito reconhecidos. Além disso, este artigo discute sobre uma definição flexível dos Essenes como uma solução às discrepâncias entre os Essenes da literatura clássica e dos restos arqueológicos do estabelecimento de Qumran. Aqui também é examinada a tendência de atribuir os Essenes à comunidade de Qumran, e se há provas suficientes para esta identificação.

Ethnischer Hintergrund der Essener

Zusammenfassung:

Der ethnische Hintergrund, als soziologischer Wegweiser, ist von grossem Wert auf dem Gebiet der Archaeologie. Bei der Darstellung der Essener als eine ethnische Gruppe werden 2 Zwecke erfuellt. Erstens, die Lieferung weitere Beweise einer Verbindung der Essener mit der Qumran Bevoelkerungsgruppe und zweitens, die Darlegung der Nuetzlichkeit anderer, weniger anerkannter Begriffe der Archaeologie. Weiterhin diskutiert die Schrift eine fliessende Definition der Essener als eine Aufklaerung der Diskrepanz zwischen den Essenern der klassischen Literatur und den archaeologischen Funden in den Qumransiedlungen. Auch wird die Tendenz untersucht die Essener mit der Qumranbevoelkerung zu gruppieren und ob genuegende Beweise fuer diese Gruppierung vorhanden sind.

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> *Indeed, there exist among the Jews three schools of philosophy: the Pharisees belong to the first, the Sadducees to the second, and to the third belong those who have a reputation for cultivating a particularly saintly life called Essenes. They are Jews by race, but in addition, they are more closely united among themselves by mutual affection than are the others. The Essenes renounce pleasure as an evil, and regard continence and resistance to the passions as a virtue. They disdain marriage for themselves, but adopt the children of others at a tender age in order to instruct them; they regard them as belonging to them by kinship....*
>
> Josephus, *War* 2. 119-121.

To the west [of the Dead Sea] the Essenes have put the necessary distance between themselves and the insalubrious shore. They are a people unique of its kind and admirable beyond all others in the whole world, without women and renouncing love entirely, without money, and having for company only the palm trees.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 5. 17, 4(73-77).

…Palestinian Syria, which is occupied by a considerable part of the very populous nation of the Jews…certain among them, to the number of over four thousand, are called the Essenes…fleeing the cities because of the ungodliness customary among town-dwellers, they live in villages…they do not hoard silver or gold, and do not acquire vast domains with the intention of drawing revenue from them…only what is necessary to life.

Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 75-77.

INTRODUCTION

During the time of the Qumran settlement, about 140 BCE to 70 CE, Palestinian society's political unity was the major cohesive force in Judaism.[1] There were four major sects at this time, the Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and the Essenes. The first three groups competed for leadership of the nation, while the Essenes withdrew from the political scene altogether. During the latter part of this period, around 30 CE, the Judeo-Christians formed themselves into an autonomous community within Judaism.[2] Of these various groups, all have been proposed as making up the community at Qumran. The aim of this paper is to reconsider the widely held notion of an Essene definition for the archaeological Qumran community, through the lens of ethnicity. If in this way a link between the classically defined Essenes and the community is shown to be plausible, then a source for Essene material culture, which has hitherto been highly elusive, could be offered.

Sources helpful in discovering classically held and modern notions of the Essenes include: the ancient Roman and Jewish writers Philo, Flavius Josephus, and Pliny the Elder for historical accounts of the Essenes; Geza Vermes's *The Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran in Perspective,* and Martin Goodman and Vermes in *The Essenes According to Classical Sources,*[3] both for their insights into the turn-of-the-millennium political climate;

Phillip Callaway's *The History of the Qumran Community, An Investigation,*[4] for the history of Dead Sea Scroll scholarship as well as Qumran archaeology; the *Library of Congress online exhibit,*[5] for images and measurements; and again, Geza Vermes's book, *The Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran in Perspective,* for Dead Sea Scroll excerpts, as well as salient points and arguments for a positive Essene/Qumran community identification.

