CHAPTER 6

Book Production and Circulation in Ancient Judaea: Evidenced by Writing Quality and Skills in the Dead Sea Scrolls Isaiah and Serekh Manuscripts

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1 Introduction*

When thinking about the Dead Sea Scrolls and ancient media, scribes play a central role, not only as the perceived faithful transmitters of a text, but also as taking part in the production, elaboration, transmission and circulation of texts—orally, aurally, and textually.1 An important aspect in all of this, but one that is largely neglected,2 is the question of how texts were published in ancient Judaea. How exactly should we envisage the spread of texts beyond the

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1 For a recent entry, see Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “The Scribes of the Scrolls,” in T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls, ed. George J. Brooke and Charlotte Hempel, with the assistance of Michael DeVries and Drew Longacre (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 524–32. Following the work of William Johnson, I have argued that in the intellectual reading culture in Hellenistic and early Roman Judaea as reflected by the scrolls, the activities of reading, writing, and memorizing should also be understood as intertwined aspects—that part of the procedure of reading as a multi-dimensional activity—that occurred in deeply social contexts of group reading and study of texts; Mladen Popović, “Reading, Writing, and Memorizing Together: Reading Culture in Ancient Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls in a Mediterranean Context,” DSD 24 (2017): 447–70.

first author or authors? What do we mean by publication? Does some other term capture the production and circulation of texts better?

This neglect in research is to a large part due to the dearth of evidence. If texts were central to the social life of the people behind the Dead Sea Scrolls, it may strike as somewhat remarkable that in their self-presentation they do not say much about the different activities involved in making and collecting texts. For comparative purposes, we might turn to Greco-Roman reading cultures, where researchers have carefully deconstructed anachronistic notions about publishing in the ancient world.

While studying ancient Jewish reading culture, I was intrigued by William Johnson’s discussion of the relationship between recitation and publication. Discussing the recitation of literary texts as presented in Pliny the Younger, Johnson examined “the ways in which recitation intersected, generally, with the social mechanics surrounding the literary practices that Pliny recommends, and, specifically, with the need to make public—to ‘publish’—creative literary endeavor.”3 Similar to, for example, Raymond Starr and Jon Iddeng,4 Johnson took as point of departure that, “In Roman society, there was no publisher or other agent who acted as a gatekeeper for publications.”5 Important is Johnson’s argument that “the gatekeeper function was the product of a complex social interaction, and the various circles of the literarily interested—such as the circle around Pliny—played an essential role in promoting or rejecting new authors.”6 Could we imagine the movement or group behind the Dead Sea Scrolls performing such a gatekeeper function? The Dead Sea Scrolls may provide the possibility to approach the issue of “publishing” in Judaea in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods from both conceptual and material perspectives.

Yet, instead of approaching the issues of “publishing” as text production and circulation at large, in this article I limit the research focus to the scrolls in relation to the perceived group or movement behind them and wish to draw attention to one important yet neglected aspect in scrolls studies: For whom was a manuscript copied? This question has not been raised much in Dead Sea Scrolls studies, if at all. Of course, scholars have asked after the function of certain manuscripts, but that is not precisely the same, even though the question

3 William A. Johnson, Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Reading Communities (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 52.
5 Johnson, Readers and Reading Culture, 53.
6 Johnson, Readers and Reading Culture, 53.
of a manuscript’s function can intersect with the question for whom it was copied. Scholars have also looked at the material evidence of multiple copies of a single composition, but mainly for studying textual transmission and compositional history. Asking for whom a manuscript was copied invites looking anew at the material evidence and to study, for example, the variance in script styles, the quality of writing, and the level of writing skills. These allow us to better understand what kind of manuscript a specific specimen may have represented and what that may mean in terms of production and circulation in the context of the perceived group or movement behind the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In this article, I will first briefly discuss how scholars approach the relationship between the manuscripts, the people living in the settlement at Qumran, and a broader movement, at various places. The range of possible users of and markets for the scrolls puts the topic of “publishing” in terms of production and circulation on the table.

