

Localized Scribal Systems at Elephantine and Qumran

Russell Hobson

University of Sydney

The term “Qumran practice,” coined by E. Tov,¹ is most commonly understood to denote the relatively full orthography and peculiar morphology found in most of the Qumran manuscripts labeled as “sectarian” compositions, as well as in some twenty percent of the Qumran biblical manuscripts.² Tov’s identification of orthographic patterns in the corpora from Qumran has been generally accepted, but the designation of this system as a scribal practice affiliated with a single scribal school, indeed one that was ostensibly centered at Qumran, has been met with some criticism. F. M. Cross, for example, has re-termed the same set of linguistic phenomena “baroque orthography,” and rejected the notion that the style reflects any underlying morphological diversity.³ Dong-Hyuk has argued that the elements of Qumran practice are so diversely and inconsistently applied in the corpus that it cannot be considered a distinguishing unified feature.⁴ Tov has largely addressed these criticisms in subsequent refinements to the

¹ See primarily E. Tov, “Groups of Biblical Texts Found at Qumran,” in D. Dimant and L. H. Schiffman (eds.), *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 94; and the list of texts in E. Tov, “The Orthography and Language of the Hebrew Scrolls Found at Qumran and the Origin of these Scrolls,” *Textus* 13 (1986), 50-56.

² According to Dimant, texts can be classified as sectarian if they “display the terminology, style and ideas explicitly connected with the Qumran community” (D. Dimant, “Between Sectarian and Non-Sectarian: The Case of the Apocryphon of Joshua,” in E. G. Chazon, D. Dimant and R. A. Clements (eds.), *Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran* [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 106). Dimant has suggested that it is the combination of a number of factors that contribute to a text being termed “sectarian,” namely “the practices and organization of a particular community,...the history of this community and its contemporary circumstances,... the theological and metaphysical outlook of that community, and...the peculiar exegesis espoused by that community”; D. Dimant, “The Qumran Manuscripts: Contents and Significance,” in D. Dimant and L. H. Schiffman (eds.), *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls* [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 29.

³ See F. M. Cross, “Some Notes on a Generation of Qumran Studies,” in L. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner (eds.), *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid, 18-21-March, 1991* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 6.

⁴ K. Dong-Hyuk, “Free Orthography in a Strict Society: Reconsidering Tov’s ‘Qumran Orthography,’” *DSD* 11 (2004), 72-81.

theory, and while the issues have not been entirely resolved, the theory of Qumran practice has yet emerged as a popular model for understanding the linguistic and mechanical shape of a significant number of scrolls from Qumran.⁵

The Meaning of “Qumran Practice”

On the whole, it must be said, scholarship has accepted Tov’s terminology at face value. “Qumran practice” is generally taken to signify the recognizable practical habits of scribes that physically copied texts at the site of Khirbet Qumran. Taking this a step further, one might suggest that Qumran practice refers to the scribal habits of the group regularly held to be responsible for the collection and ultimate deposit of the scrolls in the caves near the *khirbeh*. And, given the mainstream acceptance of the identification of this group with the isolationist community reflected in the scrolls, and the equation of this same with a second century Essene splinter-group, it is natural that a link between the linguistic profile of certain scrolls and the “sectarian” community in residence at Qumran be theorized.

One may ask, though, whether a connection between “Qumran practice” and the Qumran sectarian community may be so conveniently drawn.⁶ A case in point is the description of Qumran Hebrew as a type of socially demarcated “anti-language” which, according to W. Schniedewind and subsequently S. Weitzman, delineated the Hebrew speaking community at Qumran from their Aramaic surrounds.⁷ Although these arguments have been dismissed by de Caën as proposing a “counter intuitive behavior of

⁵ See E. Tov, “Some Notes on a Generation of Qumran Studies: A Reply,” in Trebolle Barrera and Vegas Montaner (eds.), *The Madrid Qumran Congress*, 15-21, and the counter-arguments to Dong-Hyuk’s criticisms in E. Tov, “Reply to Dong-Hyuk Kim’s Paper on ‘Tov’s Qumran Orthography,’” *DSD* 11 (2004), 359-60.

⁶ See, e.g., the reference to the “specific dialect of Hebrew used by the Qumran sect” in J. J. Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 47. Straightforward equations between “dialect” and “sect” were already questioned by E. G. Chazon, “Is Divreh Ha-Me’orot a Sectarian Prayer?” in D. Dimant and U. Rappaport, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (Leiden-New York: Brill, 1992), 4-10.

⁷ For the term “antilanguage” in relation to Qumran Hebrew, see W. M. Schniedewind, “Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage,” *JBL* 118 (1999), 234; and more generally S. Weitzman, “Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?” *JAOS* 119 (1999), 35-45.

Hebrew," Schniedewind in fact builds on observations made by S. Morag, and repeated by E. Qimron, that certain aspects of Qumran Hebrew indicate its development as a spoken language.⁸ Paired with the view that an Essene splinter-group compiled and propagated texts in the Qumran library, Tov's identification of a Qumran scribal school readily gives rise to scholarly reconstructions like Schniedewind's "anti-language" community, regardless of the fact that there is little evidence other than inferred textual data for such a group's existence in history.

It is important to note that, despite the designation *Qumran* practice, Tov does not tie this scribal style specifically to the site of Qumran. In fact, it is defined rather as a *Palestinian* scribal practice, best evidenced in the scrolls from Qumran, but not necessarily originating from that site.⁹ For example, the manuscript of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice found at Masada proves that a "sectarian" text which has some of the hallmarks of Qumran practice orthography can exist outside of Qumran.¹⁰ 4Q422, a paraphrase on excerpts of Genesis and Exodus, "displays no signs of the special exegesis or ideas of the Qumran community" despite the fact that it is

⁸ See V. de Caën, "Hebrew Linguistics and Biblical Criticism: A Minimalist Programme," *JHS* 3 (2001), 4, and 10-25. See also S. Morag, "Qumran Hebrew: Some Typological Observations," *VT* 38 (1988), 148-64; and E. Qimron, "The Nature of DSS Hebrew and Its Relation to BH and MH," in T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde (eds.), *Diggers At the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 232. The possibility that Qumran Hebrew reflects a spoken language was already raised on comparison with Samaritan Hebrew in Z. Ben-Hayyim, *Studies in the Traditions of the Hebrew Language*, (Madrid-Barcelona: Instituto Arias Montano, 1954).

⁹ "The term *Qumran practice* merely indicates that as a scribal system it is known mainly from a number of Qumran scrolls, without implying that this practice was not used elsewhere in ancient Israel"; E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001, 108 (*italics in original*)).

¹⁰ However, the reader should see the suggestion that the Masada scroll may have been brought from Qumran, in E. Tov, "A Qumran Origin for the Masada Non-Biblical Texts?" *DSD* 7 (2000), 57-73. See also the suggestion that Essenes were among the refugees at Masada in the final years of the First Revolt in G. Stiebel, "Masada," *Enc.Jud.*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem, 2007), 13.593.

written using Qumran practice orthography and morphology.¹¹ These examples demonstrate that the connection between the sectarian literature at Qumran and the linguistic features of certain Scrolls is not straightforward.