THE ESSENES

Ethnic Definitions

In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Frederik Barth produces an ample analysis on how to distinguish and apply ethnicity.[6] Largely, the definition of ethnicity is arbitrary, depending upon

the group studied and the classification techniques of the researcher. Although his guidelines include some aspects that would not apply to the Essenes, Barth has presented a clear and easy system for ethnic identifications which does not require a necessary assimilation of all its criteria to be helpful in individual cases. Even so, three of Barth's main qualifications do place the Essenes squarely within an ethnic framework:

- Firstly, that ethnicity should not be perceived in terms of culture, but as a form of organizing cultural difference. In order to begin this organization, a group must create boundaries between "us" and "them," called *dichotomization*.
- Secondly, ethnic identification is based in ascription and self-ascription, which means that ethnic identities are malleable, not fixed or inherent.
- Finally, ethnicity is an aspect of a relationship, not as a property of a person or a group.[7]

As an example of Barth's above definition, the Essenes, as described by the Classical authors Philo, Pliny, and Flavius Josephus, created boundaries between themselves and other Jewish sects by their behavior. They also took common Jewish history into their own terms, creating a strict religious outlook that would set them apart from all others. Yet from primordialist standpoints,[8] the Essenes would not be considered an ethnic group because they do not share a biological component unique unto themselves. Consequently, they cannot be defined in terms of ethnicity through kinship, as group members were generally not related. By this method, the only way the Essenes could be defined as an ethnic group is if they were considered along with the Pharisees, Zealots, and others who made up the dynamic Jewish religion, claiming to have a common genealogical descent, during the beginning of the first millennium CE. Yet, arguments for an Essene ethnicity during the closing centuries BCE until the first century CE, and independent from the rest of Judaism, are, unwittingly or not, attested to by writers who saw these people as their contemporaries.

CLASSICAL SOURCES

Philo

A leading figure in the Jewish Community of Alexandria, Philo wrote between 30 BCE and 45 CE. In his work, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, and more specifically between lines 75-91,[9] Philo describes the Essenes as the Jewish manifestation of a more widespread wisdom movement. Yet, Philo's account may at times seem suspiciously obsequious. To quote Philo:

> *Such are the athletes of virtue which this philosophy produces, a philosophy which undoubtedly lacks the refinements of Greek eloquence, but which propounds, like gymnastic exercises, the accomplishment of praiseworthy deeds as the means by which one ensures absolute freedom for oneself.*
>
> -Philo *Quod* 88-89

With laudatory phrases such as "athletes of virtue," Philo's motive may lie more in attempting to endear the Jewish community to his Greek audience rather than relating the precise and unabashed nature of his subject. Yet, despite this glorification, Essene characteristics can be gleaned from Philo that may be compared to passages from his contemporaries.

According to Philo, all work, mainly agricultural, was done in the name of peace and for the good of the community. All cultivated food went only to communal sustenance, with no profits from agriculture. The Sabbath was strictly observed and there were no animal sacrifices. The Essenes also rejected slavery, commerce, and oaths. Slave owners were also condemned, which can be

seen as an aspect of the "us" versus "them" mentality, to which Barth's ethnic definitions also ascribe. There was no private ownership. Homes, money, food, and even clothing were all collective. As for the group's money, a steward held it all and bought whatever was necessary for the community. A high respect for elders was practiced, perhaps because they all were, or were soon to become, elders. The community was made up of older men, as Philo states, "inclining to old age who are no longer carried away by the flux of the body nor drawn by the passions."[10] Riches, glory, and power were held in contempt. Instead, the Essenes focused on frugality, simplicity, contentment, modesty, stability of character, and obedience to their rules. Children, adolescents, and women were not allowed.[11]

Philo designated stereotypes to the Essenes which he thought would most positively embody their group. According to T. H. Eriksen in *Small Places, Large Issues*, stereotypes help to produce ethnic classifications. [12] Yet, contrary to Eriksen's proposal that ethnic stereotypes are often morally condemning, Philo uses stereotypes as a positive force in defining the Essenes. In fact, positive stereotypes for the Essenes abound in the ancient sources.

Pliny the Elder

Pliny's *Natural History* has provided information on a wealth of different people, places, and events in the ancient world. Luckily, the Essenes are among those mentioned, albeit only in a single, yet crucial, paragraph in *Natural History* 5. 17, 4 (73). A Roman gentleman from the north Italian town of Comum, and living between 23-24 and 79 CE, Pliny was not very accurate when describing locations in Judea. Consequently, his description of an Essene location near the Dead Sea is suspect. Yet, just as with Philo, when combined with the information from other sources, we can hopefully gather a bit of truth about the Essenes.