Second, I will give a brief, inexhaustive, overview of some recent research on “publishing” in the Roman Mediterranean and ancient Judaea. This will redirect and limit the focus to the central role of scribes and to the distinction between trained and untrained copyists in relation to the level of writing skills they have achieved. This will allow us to focus on the question for whom a manuscript was copied, and in what context.

Third, as a way of probing the data, I will give a preliminary consideration of a number of manuscripts of two compositions, namely those of Isaiah and those of the Serekh (Community Rule). The concrete evidence of these two groups of manuscripts enables interaction with various scholarly scenarios of text production and circulation in connection with different models of communities or movements behind the scrolls. The Isaiah manuscripts are interesting as “biblical” manuscripts for our purposes because they, or manuscripts like them, were broadly circulated in ancient Judaism. Furthermore, despite the numerous textual variants, which can be classified as individual variants, the text of Isaiah was remarkably stable with the extant textual evidence pointing to a single main edition of the work circulating in ancient Judaism.

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7 Often, when palaeographers speak of the “quality” of the hand, they mean something like the ability of the writer to produce text in the desired script style consistently and accurately. While there can be overlap between “quality” and “level of writing skills” in relation to script style, “quality” can also be understood distinct from “level of writing skills” in order to differentiate, for example, evidence where a skilled scribe, say one who had attained a high level of writing skills, shows a lower-level quality execution of writing in a specific copy, see the discussion below, e.g., 4Q62a (4Qlsa).

The Serekh manuscripts are interesting because they have been understood in scholarship to be sectarian manuscripts *par excellence*, while their scholarly understanding of a Qumran-only context has evolved to also include multiple, related groups, understood as Essene, Yaḥad or otherwise, at different locations in ancient Judaea. Furthermore, far from pointing to a stable text, the extant manuscript evidence demonstrates that there was not a single moment of "publication," no finalised text, but rather textual fluidity. Scholars have drawn different conclusions for what this means for our understanding of what each manuscript copy represented, calling into question too what constituted the work "Community Rule/Rules" in the minds of the scribes.9 Here, I show how a focus on the scribes' writing style, quality of writing, and level of writing skills can sharpen and improve our understanding of what the manuscript evidence as a distinct physical object may have represented for the one copying it as well as for those for whom it was copied.

2 The Scrolls, Qumran, and the Yaḥad Community or Movement

Ever since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls between 1947 and 1956, the relationship between the manuscripts and the people living in the settlement at Qumran has been debated. The debate has focused mainly on the question of material connections between the archaeology of the settlement and of the

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caves.\textsuperscript{10} Early on, statements were also made as to the inscriptive evidence from the site and the scrolls showing the same writing, though, to my knowledge, this has never really been assessed otherwise.\textsuperscript{11} Scholars reiterate that no scrolls were found in the site itself, arguing against a connection or explaining that such is to be expected after the site’s destruction but that this does not speak against a connection.\textsuperscript{12}

Linking the site and the scrolls, scholars have suggested various scenarios for understanding how the manuscripts may have belonged to the people living at Qumran.\textsuperscript{13} In addition to archaeological interpretations of the tangible evidence at the site, in the caves near Qumran, and from the immediate surroundings, these scenarios also depend in part on various literary and historical interpretations of the textual evidence, in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as from other ancient sources.

For example, for Roland de Vaux and other scholars, it was clear that manuscripts were copied in what he identified as the scriptorium of Qumran (locus 30) and also that certain works were composed on site. In addition to practising agriculture and certain industries, as well as living under a community regime with special rules and rituals, the people living at Qumran, de Vaux argued, owned and read the manuscripts that were found, in modern times, in the surrounding caves. These manuscripts were copied on the spot or had come from elsewhere.\textsuperscript{14} While de Vaux did not exclude the possibility that those at Qumran could have sold the manuscripts which they copied for gain,


\textsuperscript{12} See, however, Wise, ‘Accidents and Accidents,’ 120 n. 56.

\textsuperscript{13} For our purposes here, I focus only on those scenarios of a more sustained connection, not those that limit a possible connection only to the moment of depositing the manuscripts in the caves in the context of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66–70/73 CE.