According to Tov, the strongest evidence for a scribal tradition in certain Scrolls is not their linguistic profile, but rather their mechanical execution. The methods of preparation, notation, and emendation are more consistent indicators of a specific scribal system than peculiar orthographic and morphological tendencies. These mechanical features, when combined with the perceived linguistic profile, create a confluence of identifying marks that set Qumran practice apart from other unspecified systems evidenced in the Scrolls.

A potentially problematic aspect of the data is the lack of uniformity with which these mechanical features are applied.¹² Marginal *waw*, defining new paragraphs, occurs in the “sectarian” works 1QS, 1QIsa^a, and 4QTestimonia, but also in the non-Qumran practice text 4QPs^b, and in the paleo-Hebrew manuscripts 4QpaleoExod^m and 11QpaleoLev^a.¹³ Other phenomena, such as the *paragraphos* sign, cancellation dots, and the use of paleo-Hebrew script or Cryptic A script to designate matters of special interest, also appear in Qumran practice texts and non-Qumran practice texts alike.¹⁴ While it must be maintained that the majority of these scribal marks

¹¹ E. Tov, “A Paraphrase of Exodus: 4Q422,” in Z. Zevit, S. Gitin, and M. Sokoloff (eds.), *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1995), 352.

¹² Lists of the occurrences of all of the scribal methods for delimitation and correction mentioned here are available in E. Tov, “Further Evidence for the Existence of a Qumran Scribal School,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years After Their Discovery—Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20-25, 1997* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). Also note the comments in E. Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 179.

¹³ It has been suggested that the scribe who wrote both 1QS and 4QTestimonia might have been in a position of power in the sect itself; see E. Ulrich, “The Absence of ‘Sectarian Variants’ in the Jewish Scriptural Scrolls Found at Qumran,” in E. D. Herbert and E. Tov (eds.), *The Bible as Book: The Hebrew Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoveries* (London: British Library, 2002), 187-90. According to E. Tov, “Scribal Practices Reflected in the Paleo-Hebrew Texts from the Judean Desert,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 15 (1996), 273, the paleo-Hebrew manuscripts from Qumran are not considered part of the corpus of Qumran practice texts.

¹⁴ Tov, “Further Evidence,” 200-5.

do appear in manuscripts designated as Qumran practice, these features, like the linguistic characteristics, may include elements held in common with other scribal systems.¹⁵

While the mechanical features of Qumran practice texts have received a great deal of attention by Tov, it is the matter of linguistic profiling that has attracted the most attention in the scholarly literature. In 2004 Dong-Hyuk proposed that the distinctive grammatical features of Qumran practice are so inconsistently applied across the manuscripts that the designation is meaningless for linguistic analysis. Taken with the evidence of similar mechanical and notational practices, which are also inconsistently represented, the term “Qumran practice” comes to signify the tendency for a set of features, both textual and mechanical, to culminate in texts that are “sectarian” in nature. It remains, however, that no manuscript contains all of the features designated as comprising the Qumran scribal practice. Certain features are present in some sectarian texts, yet are entirely lacking in others. Other apparently sectarian texts, such as *Miqsat Ma’aseh ha-Torah* and the Copper Scroll, do not exhibit any elements of Qumran practice in terms of their language.

Orthography in the Wider Context

Ancient scribes were demonstrably unconcerned with producing consistent orthography. One can talk of “preferred” or “common” orthographic forms, and it is true that some words are always spelled the same way, but time and again a scribe’s apparent indifference towards orthographic consistency is demonstrated by multiple spellings of individual lexemes occurring within the same manuscript.

¹⁵ See A. D. Crown, “An Alternative View of Qumran,” in M. Bar-Asher and M. Florentin (eds.), *Samaritan, Hebrew and Aramaic Studies Presented to Professor Avraham Tal* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2005), 8-9; and also J. Ashton, *Scribal Habits in the Ancient Near East: c. 3000 BCE to the Emergence of the Codex* (Sydney: Mandelbaum, 2008), 120-21. Tov has pointed to similarities in the preparation of scrolls in other localities, including Elephantine, for which see Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches*, 35 and 302.

Any scholar who has read several ancient copies of a well-attested text will recognize that the concept of standardized orthographic practice probably never existed in the ancient Near East. In a sampling of the cuneiform evidence from the first millennium, for instance, texts with long and well-established histories of transmission regularly differ between manuscripts, and in the overwhelming majority of cases these differences concern matters of orthography.¹⁶

This much is true even of authoritative texts that refer to their own fixed form. For example, a reasonably well-attested colophon appended to copies of some well-executed cuneiform texts from the royal library at Nineveh proclaims that the tablet bearing the inscription was “written and checked according to its original.”¹⁷ However, no two manuscript copies bearing such an inscription are completely identical.¹⁸ While this in itself

¹⁶ This sampling includes first millennium copies of the Laws of Hammurabi, tablet XI of the Epic of Gilgamesh, the 63rd tablet of the series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, the instruction tablets for the *mīs pî* ritual and the astronomical series MUL.APIN, the examination of which was completed in the course of the author’s dissertation research. In these texts, orthography is typically the most common form of textual variation between ancient manuscript copies, but it is certainly not the only form of variation attested in even the most accurately copied manuscripts. Even when manuscripts adhere very closely to a particular form, differences in expression, language and spelling invariably creep in between the copies. For example, see R. Hobson, “A Copy of Mul.Apin From a Private Library at Ashur (VAT 9429),” *Journal of Ancient Civilizations* 24 (2009), 36-37. For a discussion of the evidence in a wider context, and on the question of the comparability of textual variation between copies of cuneiform “canonical” texts and manuscripts of the Torah from near the Dead Sea, see the author’s forthcoming case study on the exact transmission of texts in the first millennium BCE.

¹⁷ See H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), 58, no. 150.

¹⁸ For example, two copies of the 63rd tablet in the series *Enūma Anu Enlil* that claim to be based on a Babylonian original differ both in terms of their orthography and in terms of their content. The first, W 1924.802, is a copy from the reign of Sargon II, while the second, K 160, is a well-preserved copy from the royal library at Nineveh. The tablets display differences in the writing of frequently occurring words, varying between logographic and syllabic spellings. Most significantly, W 1924.802 preserves an apodosis to an omen that is not reflected in K 160 or in either of the two other manuscripts that also preserve this section. The case is the same with manuscripts that do not contain such colophons but are ostensibly based on known prototypes. Some first millennium copies of the Hammurabi stele adhere closely to the original, yet none can be said to adhere to it absolutely, particularly in matters of orthography. Here the matter becomes complicated for two reasons. First, textual variation in this instance appears to be in some way related to genre, in that most of the significant variations occur in copies of the poetic prologue and epilogue, while the laws themselves are reproduced with relative accuracy. Second, in addition to the Louvre stele, we have fragments also inscribed on black basalt that are presumed to have belonged to

cannot be garnered as evidence that no manuscript was ever copied identically according to an authoritative exemplar, it is extremely rare to find two manuscripts that faithfully reproduce a common “original” with absolute attention to orthographic forms.