Yet another author who raves about the Essenes, Pliny glowingly states, "They are a people unique of its kind and admirable beyond all others in the whole world, without women and renouncing love entirely, without money, and having for company only the palm trees." Particularly relevant to this paper, Pliny mentions that "For thousands of centuries a race has existed which is eternal yet into which no one is born" (Pliny ca. 77 CE)." The use of the word "race" here has more to do with the mid-twentieth-century English translation than with Pliny's categorization of the Essenes. Yet, clearly, Pliny was talking about a group that would have seemed to have had the same characteristics as a kin group based on descent, without actually being related.

Flavius Josephus

A Jewish priest from Jerusalem, Josephus lived from 38 CE until after 93 CE. He wrote about the great revolt against Rome in 66-70 CE, and in this account he explains in great detail the rituals and practices of the Essenes.[13] Josephus's knowledge supposedly comes from first-hand knowledge of the Essenes, which would make him the only Greek or Latin writer to claim personal acquaintance with them. By virtue of this acquaintance, his writings are much more detailed than those of either previous author. However, more information does not necessarily equate with more correct information, as Josephus disagrees with Pliny and Philo on some points. For example, unlike Philo, Josephus views the Essenes as unique. Also, explaining an earlier comment made by Philo concerning women, Josephus gives the following comment, "It is not that they abolish marriage, or the propagation of the species resulting from it, but they are on their guard against the licentiousness of women and are convinced that none of them is faithful to one man" (Josephus ca. 75 CE).

Josephus, like Philo, wanted to present a sympathetic picture of Jews to a gentile audience. His accuracy, then, is also suspect, as he may have placed misleading emphasis on aspects of Jewish civilization more pleasing to the Greek pagan culture. Additionally, Josephus emphasizes Essene accuracy in prophecy. Since Josephus claimed to be an expert in seeing the future, prophecy may be a trait that Josephus disproportionately praises.

THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY

Using Barth's definition and a little help from the Classical sources, the Essenes do seem to fit comfortably within the bounds of an ethnic group. Yet, are they the ethnic group that produced the famous Dead Sea Scrolls and lived in the cave-community of Qumran? Before tackling these questions, a little history about the Qumran site and its finds are needed. From the Gnostic Society Library,[14] a wonderful and well researched online resource for information on the Nag Hammadi Library and the Dead Sea Scrolls, comes this fascinating introduction:

> In 1947, young Bedouin shepherds, searching for a stray goat in the Judean Desert, entered a long-untouched cave and found jars filled with ancient scrolls. That initial discovery by the Bedouins yielded seven scrolls and began a search that lasted nearly a decade and eventually produced thousands of scroll fragments from eleven caves. During those same years, archaeologists searching for a habitation close to the caves that might help identify the people who deposited the scrolls, excavated the Qumran ruin, a complex of structures located on a barren terrace between the cliffs where the caves are found and the Dead Sea. Within a fairly short time after their discovery, historical, paleographic, and linguistic evidence, as well as carbon-14 dating, established that the scrolls and the Qumran ruin dated from the third century BCE to 68 CE. Coming from the late Second Temple Period, a time when Jesus of Nazareth [supposedly] lived, they are older than any other surviving manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures by almost one thousand years.

Since their discovery nearly half a century ago, the scrolls and the identity of the nearby settlement have been the object of great scholarly and public interest, as well as heated debate and controversy. One such contention point of these debates and the one that is central to this paper is the identity, more specifically the ethnic identity, of the Qumran community.

The Qumran Story

The initial excavator, and architect to a half century of archaeological dogma, of the site was Roland de Vaux,[15] a French Dominican whose goal was to find the habitation of those who deposited the scrolls in the nearby caves. The excavations uncovered a complex of structures, 262 by 328 feet in total, which de Vaux suggested were communal in nature. In 1953, de Vaux reported to the British Academy that the site was the wilderness retreat of the Essenes, a separatist Jewish sect of the Second Temple Period, a portion of whom had formed an ascetic monastic community. According to de Vaux, the sectarians inhabited neighboring locations, most likely caves, tents, and solid structures, but depended on the center for communal facilities such as stores of food and water. Following de Vaux's interpretation and citing ancient historians, mainly Philo, Josephus, and Pliny the Elder, as well as the nature of some scroll texts for substantiation, many scholars believed the Essene community wrote, copied, or collected the scrolls at Qumran and deposited them in the caves of the adjacent hills. In the same year, de Vaux

and his team of eight colleagues began a scholastic monopoly of scroll research which would last for fifty years.