Hartmut Stegemann went further and argued that the whole reason for the settlement of Qumran, and Ein Feshkha, was to be a scrolls production centre for the many Essene settlements throughout the country. But when Qumran would have been unoccupied after the earthquake of 31 BCE, according to de Vaux’s interpretation, Stegemann allowed for scrolls to have also been produced elsewhere while production continued, on a smaller scale, at Qumran.

More recently, Sidnie White Crawford continued this line of thought and argued that Qumran was a scribal centre and library for a wider Essene movement. Differently from Stegemann, she assumed that the scroll collections in the individual caves came from different local Essene communities before being processed for long-term storage at Qumran.

Attributing the origin of manuscripts also to sites other than Qumran, albeit unknown ones, White Crawford is in agreement with a number of researchers that have argued for a more diverse movement of authors, scribes, or owners behind the scrolls, a movement that would have extended beyond the site of Qumran itself. This reorientation in research is due in part to the full publication of the scrolls in the 1990s and 2000s, which enabled scholars to engage with all the extant texts. Acknowledging, for example, that a text like 1QS 6:1–2/4Q258 2:6 (“In this way they shall behave in all their places of residence”) is written with more than one community in mind, or that the multiple copies in different versions of the Damascus Document and the Rule of the Community, regarded by scholars to be foundational community compositions, point to a more complex and dynamic development than of just one community, scholars have argued for the existence of multiple, related communities—at different sites than just Qumran.

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17 Stegemann, *Die Essener*, 83–84.
20 This differentiation of related groups across the country is sometimes similar but sometimes not exactly the same as the differentiation researchers made between different Essene groups, e.g., celibate at Qumran and non-celibate elsewhere, and used as a model in earlier phases of Dead Sea Scrolls research.
Focusing on writing or scribal activities for which we have material evidence, the presence of many ostraca, inscribed jars and at least six, but maybe eight, inkwells indicates that various writing activities took place on site at Qumran. André Lemaire argued for sectarian education at Qumran, referring also to one inscribed jar in particular (KhQ 1313) to argue that its fine and regular writing, being of unusual good quality for a jar inscription, pointed to a scribe that was accustomed to writing on manuscripts. Although the find sites of the ostraca give no indication of a concentration of writing anywhere at Qumran specifically, the presence of abecedaries or student exercises such as KhQ 161 and KhQ 2207 can be taken to indicate that scribes were present at Qumran and also that some elementary exercises or training in writing may have taken place there. As to the manuscripts from the caves near Qumran, it is evident that those who composed and copied them must have received some form of education, but, as Eibert Tigchelaar has cautioned, the concrete evidence for this education is limited. (And we have no idea what it was like for “non-Qumran” Jews either.) This scribal training or education may have happened at Qumran or elsewhere.

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It is clear that a significant number of manuscripts predates the period that the site of Qumran was settled, whether according to the traditional chronology proposed by de Vaux beginning in the second century BCE, sometime prior to the rule of John Hyrcanus (135–104 BCE), or according to Jodi Magness’s interpretation of the archaeological evidence that suggests a beginning in the first half of the first century BCE. White Crawford has suggested that we must assume the group was already in existence prior to the settlement at Qumran and owned those manuscripts, and also that Qumran was only one of the places where they were located. In addition to the possibility that scrolls were brought to Qumran for safekeeping from various Essene settlements, John Collins allowed for the possibility that scrolls copied at various locations were brought to Qumran by sectarians who moved there at various times, adding the cautious note that much remains uncertain about the provenance and use of the scrolls found in the caves.

Magness’s redating has especially challenged scholarly interpretations of the Serekh manuscripts as reflecting a group directly connected with the site of Qumran. A further complicating factor is the literary nature of most of the manuscript evidence. Charlotte Hempe, for example, has cautioned against reading the Serekh texts as “reality literature,” as if text and social reality directly converged without the involvement of any ideology or interest to present matters in a certain way, as can be expected from literary texts with a complex development history. Hempe’s comments as to the dating of Serekh manuscripts in relation to Magness’s revised chronology for the communal occupation call into question a neat alignment between text and historical reality as it is unlikely, she said, that 1Q8 can be associated with life at Qumran from the beginning, since the document allows for a considerable time to have elapsed in the movement’s life.