There may be a stronger case for proposing a tradition (or traditions) of exact textual transmission in the manuscripts of Hebrew scriptural texts discovered along the western shore of the Dead Sea, but this observation only relates to the sequence of letters that constitutes a text as a whole, and not to the spelling of individual words as they occur within that text. For example, two manuscripts might reflect the same letter sequence as each other, or show adherence to a common exemplar, but this indicates nothing about either manuscript’s internal orthographic consistency.¹⁹

Certainly, in terms of the types of scribal practices that are attested in the Second Temple period, the great bulk of the manuscript evidence suggests that orthographic practices varied as a matter of course. This is evident in the earliest biblical manuscripts, and indeed in the much later

another stele that bore the same inscription. For this see the description in G. R. Driver and J. C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* (2 vols.; Oxford, 1955), 1.29-30. Based on this and other fragments, J. Nougayrol concluded in “Les Fragments en Pierre du Code Hammourabien (II),” *JA* 246 (1958), 150, that there were in fact three copies of the stele at Susa. One of those copies, AO 10237, regularly diverges from the Louvre stele in terms of its orthography.

The same phenomenon is attested in a Northwest Semitic context, namely the gate inscription from Karatepe (*KAI* 26). This text is preserved in three Phoenician copies inscribed at the north gate, the south gate, and on the Baal stele within the city walls, and shows textual variation on multiple levels including orthographic variants. The most common forms of variation in this text are the addition or omission of particles, conjunctions and prepositions, with other notable syntactical variations. There are also a few orthographic variations, such as elided final *aleph* (compare the form ויטנא in line 9 of the north gate inscription with the form ויטנ in line 5 on the south gate inscription), and the interchange of some graphemes, although the latter is most likely due to errors on the part of the mason executing the inscription.

¹⁹ From around the second century CE onwards the letter-perfect copying of scriptural texts seems to have become an established practice. On this see M. H. Goshen-Gottstein’s important study, “Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts: Their History and Their Place in the HUBP Edition,” *Biblica* 48 (1967), 244-48, and also S. Talmon, “The Old Testament Text,” in P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to Jerome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 170-75. On the variation of orthography in manuscripts of Hebrew scriptural texts from before the turn of the Common Era, see below.

form of the MT.²⁰ Perhaps the most succinct statement to date in this regard has been made by J. Barr in his study of the orthography of the Hebrew Bible: “spelling varied because the scribes liked it to vary. Variation was something that they liked.”²¹

These issues are of special significance in the present context, as our investigation proposes to explore the issue of the Qumran scribal practice by giving particular attention to the orthography of the manuscripts. It is important that we look at the level of variation tolerated within the proposed scribal system, including (but not limited to) the use of fixed forms of individual words particular to that system. Further, to verify the characteristics of the proposed scribal practice, we should ideally compare its level of variation with that of another system that is reasonably well attested in a known localized manuscript collection.

A note here seems necessary on the decision by the author not to take into account the documentary texts from Naḥal Ḥever, Naḥal Şe’elim, Wadi Murabba’at and Masada, nor indeed the few documentary texts said to have come from the Qumran caves. While the latter are discounted for reasons of their spurious provenance, the contracts ostensibly from Naḥal Şe’elim, which are thought originally to have come from Naḥal Ḥever, might be considered to be a better source of comparative data, given their temporal and geographical proximity to the Qumran manuscripts.²² However, it was felt that any conclusions drawn from this data would be subject to a raft of qualifications and reservations on account of the manuscripts’ extremely fragmentary nature. Added to this is the fact that very few of the manuscripts

²⁰ For recent analyses of spelling in the Hebrew Bible the reader is directed towards the two seminal works of the later twentieth century on the topic: F. I. Andersen and A. D. Forbes, *Spelling in the Hebrew Bible* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1986); and J. Barr, *Variable Spellings in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). In addition to the work by Andersen and Forbes, see D. N. Freedman, A. D. Forbes, and F. I. Andersen (eds.), *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992).

²¹ Barr, *Variable Spellings*, 194.

²² On the dubious attribution of some scrolls to particular sites, including some of those reported to have come from Naḥal Ḥever, see S. A. Reed, “Find-Sites of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *DSD* 14 (2007), 199-221.

retain the names of the scribes who authored them, and the paleographical information gleaned from the manuscripts allows for only a few papyri to be assigned to a common author. Thus, it is not possible to arrange the manuscripts into groups that constitute sufficient data for undertaking a meaningful statistical analysis. While the texts from Qumran examined in this study are typically of a length that allows for a reasonable amount of statistical information to be drawn from a single manuscript, such is not the case with the contracts from Naḥal Şe'elim.

Even with these reservations, we can still quite confidently state that the Aramaic contracts from Naḥal Şe'elim reflect significant levels of variation in respect to their orthography. For example, if one considers the spelling of the emphatic suffix across the Aramaic contracts from Naḥal Şe'elim, one finds a very high level of variation between the possible spellings of initial $\aleph$ and η between the manuscripts. The case is the same regarding the demonstrative pronoun $\text{'}\delta$, whether written as an independent or a proclitic particle. To a lesser extent the same is true concerning the *plene* or defective spellings of the masculine plural morpheme on nouns, adjectives, and participles.²³ It remains, however, that even though the evidence from

²³ The data referred to here were collected from a sampling of the most well-preserved contracts from Naḥal Şe'elim concerning the sale of land. The manuscripts are: no. 7 (XHev/Se Deed of Sale A ar), no. 8 (XHev/Se pap Deed of Sale B ar and heb), no. 8a (XHev/Se pap Deed of Sale C ar), and no. 9 (XHev/Se pap Deed of Sale D ar). Manuscripts 8 and 8a were probably written by the same scribe. Concerning the spelling of the emphatic suffix, no. 7 preserves two certain and three possible spellings with $-\eta$; no. 8 has five certain and one possible spelling with $-\eta$ against one spelling with $-\aleph$; no. 8a has four certain and five possible spellings with $-\eta$ against six spellings with $-\aleph$; and no. 9 has 14 certain and four possible spellings with $-\eta$ against one spelling with $-\aleph$ (by “possible spellings” I mean that in the context one may read the morpheme in question as either the marker of the emphatic state or as a pronominal suffix). Concerning the demonstrative pronoun, no. 7 preserves two occurrences of proclitic $-\delta$; no. 8 has one occurrence of proclitic $-\delta$ against eight occurrences of the independent pronoun $\text{'}\delta$; no. 8a has four occurrences of the independent pronoun $\text{'}\delta$; and no. 9 has one occurrence of proclitic $-\delta$ against seven occurrences of the independent pronoun $\text{'}\delta$. Concerning the m. pl. morpheme on nouns, adjectives, and participles, no. 7 preserves one defective and one *plene* spelling; no. 8 has five *plene* spellings; no. 8a has four *plene* spellings; and no. 9 has two defective and seven *plene* spellings. For a full discussion of the types of orthographic variation attested in the corpus of documentary manuscripts from sites around the Dead Sea, see *DJD* XXVII, 9-13.