For decades, translation and publication of the scrolls were delayed, and the Essene hypothesis was taken for granted. This limitation of diversity on scroll scholarship made it extremely difficult to ascertain the validity of de Vaux's original hypothesis. Yet, through unauthorized photographs and the black market, other scholars did get to offer their own interpretation. Some of these first few were: Cecil Roth and G.R. Driver,[16] who claim the Qumran community were radical Zealots; Geza Vermes, who supports de Vaux's original assertion; Robert Eisenman,[17] who holds that they were a militant splinter group of Sadducees; Barbara Thiering,[18] who opts for a Judeo-Christian view; and Norman Golb,[19] who believes that the evidence available does not support a single definitive answer.

The following is mostly an analysis and critique of arguments made by one of the more well-known of the authors, Geza Vermes. Vermes holds firm on an Essene definition for the Qumran community, yet offers a solid and unabashed base theory from which to assess the Qumran community in terms of ethnicity.

Ethnic Definition

In his book, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective*, Geza Vermes agrees with the original interpretation of de Vaux that the Qumran sect was a community of Essenes. Yet also, Vermes's quotes and examples from key Dead Sea Scroll fragments inadvertently hold the Qumran community to the standards of an ethnic group as laid forth by Barth. Furthermore, Barth's definitions are not alone in pertinence to Vermes's arguments. According to the *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology,*[20] a current and effective definition of an ethnic community should include, "A group of people whose members share a common name and elements of culture, possess a myth of common origin and common historical memory, who associate themselves with a particular territory and possess a feeling of solidarity…." According to the previously mentioned T.H. Eriksen, origin myths and historical continuity of a group can manipulate the past in order to justify a particular view of the present, legitimize the existing political order, and offer group identity.[21] Using these sources, a four-part argument for the Qumran community as an ethnic society is presented below.

Beginning with the "myth of common origin and historical memory," the inhabitants of ancient Qumran thought of themselves as the true Israel, the repository of authentic traditions from the religious body out of which they had seceded. From the War Rule's account of Temple worship, "The 12 chief priests shall minister at the daily sacrifice before God….Below them shall be the chiefs of the tribes" (I QM 2.1-3).[22] Apparently, they modeled themselves after the biblical twelve tribes, adapting their origins to their current way of life.

As for "possessing a feeling of solidarity," from the Community Rule they refer to themselves as "the men of holiness," "the men of perfect holiness," and to their organization as "the Community" and the "Council of the Community." They were also to "eat in common, pray in common, and deliberate in common."[23] The Qumran community's solidarity was based on their commitment to God and community. From the ending hymn of the Community Rule: "I will pay to no one [person] the reward of evil;/ I will pursue that person them with goodness/ For judgment of all the living is with God/ And it is [God] who will render to [humans their] us our reward" (I QS 10.17-18).[24] They also referred to themselves as the "children of Zadok, the Keepers of the Covenant (I QS 5.7-11)."[25] Zadok was High Priest in the time of David.

Thirdly, the Qumran community associated themselves with a particular territory. The Dead Sea Scrolls seem to point to two different branches of the same sect, one living in towns and the others in monastic settlements. The Qumran branch belonged to the latter. They were all men living together in seclusion.

Lastly, they shared common elements of culture, including the following distinguishing features: they indulged in a contemplative life and became proficient in the knowledge of the "two spirits,"[26] the precedence of the Qumran priesthood was absolute and not conditional unlike the rest of Judaism, their purity rituals, initiation ceremonies and periods, as well as their grounds for expulsion from the community, which include these strange examples taken from Vermes: "For spitting in Council, for 'guffawing foolishly,' for being 'so poorly dressed that when drawing his hand from beneath his garment his nakedness was seen': thirty days expulsion" (Vermes 1994, 81). They also embraced an unorthodox liturgical calendar and practiced celibacy.