Naḥal Şe’elim is suggestive, it has been left aside in the present study for those reasons outlined above.

The Localized Scribal System at Elephantine

With the limitations on the manuscript evidence proximate to Qumran in mind, one is forced to cast further afield for appropriate comparative data to bring to bear against the data from Qumran. Arguably one of the best examples of localized scribal practices from the Second Temple period comes from the fifth-century Jewish fortress at Elephantine in southern Egypt. The Aramaic papyri discovered at this site reflect almost a century of scribal activity in a community of roughly a few hundred people. The manuscripts include temple receipts, legal documents (primarily marriage contracts and deeds of sale), and official correspondence between Elephantine temple priests and the Judean and Samaritan governorships to the north. By comparing the consistency in morphological and orthographic style between the manuscripts from Qumran and Elephantine, some light may be shed on the nature of the scribal traditions in the Second Temple period in general, and on the nature of Qumran practice specifically.

Elephantine is an island at the first cataract of the Nile, near modern Aswan in the south of Egypt. The island has a history of Egyptian occupation that extends into the fourth millennium BCE. For at least the bulk of the fifth century the southern tip of the island was occupied by a population who identified themselves as Judahites.²⁴ Scholarly theories about the history of Judean settlement at Elephantine range from the early Iron Age to the late Iron IIC.²⁵ The *terminus a quo* given in the documents themselves places the

²⁴ One of the sources for this study, A4.7, is dated to November 25, 407 BCE., and claims that a temple to YHW had stood there when Cambyses invaded Egypt in 525 BCE (see A4.7 line 13-14). Line 22 identifies the senders and their community as “Yedeniah and his colleagues and the Judahites, all citizens of Elephantine.” Elsewhere the community is referred to as “the Judean force.” On rare occasions in the other papyri Judeans in Elephantine and nearby Syene are referred to as Arameans, but such cases are exceptional; see A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BC* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), xv-xvi.

²⁵ For the earlier date, see E. C. B. MacLaurin, “Date of the Foundation of the Jewish Colony at Elephantine,” *JNES* 27 (1968), 89-96. J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids, MI:

Judean settlement on the island from at least the last quarter of the sixth century BCE, and the dominant position in modern scholarship assumes a mid-seventh century date.²⁶

The contracts and correspondence examined in this study date from the last half of the fifth century. This puts the scribal activity under examination roughly two centuries after the establishment of the Judean community at Elephantine – plenty of time, one may conjecture, for a local scribal tradition to develop and leave a mark on the documents authored by its constituent scribes. That some sort of hereditary scribal schooling took place on the island may be assumed by the familial relationship that exists between at least two of the five scribes examined in this study, Nathan bar Ananiah and Mauziah bar Nathan.²⁷ While the other three scribes who feature in my examination leave no certain evidence of familial interconnections, I will assume for or present purposes that all of the scribes wrote in a style that was considered mutually intelligible and suitable for the drawing up of official correspondence and legal documents within the Elephantine community.

There are over 20 features of Imperial Aramaic orthography and morphology attested within the present corpus that can be taken into consideration when delineating an “Elephantine practice,” but only a small proportion of these occur in sufficient numbers to be statistically meaningful.²⁸ Some of these are reflective of tensions between historical and

Eerdmans, 1980), 674-75, raises the possibility of a connection between the settlement at Elephantine and the migration to Egypt following the Babylonian invasion alluded to in Jer. 44:1-30.

²⁶ B. Porten, “Settlement of the Jews at Elephantine and the Arameans at Syene,” in O. Lipschits (ed.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 461.

²⁷ It has been suggested by B. Porten and Z. H. Szubin, “The Status of the Repudiated Spouse: A New Interpretation of Kraeling 7 (TAD B3.8),” *Israel Law Review* 35 (2001), 75, that the drawing up of marriage documents was the special prerogative of this father-son team.

²⁸ The entire set of features equate to most of those listed by Folmer as relating to orthography, phonology and morphology; see M. L. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period* (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 49-258. In the present context “sufficient numbers” means that at least 20 occurrences of a single feature are reflected in the corpus of documents.

phonetic spellings, while the background of others is less clear.²⁹ These are: /ḏ/ > ד or ט in demonstrative pronouns; /ḏ/ > ק or ע; /ṭ/ > ש or ט in the noun /ש/תקל; 2 f. sg. pronominal suffix > י or ך; 3 m. sg. pronominal suffix > ו or ם; m. pl. absolute morpheme > ן or ך.³⁰

The data thus obtained from the papyri can be put to use in a number of ways. They inform us about the level of variation that individual scribes may attest in relation to specific features of orthography and morphology, while remaining essentially within the bounds of the localized scribal system of which they were a part. The data also indicate the level of variation that is present in the overall scribal system itself. In the first instance, the method is

²⁹ The phenomenon of historical versus phonetic spellings principally concerns the phonemes /ḏ/, /ḏ/ and /ṭ/. In each case it seems that we are dealing with historical spellings in tension with phonetic realities, however this is by no means certain. It has been suggested that the phoneme /ḏ/ was pronounced similarly to /d/ by the end of the fifth century BCE, although the process is already detected in the sixth century manuscripts from Hermopolis. Similarly, the graphical representation of /ḏ/ was still in fluctuation as late as 421 BCE, but again the process appears to have begun much earlier. In the case of /ṭ/ the phonetic reality is even more difficult to determine due to the paucity of evidence. On the issues concerning these and other phonemes in Persian period Aramaic, see T. Muraoka and B. Porten, *A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3-9.

³⁰ The documents analyzed in this study are taken from B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt, Newly Copied, Edited, and Translated into Hebrew and English: Letters*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1986), and B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt, Newly Copied, Edited and Translated into Hebrew and English: Contracts*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1989). We count as official correspondence the letter, in two drafts (A4.7 and A4.8), written to the governors of Judah and Samaria in 407 BCE. on behalf of Yedaniah, whom we presume to be the high priest of the temple at Elephantine, and the response to this letter (A4.9), said by to be written in the same hand as A4.8 and part of A4.7; Folmer, *The Aramaic Language*, 34, esp. n. 203). Because the scribes who wrote these documents did not sign their names, the author of A4.7 lines 1-11 will be referred to as “scribe 1,” and the author of A4.7 lines 12-30, A4.8, and A4.9 will be referred to as “scribe 2.” The legal documents examined here include the papyri authored and clearly signed by any one of a group of three scribes who operated as contemporaries in the last part of the fifth century BCE at Elephantine. These scribes are known from the signatures appended to the end of their respective contracts: Nathan bar Ananiah (author of B2.6, B2.7, B3.1, and B3.3); Mauziah bar Nathan (author of B2.9, B2.10, B3.5, B3.8, and B6.4); and Haggai bar Shemaiah (author of B3.4, B3.6, B3.10, B3.11, and B3.12). The overall contemporaneity of the scribes responsible for the official correspondence and the legal documents is suggested by three factors: all of the papyri exist within a tight geographical proximity, namely the temple of YHW at Elephantine; the documents all share temporal proximity, being authored in the second half of the fifth century (excepting B2.6 and B3.1, which were written in 458 and 456. respectively); and the connection between the legal documents and the temple, and thus the official correspondence, suggested by the fact that contracts authored by all three scribes record transactions made on behalf of one Ananiah bar Azariah, who is listed in A4.7 as “a servitor of the temple of YHW the god who is in Elephantine” (B3.3, B3.4, and B3.5).

to examine the level of variation reflected for each feature in the collected works of an individual scribe. In the second instance, the method is to measure the overall level of variation of a given feature to determine the most common form of that feature in use in the system as a whole. An outline is thus sketched both of the characteristics of the individual scribes, and of the general system, that existed at Elephantine in the late fifth century.

The advantage of viewing the data this way is twofold. We are at once able to determine an average level of variation of particular features for individuals writing in the Elephantine system, which may then be contrasted with the average level of variation of similar features attested in individual scrolls authored in the Qumran system. This will outline the comparative behaviors of *individual scribes* that contributed to both systems. Further, we can find the level of variation that is attested within each system on the part of its individual members, and thus contrast the general nature of the Elephantine system *as a whole* with that of the Qumran system. Such an approach allows us to plot the behaviors of both systems' individual members, as well as the nature of each system as a discrete entity. We may then be in a position to offer some comments on the theory that Qumran practice represents a localized scribal system, in as much as it compares to the known localized scribal system at Elephantine.

Constructing a Comparative Analysis

Problems naturally arise when comparing documents that stand apart in time, place, and language, not to mention genre and social setting. For one, the Elephantine documents are written in Aramaic, while the Qumran documents discussed here are written in Hebrew. Also, the documents from Elephantine share a different temporal and geographical provenience from the documents from Qumran. Add to this the fact that the analysis of forms from Elephantine concerns different textual features to those examined in

the Qumran material, and we are faced with a three-fold disparity between the sources for our comparative analysis.

In response to these concerns, we can state that Hebrew and Aramaic share many common traits in terms of their roots in the Northwest Semitic language family, in their use of the Phoenician alphabet, and comparable grammatical conventions. Indeed, “these two languages are closely related – Aramaic is to Hebrew as French is to Italian.”³¹ In addition, there are significant similarities surrounding the composition of both groups of texts. Each group was written by Second Temple Jewish communities living in relative isolation from the religious center at Jerusalem.³² Both social groups experienced some form of separation from that center which extended beyond the geographical distance imposed by their locations. For example, the polemic evident in A4.7 and A4.9, which points to a discrepancy over the particular religious rites that could be suitably carried out at Elephantine,³³ links with the more developed polemic at Qumran against the established authority that is evident in CD, MMT, and 1QpHab.³⁴

Indeed, among the Aramaic documents from Qumran we also find orthographic features in fluctuation that parallel the phenomena discussed

³¹ M. Wise, M. G. Abegg, E. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), 9.

³² Concerning Qumran, see the convenient summary in G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 5th ed. (London: Penguin, 1998), 54; on Elephantine see B. Porten, “The Jews in Egypt,” in W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (eds.), *Cambridge History of Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 393-98.

³³ The building in Elephantine is referred to in A4.7 as “the temple” (line 6, *et passim*), but in the reply from Jerusalem as “the house of the altar” (A4.9 line 3). Additionally, the letter from Elephantine lists the suitable sacrifices to be offered at that structure as “the sacrificial offerings, the incense offerings and the burnt offerings” (A4.7 line 25), while the reply from Jerusalem acknowledges only the right of the Elephantine priests to offer “the sacrificial offerings and the incense offerings” (A4.9 line 9). A subsequent letter (A4.10) indicates that the establishment at Elephantine acquiesced in this regard to the will of the Jerusalem and Samaritan authorities.

³⁴ The author is aware that this statement assumes that CD, MMT, and 1QpHab are representative of the very “scribal school” at Qumran that is being tested in this analysis. The null hypothesis in this article assumes the authenticity of Qumran practice as described by Tov, and proposes to test this position by comparative analysis with the reasonably well documented model from Elephantine. On the rationale behind the exclusion of certain documents from this examination see below.

here in relation to Elephantine.³⁵ Such features include the 3rd f. sg. pronominal suffix written הא- in 44 out of 54 occurrences in the Genesis Apocryphon, against the spelling ה- in the majority of other manuscripts;³⁶ the spelling of the relative particle with graphical ר as opposed to ד ;³⁷ and the defective writing of the morpheme marking the masculine plural absolute state for nouns, adjectives and participles.³⁸ That the second and third grammatical features mentioned here are also reflected in the scribal practices at Elephantine supports the position presented in this article that a comparison of scribal practices reflected in Qumran Hebrew and Elephantine Aramaic is valid.

Finally, it can be said that the forms examined in each system involve similar qualities, such as orthographic conventions for representing phonology (Aramaic ר/ד, ע/ק, ש/ת compared with Hebrew *mater lectionis* ו in לוא/לא, כול/כל , and א forming a digraph with י in כיא/כי), as well as orthographic conventions of representing morphemes, such as independent pronouns (Aramaic די/זי compared with Hebrew הוא/המה/הם), and suffixes (Aramaic $\text{ין/ון, ויה/וה, כי/ך}$ compared with Hebrew כה/הם and המה/הם).

³⁵ Several discussions of Qumran Aramaic are worth noting. See primarily E. Y. Kutscher, "The Language of the Genesis Apocryphon: A Preliminary Study," in C. Rabin and Y. Yadin (eds.), *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1957), 6-8; K. Beyer, *The Aramaic Language*, trans. J. F. Healey (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 20-21; E. A. Cook, "The Orthography of Final Unstressed Long Vowels in Old and Imperial Aramaic," *Maarav* 5-6 (1990), 60-67; E. A. Cook, "Qumran Aramaic and Aramaic Dialectology," in T. Muraoka (ed.), *Studies in Qumran Aramaic* (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 8-13; E. Qimron, "The Pronominal Suffix כה- in Qumran Aramaic," in *ibid.*, 119-23; S. E. Fassberg, "The Pronominal Suffix of the Second Feminine Singular in the Aramaic Texts from the Judean Desert," *DSD* 3 (1996), 10-19; J. C. Greenfield, M. E. Stone and E. Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 22-25; and D. A. Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13-17* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 138-39.