More specific instances of the Qumran community's ethnic identification may also be seen in the following. Concerning the "us versus them" aspect proposed by Barth, literarily the Qumran community provides many examples. The highest office of the Qumran community was that of the Guardian. The Guardian was not allowed to dispute with "the men of the Pit," which is Qumran slang for outsiders, and not to transmit to them any of the sect's teachings. Also, the sect's priesthood defined all those who did not swear total fidelity to the Mosaic Law as they interpreted it as: "all those of falsehood who walk in the way of wickedness" (I QS 5.10-11).[27] Those who wished to join the community had to pass the boundaries set up by the members. This only occurred through a lengthy initiation beginning with a two- to three-year trial period, after which the candidate would face the Guardian who would pass the candidate through to yet another stage. Here, the candidate would swear the first and only oath, be briefed on all the rules of the community, and then wait another year until pure enough to eat with and touch the eating utensils of the community, or do anything communally for that matter. Another feature of Barth's ethnic categorization, that ethnicity is flexible, can be seen in the Qumran practice that any person could become a member of the Qumran community if such persons repented their corrupted habits.

THE ESSENES AS THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY

Now that the argument has been established that the people of Qumran may well have been an ethnicity, the central question can now be asked: Do the Essenes, as an ethnic group, match the Qumran ethnic community? For this task, Geza Vermes, in his book, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective*, once again provides the baseline for discussion. Vermes's strategy in his proof that the Essenes were the authors and inhabitants of Qumran is to describe, analyze, and eliminate the four other Jewish groups that other scholars had proposed as Qumran residents. The first view he tackles is that of Judeo-Christianity where, in the space of one paragraph he states: "The Qumran writings cannot be mistaken for Christian literature. Neither can the persons of Jesus and other New Testament characters be found in the leading figures alluded to in the Dead Sea manuscripts" (Vermes 1994, 101-102). Vermes offers no evidence to back up this statement. He then goes on to say that those who hold this viewpoint explain away archaeological data and disregard radiocarbon tests which place the advent of the Qumran sect in a pre-Christian (second century BCE) era.[28]

Next, Vermes eliminates the Sadducees. He admits that the Sadducees have some similarities with the people of the Scrolls, e.g., some Sadducee practices resemble Scroll laws. Yet he also points out that the Sadducees have no sectarian organization like Qumran, and were nearly

always the governing party in Judea, while the Qumran community preferred exile. Also, the Sadducees were rich and the Qumran people were poor. Lastly, angels are everywhere in the Scrolls, while Sadducees were said to disbelieve in them.[29]

The Pharisees soon follow the Sadducees. As Vermes states, the most important Qumran features are lacking in documents related to Pharisees, including placing ultimate authority in the hands of ordinary members and not priests. Also, the Pharisees did not mind interacting with and teaching others outside their group, and community property was not stressed—a feature central to the Qumran ideology.[30]

Last to be dismissed are the Zealots. Vermes states that the academic opinion on the Zealots is confused because of scanty information on Zealot teaching and a lack of original sources, perhaps with the exception of Josephus. Yet Josephus absolutely hated the Zealots, so his opinion is likely very biased. Vermes again points to archaeological evidence that Qumran was occupied from around 140 BCE in order to reject the Zealot sect, which did not come into existence until 6 CE.[31]

Eliminating the competition, Vermes is left with the Essenes, claiming that evidence from the ancient sources correlates best with the Qumran community. Josephus and Pliny both locate the Essenes in Palestine, with Pliny specifically placing the Essenes at the Dead Sea. The Essenes were rigorously organized and had the same initiation rites as the Qumran community. Everything was owned communally in both sects, and there were many overlaps between the sect of the Scrolls and classical accounts of the Essenes. Also, Josephus's testimony of Essenes, along with archaeological finds at Qumran, point to the same chronological context: the middle of the second century BCE until the First Jewish War from 66-70 CE.[32]