³⁶ The full spelling הא- is also attested once in each of the following Aramaic manuscripts from Qumran: 4Q197, 4Q213a, 4Q537, 4Q539, 4Q541, 4Q559 and 4Q584. Of these 4Q539, 4Q541 and 4Q549 do not attest any occurrences of the defective spelling ה- .

³⁷ 4Q206, 4Q213a, 4Q530 and 4Q536 all attest the spelling ר for the relative particle; however, in each of these manuscripts the majority of occurrences are written with ד .

³⁸ This last example is admittedly very rare and only occurs with certainty on a few participles. See the form נחתן in 1Q20 col. XX line 12, and the forms of $\sqrt{\text{חער}}$, "smile," in 4Q543 frag. 5-9 line 7, and 4Q544 frag. 1 line 14.

A few remarks are also necessary here in relation to the methodology of this study. Only those scrolls that reflect the most consistent use of the features pertaining to Qumran practice were analyzed. Documents that do not show consistent use of these features, such as CD, the Copper Scroll, and 4QMMT, were not considered.³⁹ Because they lack the names of their copyists, the Qumran scrolls have been grouped according to their paleography. The scrolls 1QS and 4Q175 were considered as the works of an individual scribe within the Qumran scribal system, while corrections and additions to 1QS made by a second scribal hand were not considered.⁴⁰ The whole of 1QM was also considered as the work of an individual scribe. In the case of 1QH the text is taken to represent the work of two scribes, defined as 1QH 1 (col. IX line 1 – col. XIX line 21) and 1QH 2 (col. XIX line 22 – col. XXVI; plus cols IV-VIII).⁴¹ To limit the amount of data represented by 11QT, only the rules relating to the conduct of the king in col. LVI line 12 – col. LIX line 21 were examined.⁴² The fragmentary scrolls 4QS^{a,b,d,e} were included to provide a point of comparison with the text of 1QS.

³⁹ Tov, "Orthography and Language," 38, indicates that almost all of the sectarian documents could be considered as Qumran practice texts.

⁴⁰ The hand of a second scribe in 1QS has been noted by several scholars. For example, P. Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline: Translated and Annotated With an Introduction* (Leiden: Brill, 1957), 113 n. 3, notes that the addition to VII line 1 is "written by another scribe." M. Martin, *The Scribal Character of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 vols.; Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1958), 1.464, also noticed that a second hand was involved in correcting aspects of that document. S. Metso, "The Textual Traditions of the Qumran Community Rule," in M. Bernstein, F. Garcia-Martinez, and J. Kampen (eds.), *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Cambridge, 1995: Published in Honour of Joseph M. Baumgarten* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 146, refers to "additions and corrections made by a second copyist." A full list of some 29 corrections and additions to cols. VII and VIII by a second scribal hand is given in S. Metso, *The Textual Development of the Qumran Community Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 96-97.

⁴¹ The order given here follows that presented in E. Puech, "Quelques aspects de la restauration du Rouleau des Hymnes," *JJSt* 39 (1988), 38-55. This corresponds to col. I – col. XI line 21, and col. XI line 22 – col. XVIII line 33 of the *editio princeps* presented in E. L. Sukenik, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1955), 37. Despite Puech's significant rearrangement of the text from that which Sukenik presented, allowing for the placement of many more fragments, the fact that we are dealing here with the work of two scribes seems certain given the noticeable change in handwriting that occurs between lines 21 and 22 of col. XIX.

⁴² The unity of this particular section of 11QT is suggested by M. Hengel, J. H. Charlesworth, and D. Mendels, "The Polemical Character of 'On Kingship' in the Temple Scroll: An Attempt at Dating 11QTemple," *JJSt* 37 (1986), 38, making this a viable extracted text of manageable

Elephantine Practice

In the localized system at Elephantine some scribes show more variation than others and, while there are noticeable trends towards preferred forms, no two scribes consistently represent each of the phonological and morphological features in the same way. This result will not be surprising to many readers, and indeed should be expected of any ancient localized scribal system. What is particularly instructive in the data is the differentiation between the relatively free orthography employed in the private contracts and the more uniform orthography of the official correspondence.

Orthography of Phonemes

Among the contracts there is no exclusive use by any scribe of either the grapheme 𐤀 or 𐤁 to represent the phoneme /d̥/, although a preference for /d̥/ > 𐤀 prevails. While the phonetic value of Old Aramaic /d̥/ had likely shifted towards /d/ by the end of the fifth century BCE, it seems that writing the phoneme in its older form was still perceived as somehow more “correct.”⁴³ In the official correspondence, in contrast to the contracts, /d̥/ is written with 𐤁 consistently.⁴⁴

proportions. Even so, the present analysis will refer to the occurrence of particular forms in the rest of the text of 11QT as appropriate.

⁴³ The phonetic realization of /d̥/ in this period is uncertain, regarding which see Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar*, 3. The strongest evidence that the “correct” spelling of /d̥/ was considered to be graphical 𐤀 is found in the erroneous writing of the set phrase 𐤁𐤓 𐤓𐤁𐤁 by Haggai bar Shemaiah as 𐤁𐤓 𐤓𐤁𐤁 (see B3.4 line 17), in which the spelling of the initial phoneme /d̥/ > 𐤀 is a hypercorrection towards a perceived standard orthography, even though the initial phoneme does not actually represent historical /d̥/. Instances of the correct spelling are found in the same document (B3.4 lines 3, 9, and 23) and in B3.6 lines 5 and 13; B3.10 lines 4 and 16; and B3.11 lines 6, 7, 9, and 14.

⁴⁴ That is, in each of the 99 occurrences of the relative particle in the official correspondence, /d̥/ is written as 𐤁 consistently. In contrast, Nathan bar Ananiah has 𐤁𐤓 𐤓𐤁𐤁 in B2.7 lines 7, 11 and 16, but also uses the form 𐤁𐤓 𐤓𐤁𐤁 in the same document at B2.7 line 8. While Mauziah bar Nathan has 𐤁𐤓 in B3.8 line 2, he writes 𐤁𐤓 in a document dated one month prior (B2.9 line 4). Despite Haggai bar Shemaiah having examples of /d̥/ > 𐤀 in demonstrative pronouns in every document considered here (see B3.4 line 12; B3.6 line 3; B3.10 lines 10 and 14; B3.11 line 3; B3.12 lines 30 and 31), this scribe exhibits a general preference for /d̥/ > 𐤀.

The phoneme /d/ in the majority of cases is written with the old orthography ק. Even where the later form /d/ > ט is prevalent, in almost every instance of a given lexeme the graphical representation of /d/ is spelled consistently.⁴⁵ The only example in which the same word is written with different graphemes for /d/ is the word meaning “wool,” written as קמר by Mauziah bar Nathan, and as עמר by Nathan bar Ananiah.⁴⁶

For the phoneme /t/ the general tendency is that /t/ > ת in the noun √תקל, to which the only exception occurs in the work of Nathan bar Ananiah. Even then, this scribe only varies his own orthography in two out of 39 instances. Further, verbs formed from this root always reflect /t/ > ת.⁴⁷ Mauziah bar Nathan and Haggai bar Shemaiah uniformly write /t/ > ת in a total of fourteen instances in which this noun appears.⁴⁸

Orthography of Morphemes

The 2 f. sg. suffixed pronoun כִּי- shows a tendency toward uniformity across the system, with each scribe preferring the same form. The short form of the 2 f. sg. pronominal suffix, ךְּ-, is in the minority in the manuscripts from Elephantine, as is the case in Official Aramaic more generally.⁴⁹ Nathan bar Ananiah writes the long form כִּי- in 16 out of 21 occurrences, while Haggai bar Shemaiah has the long form in 38 out of 49 occurrences. For these scribes both the long and the short forms of the 2 f. sg. suffix regularly appear in the same document.⁵⁰ Against this trend, Mauziah bar Nathan writes the long form in all 15 preserved instances.

⁴⁵ For /d/ > ק see עק, “wood,” in A4.7 line 11; 4.8 line 10; B2.9 line 5; and B3.8 line 19 (twice). For /d/ > ט see ארעא, “land,” in A4.7 line 9; A4.8 line 8; and מועא, “east,” in B2.7 line 14; B2.10 line 6, *et passim*.

⁴⁶ For occurrences in the works of Mauziah bar Nathan see B2.9 line 5; B3.8 lines 6, 7, and 13. For the term used by Nathan bar Ananiah see B3.3 line 4; B2.6 lines 7 and 10.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., B2.6 line 24.

⁴⁸ See Folmer, *The Aramaic Language*, 71 n. 148, for a complete list of occurrences.

⁴⁹ See Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar*, 49; and Fassberg, “The Pronominal Suffix of the Second Feminine Singular,” 15-16.

⁵⁰ See Folmer, *The Aramaic Language*, 162-63, esp. nn. 836 and 837.

In the official correspondence scribe 2 writes the long form of the 3 m. sg. pronominal suffix in each of five occurrences. In the contracts Nathan bar Ananiah attests both the long and the short form of the suffix within the same document,⁵¹ while Mauziah bar Nathan and Haggai bar Shemaiah attest both the long and short form of the suffix appended to the same lexeme within the same document.⁵²

In the majority of cases the writing of the masculine plural absolute noun marker ־ is consistently defective, with the only exception being the practice of scribe 2 in the early draft of the letter to Bagavahya, A4.7. Significantly, the tendency towards uniformity in this regard that is reflected in the later draft of the same letter, A4.8, shows that scribes at Elephantine were careful to insure the use of precise and uniform language in their official correspondence, perhaps in the interests of promoting a response to their written requests.⁵³ Attention to orthographic consistency was evidently less requisite when documents were in draft form, as seen in A4.7, or when a document was written for limited use inside the community, such as with the contracts.

Qumran Practice

It has already been noted that the features that constitute Qumran practice were not applied consistently in any single manuscript from the caves near Qumran. While this fact stands, we can detect certain features that were written more consistently than others. In fact, when all of the features are

⁵¹ See B2.7 line 3, דמֹה; and B2.7 line 7, אַחֲרוֹי.

⁵² For Mauziah bar Nathan see B2.10 line 3, אַחוֹה; and B2.10 line 21, אַחוֹהִי. For Haggai bar Shemaiah see 3.6 line 12, אַבוֹה; and 3.6 lines 11 and 14, אַבוֹהִי.

⁵³ See B. Porten, "The Revised Draft of the Letter of Jedaniah to Bagavahya (TAD A4.8 = Cowley 31)," in M. Lubetski, C. Gottleib, and S. Keller (eds.), *Boundaries of the Ancient Near Eastern World: A Tribute to Cyrus H. Gordon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 241. To this may be added the other examples of consistency among the features attested in the official correspondence already mentioned, such as the writing $\text{/d/} > \tau$ both in relative particles and where the phoneme appears word-initially and word-medially, and the spelling of the 3 m. sg. pronominal suffix.

considered together certain manuscripts reflect more uniformity than others. From the data it emerges that there is more consistency regarding the orthography of phonemes (for instance, the application or omission of *matres lectionis*) than there is regarding the orthography of morphemes (such as the spelling of independent or suffixed pronouns). Also worth noting is the proclivity in 1QH – the only Qumran manuscript examined in this study that was written in multiple scribal hands – to show more internal variations in orthographic practice than any of the manuscripts written in a single hand. This can be compared with the generally inconsistent orthography reflected in A4.7, the draft letter from Elephantine written in two scribal hands, and contrasted with the more uniform spellings found in the revised draft, A4.8, and in other examples of official Elephantine correspondence such as the so-called “Passover letter,” A4.1. In both the Qumran and Elephantine systems, then, the practices of individual scribes can vary noticeably from one another in certain respects, while a cohesive scribal system may still be perceived in terms of general orthographic trends.

Orthography of Phonemes

A hallmark of Qumran practice, *plene* כּוּל, is written with a very high level of uniformity. In terms of its distribution the absolute uniformity of the form in such a large number of manuscripts is remarkable. In 1QS there are 185 occurrences, to which can be added 132 instances in 1QM, and 25 instances in the extract from 11QT.⁵⁴ In contrast, the scribe designated here as 1QH 1 shows some small degree of variation, with ten out of 125 occurrences written defectively. Another manuscript, 4QS^d, demonstrates a strong preference for the defective form with all but two out of 23 occurrences

⁵⁴ There are no defective spellings attested in around 220 occurrences of this word throughout the whole of 11QT.

written defectively. This is despite the fact that all other manuscripts of S from Qumran overwhelmingly prefer the *plene* spelling.⁵⁵

The case is slightly different concerning the negative particle $\alpha\lambda$, which is written with a mixture of the *plene* and defective forms in 1QH 1, 1QH 2, and in 4QS^d. The other documents show a consistent use of the *plene* form $\alpha\lambda$. Similarly, the particle $\neg$ consistently has the defective form in 4QS^b, 4QS^d, and 11QT, in contrast to the predominant use of the *plene* form $\neg$ in 1QM and 1QS. The copyists of 1QH 1 and 1QH 2 show a mixed usage of the defective and *plene* forms of this particle.