Yet, Vermes also relents that there are weaknesses in his argument. The Essenes did not own public property, but the Qumran sect, via legislation in the Damascus Document, seems to have had some. Secondly, Josephus admits some Essenes were married. The Scrolls say nothing of this occurrence. The Damascus Document also implies that slaves may have been owned by the Dead Sea Sect. Additionally, at Qumran, the oath is the first act in the initiation procedure; among the Essenes of Josephus it is the last. Despite these concessions, Vermes explains why these weaknesses can be overlooked as exaggerations by all three Classical authors (Philo, Pliny, and Josephus), in order to persuade their audiences, or as misunderstandings over which branch of the Qumran sect each author was familiar with.[33]

Vermes concludes his argument by stating that the similarities between the Essenes and the Qumran community far outweigh those of any other groups. He goes on to say that if the Dead Sea sect were not Essenes, then the archaeologists must have uncovered a previously unknown Jewish sect almost identical to the Essenes.[34]

Vermes's Theory in Contest

The first challenge to Vermes's Essene conclusion is that the name *Essene* is not mentioned anywhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although as a concession, the term *Essene* may have only been used by outsiders to the sect. Philo somewhat alludes to the name as perhaps originating from the word for *holiness* or *saint*.[35] Perhaps those who popularized this term had the same intentions as Philo and Josephus in creating a positive stereotype, and therefore a positive name for the group. Secondly, Vermes's reliance on Pliny's location of the Essenes along the Dead Sea may prove faulty. As Vermes himself points out in *The Essenes According to Classical Sources*, Pliny has made many errors concerning Judean locations, making his placement of the Essenes suspect.[36]

Additionally, Vermes's methodology in the consideration of other theories is at times inadequate. The possibility exists that what had begun as an Essene sect had chronologically morphed into another type of identity that was named and perceived differently by its contemporaries. This is the malleability of ethnic identity explained once again by Barth. While it is true that there are no clear breaks in pottery styles found at Qumran, a point pushed by Vermes as a sure way to indicate that another group had not suddenly taken over, this is just more fuel for the argument of a gradual morph in identity. Again referring to Barth, ethnic ideologies are not fixed, so why could the Essenes not have turned into another, more recent, Jewish sect? In addition, Vermes did not give adequate voice to another viable viewpoint, the Judeo-Christian point of view.[37] Perhaps exploration of the view and grounds for rejection were needed before its abrupt dismissal. Also, concerning Vermes's accusation towards Josephus giving scholars a confused view about the Zealots, the same bias, but in a positive way, can be applied to the Essenes, also causing confusion to scholars who just cannot identify an objective viewpoint in Josephus. Additionally, and this is a weakness that even Vermes acknowledges cannot be overlooked: it is very difficult to rule out the Zealots because almost nothing is known about their structure.

CONCLUSION

Despite the above considerations, Vermes's view of Essenes as the group that inhabited Qumran seems largely solid save for one thing. Qumran has become almost synonymous with the Essenes, who are themselves seen as a clearly defined group with no fuzzy boundaries. Even though the classically defined Essenes and the archaeological Qumran community often do not match, the Essene identity is not allowed to waver from its long-held typology. Perhaps a more fitting solution is to regard the Qumran community as an amalgamation of two or more Jewish sects of the time, or perhaps as an evolved Essene community, differing much from the older and/or geographically separate Essene groups written about by the Classical sources. When in isolation, species—in this case ethnicities—tend to morph or mutate until they have sometimes radical dissimilarities from the original type. This model, called *adaptive radiation,* was famously used by Charles Darwin to describe the adaptations of Galapagos island finches, whom had become isolated from their mainland counterparts. However, the Essenes, like the finches, kept many fundamental similarities compatible with those described by classical sources. Perhaps then Darwin could also be brought into the fray and lend a hand in reconciling the dissimilarities between the Classical Essenes and the Qumran community. Nevertheless, in order to really tackle the issue of Qumran/Essene identity and ethnicity, scholars from a more diverse range of academic backgrounds must conduct research in the area of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Even with their share of disillusionment, as Dr. Eliezer Segal demonstrates in his article "The Dead Sea Dud"—*"…the Dead Sea Scrolls are not at all that important, and that their impact has been inflated out of all proportion by the media and various interested parties"* [38]—the Scrolls, as well as the site of Qumran still have much to offer. Published and explained for nearly half a century by a select few, Qumran's passages and pottery are ripe for a plethora of new interpretations. Demonstrated by the success of material such as Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*; Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln's *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*; and even Thiering's *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls*,[39] public interest in the religious and esoteric maelstrom of this time period is great. Yet, future and current scholars of the Scrolls must be careful to find their own path through steadfast and burgeoning dogmas, remaining open to and incorporating ideas from all disciplines, even and especially those concepts normally left by the academic wayside in the course of an all-too-narrow stream of consideration.

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NOTES:

[1] G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (London: SCM Press, 1994*)* 100-101. This text will be abbreviated as *DSSQP* in all following citations. Vermes additionally notes that concerning faith and ritual, Palestine was still very much divided. Yet, in addition to politics, the Temple of Jerusalem was collectively acknowledged.
[2] Ibid., 101.
[3] G. Vermes and M. D. Goodman, *The Essenes According to Classical Sources* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1989). This work will be abbreviated as *EACS* in following citations.
[4] P. R. Callaway, *The History of the Qumran Community, An Investigation* (Sheffield, UK: Academic Press, 1988).
[5] Scrolls from the Dead Sea: The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Scholarship http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/scrolls/toc.html (Feb. 27 2002).
[6] All references to Barth taken from K. Verdery, "Ethnicity, Nationalism, and State Making―Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: Past and Future," in H. Vermeulen and C. Govers, eds., *The Anthropology of Ethnicity,* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1994).
[7] Ibid., 35.
[8] From S. Sokolovskii and V. Tishkov, "Ethnicity," in *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* A. Barnard and J. Spencer, eds., (London: Routledge, 1996), 190-191. Primordialist views may be broken down into two camps: those influenced by Evolutionism: "…ethnicity is usually conceptualized as based in biology and determined by genetic and geographical factors"; and Socio-biological interpretations: "…human ethnic groups are extended kin groups or collectivities based on descent…."
[9] All following introductory information concerning Philo, Pliny and Josephus, as well as all translated quotations taken from Vermes in *The Essenes According to Classical Sources.*
[10] Philo, *Apologia pro Iudaeis,* preserved by Eusebiu*s* in *Praep. ev.* viii 6-7:3. (Philo, 1989, pp. 19-31).
[11] Ibid., 4-17.
[12] T. H. Eriksen, *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 264-267.
[13] Specifically, the Essenes are mentioned in *The Jewish War* I. 78-80, *War* 2. 113, 119-161. (Josephus, 1989, pp. 34-57).

[14] The Gnosis Archive. The Dead Sea Scrolls Collection at the Gnostic Society Library, http://www.gnosis.org/library/dss/dss.htm (October, 2004).

[15] All information on de Vaux taken from M. Baigent and R. Leigh, *The Dead Sea Scroll Deception,* (New York: Summit Books, 1991).

[16] C. Roth, *The Historical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958); G. R. Driver, *The Judeaean Scrolls: the Problem and a Solution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965).

[17] R. H. Eisenman, *Maccabees, Zadokites, Christians and Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1983).

[18] B. Thiering, *Jesus the Man, a New Interpretation from the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Sydney; New York: Doubleday, 1992).

[19] N. Golb, "The Problem of Origin and Identification of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 124/1 (1980), 1-24.

[20] S. Sokolovskii and V. Tishkov, "Ethnicity," in A. Barnard and J. Spencer, eds., *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 2000), 192.

[21] Eriksen, *Small Places*, 272-273.

[22] Vermes, *DSSQP,* 75.

[23] All self-ascriptions taken from Vermes, *DSSQP,* 75.

[24] Ibid., 76.

[25] Ibid., 82.

[26] Ibid., 77.

[27] Ibid., 84.

[28] Ibid., 102.

[29] Ibid., 102-104.

[30] Ibid., 104-107.

[31] Ibid., 107-111.

[32] Ibid., 111-115.

[33] Ibid., 115-117.

[34] Ibid., 117.

[35] Vermes & Goodman, *EACS,* 21.

[36] Ibid., 33.

[37] Vermes, *DDSQP,* 101.

[38] E. Segal, "The Dead Sea Dud," in J. Shapiro, ed., *Jewish Free Press* (Calgary, Aug. 25, 1994), 9.

[39] D. Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (London 2004); M. Baigent, R. Leigh, and H. Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1982); B. E. Thiering, *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Unlocking the Secrets of His Life Story* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).