Orthography of Morphemes

Concerning the pronouns, the long form of the 1 c. sg. independent pronoun in 11QT stands in contrast to most of the other scribal hands, though the evidence is admittedly meager. In 11QT, the use of the long form of this pronoun is perhaps related to the nature of the subject specifically, or indeed to the biblical tone of the document more generally, as has been noted by Kaufman and others.⁵⁶ Despite its infrequent appearance in the manuscripts examined here, the long form of the 1 c. sg. independent pronoun is not isolated to 11QT in the broader Qumran corpus, but it seems that the majority of occurrences fit the context to which Kaufman referred.⁵⁷ The occurrence of the long form of the 1 c. sg. independent pronoun in 4Q175 is instructive in this respect: the long form $\alpha\lambda$ appears once in frag. 1 line 7 and refers to Yahweh, while the same scribe writes the short form α three times in 1QS in reference to a human speaker addressing the deity.

⁵⁵ 4QS^e attests one instance of the defective spelling for this word against four *plene* spellings.

⁵⁶ See S. A. Kaufman, "The Temple Scroll and Higher Criticism," *HUCA* 53 (1982), 35, for the suggestion that the biblical tone of 11QT may have influenced the author to use orthographic forms that differed from those more common in Qumran practice. E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 57, has also pointed out that the long form of the 1 c. sg. pronoun in that text refers invariably to the deity.

⁵⁷ This includes three occurrences in 1Q22 (1QapocMoses^a), as well as singular occurrences in 4Q166, 4Q167, 4Q252, 4Q364, 4Q365, 4Q390, and perhaps also 11Q5-6 (11QPs^{a-b}). The single exception is the form in 4QpapJub^h (4Q223-224) frag. 2 ii, 3, which refers to Isaac rather than the deity.

A noticeable contrast exists between the sources regarding the form of the 3 m. sg. independent pronoun. The almost exclusive use of the long form of the pronoun הוּאֵה in 1QS and 1QM stands in contrast to the nearly uniform use of the short form הוּא in 1QH 1, 1QH 2 and 11QT.⁵⁸

The spelling of the 3 m. pl. pronoun, both independent and suffixed, is also unevenly distributed in the manuscripts. The scribes who wrote 1QS+4Q175, 4QS^b, 4QS^d, 1QH 1, and 1QH 2 had a marked tendency to use the short form of the 3 m. pl. suffixed pronoun, and a mixture of short and long forms of the 3 m. pl. independent pronoun (1QS uses the long forms almost exclusively). In contrast, the copyist of 11QT preferred to use the long form for both the independent and suffixed 3 m. pl. pronoun.⁵⁹

The form of the 2 m. sg. suffixed pronoun is also mixed in the manuscripts, although most scribal hands tend to favor the long form כִּי-הוּא. The scribe who copied 1QH 2 attests evidence to the contrary, where the use of the long and short forms of the suffix are fairly evenly divided across more than 150 occurrences.⁶⁰

Conclusion

It is clear that both Qumran practice and Elephantine practice lack complete consistency in their respective orthographic systems. Some variation is, of course, to be expected through decisions of individual style, or through errors. If we examine the orthographic practices of each scribe, regardless of whether the scribe is from Elephantine or Qumran, there is relative homogeneity between the scribes' capacity to vary their individual

⁵⁸ There is a single occurrence of the long form הוּאֵה in 11QT col. LIV line 11, occurring practically alongside the short form הוּא which occurs just four words later. Deut 13:4, from which 11QT quotes, preserves the short form in both instances, while another copy of Deuteronomy from Qumran, 1QDeut^a, has the short form first and the long form second.

⁵⁹ This is also true for the rest of 11QT. The form of the 3 m. pl. independent pronoun is uniformly long throughout, while the suffix appears in the long form 121 times against six occurrences of the short form.

⁶⁰ 1QH 2 has 90 occurrences of the short form כִּי- and 67 occurrences of the long form כִּי-הוּא.

orthographic conventions.⁶¹ That is, scribes writing in Elephantine practice and Qumran practice exhibit roughly the same capacity to vary from their respective system's conventional orthography. Much of the orthographic stability or instability shown by any one scribe is comparable to that of any other scribe.

However, if the orthographic evidence is seen as pertaining to two discrete localized scribal practices, noticeable differences appear between the two systems. For example, one can calculate the probability that a scribe will write an orthographic form that his colleagues (those other scribes that constitute the scribal system to which he ostensibly belongs) generally tend not to use. In doing so, one finds that individual scribes in the Qumran system vary their orthography from that of their colleagues more so than do the scribes in the Elephantine system. That is, in terms of their qualities as discrete scribal systems, Elephantine practice was orthographically a more stabilizing system than was Qumran practice.

This result suggests two possibilities. The "sectarian" texts from Qumran may be more appropriately understood in terms that do not seek to group them together as examples of one localized scribal system. Rather, we could view these manuscripts as stemming from the wider corpus of Jewish Palestinian texts circulating in the Second Temple period. Accordingly, the proclivity for variation in orthography could be indicative of disparate scribal conventions in manuscripts collated *after* their time of writing, rather than a common localized scribal affinity. This interpretation, though, makes no sense of the mass of other data collected by Tov that speaks to the congruence of features, both textual and mechanical, that gave rise to the theory of Qumran practice in the first place.

⁶¹ With respect to the variable features that characterize each system, most scribes register two features in which they deviate from the common practice of their system in more than ten percent of occurrences. There are only three exceptions to this trend: the copyist of 1QS+4Q175 is less than ten percent likely to use an uncommon form for all of the measured features; scribe 1 from Elephantine shows a higher than ten percent probability of using an uncommon form for only one feature; and the copyist of 1QH 2 shows a higher than ten percent probability of using an uncommon form for three features.

The alternative is that the scribes who constituted the Qumran system were simply less consistent than those who constituted the system at Elephantine. Such a situation may well have prevailed in a system that did not have as long a history as that which has been suggested in regard to Elephantine. Qumran practice, in this view, was a disparate system in terms of its textual and mechanical scribal conventions, either because it was not a very well established scribal school or because of some other mitigating factor.⁶² This may well have been the case in a system whose members were connected through religious and ideological convictions rather than familial ties.

Of the two alternatives raised here, the latter seems to be the more attractive to the present writer, especially in light of the great bulk of other evidence that Tov has presented in support of a Qumran scribal practice. The preceding study is admittedly rather limited in scope, dealing as it does only with matters of orthography. But all matters, however small, must be taken into account before one determines to support or undermine the theory of a Qumran scribal practice, and certainly before one determines to think in terms of a Qumran “sectarian” scribal practice, as some scholars tend implicitly to do.

⁶² One may conjecture a lack of patrimonial pedagogical heritage within the system, or the diffused geographical and organizational structure of the sect itself. Recent scholarship points to the sect’s dispersed nature in S and CD, for which see J. J. Collins, “Beyond the Qumran Community: Social Organization in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *DSD* 16 (2009), 357-61. Folmer has suggested that scribal variation in the Elephantine manuscripts may depend to some extent on the professionalism of the scribes; Folmer, *The Aramaic Language*, 32. But in relation to the Qumran manuscripts such a view is hard to reconcile with the skilled execution of scrolls like 1QH, 1QM, 1QS, and 11QT.