26 De Vaux, Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls, 5; Magness, The Archaeology of Qumran, 63–66.


28 Collins, Beyond the Qumran Community, 210, and see further below. See also Mladen Popović, “Qumran as Scroll Storehouse in Times of Crisis? A Comparative Perspective on Judaean Desert Manuscript Collections,” JSJ 43 (2012): 576.

29 See, e.g., Schofield, From Qumran to the Yahad, 268; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 8–9.

Yet, Hempel rightly cautioned about assuming too stark an opposition between the ideal and the real when she said that parts of the penal code and 4Q477 do indicate hints of reality.\(^\text{31}\) Another, and different, kind of “reality literature” are the writing exercises referred to by Tigchelaar (4Q6, 4Q234, 4Q341, and 4Q360), which should be taken into account when hypothesising about the nature of the collections in the caves.\(^\text{32}\) In addition to 4Q477, White Crawford also referred to 4Q339 and 4Q340 to suggest that it is unlikely that such notes were transported to Qumran from elsewhere; they must have been written at Qumran, and, what is more, indicate the local nature of the collection. She also argued that if a particular rule was being followed in the Qumran settlement, that rule would have most likely been some form of the Serekh, again also referring to 4Q477.\(^\text{33}\)

The relationship between manuscripts, site, and community has to be considered before asking for whom a particular manuscript was copied because of an assumption in the field that seems to be operative in the background when studying the textual and manuscript variation evidenced by the scrolls. The assumption seems to be that many (most?) of the manuscripts were produced and copied for the internal consumption of the presumed community, whether at Qumran or also elsewhere, catering to their specific needs, whether, for example, literary, liturgical, scholarly, or educational. This comes most clearly to the fore with regard to the extant Serekh manuscripts.\(^\text{34}\)

Thus, Collins argued, for example, that different versions of the Serekh were not copied side by side in the same community, but in different communities,
and were serving those different communities at the same time.\textsuperscript{35} Collins was cautious about connecting 1QS or any of the other Serekh manuscripts directly with Qumran. Alison Schofield was cautious too when she seemed to connect 1QS more directly with Qumran as she tentatively suggested that 1QS may have been the official Qumran copy.\textsuperscript{36} But she also argued for the manuscript variance (e.g., regarding orthography) to be explained in terms of different scribal circles in the Yahad movement having distinct localized training,\textsuperscript{37} with Qumran as a hierarchical centre of the larger movement.\textsuperscript{38} In terms of a “sectarian scribe,” Eugene Ulrich argued that the scribe who copied 1Q1, 4Q57, and 11Q14 (see section 3.1.1 below) and the scribe of 1QS did their work at Qumran because they copied sectarian literature.\textsuperscript{39} But if sectarian literature could also have been copied within the context of related communities outside of Qumran, then the copying of sectarian texts cannot be used as evidence for a direct connection of a scribe with the site of Qumran.

A closer look at the details of scribal practices evident from the manuscript evidence is important for understanding connections, commonalities, clusters of texts and differences across the totality of manuscripts available. As Tigchelaar has argued, on the one hand, shared scribal practices evident from the manuscript evidence may indicate a shared scribal culture; on the other hand, the collection as a whole also exhibits a large variety of scribal practices that cannot be taken to indicate a common provenance or a specific scribal school.\textsuperscript{40}

Instead of assuming that many of the manuscripts were produced for the internal consumption of the presumed community, Michael Wise has argued that at least some of the scrolls are the products of the broader book culture in Judaea and also that the great majority of the scrolls constitute a cross-section of that trade.\textsuperscript{41} Following Wise, Daniel Falk, focusing on the physical realia of writing and handling prayer texts (liturgical prose prayers, sectarian religious poetry, and apotropaic prayers and poems, and in comparison with scriptural scrolls and rule and legal scrolls), has suggested a commercial market for some

\textsuperscript{35} Collins, \textit{Beyond the Qumran Community}, 3, 68–69.
\textsuperscript{37} Schofield, \textit{From Qumran to the Yahad}, 129.
\textsuperscript{38} Schofield, \textit{From Qumran to the Yahad}, 271.
\textsuperscript{40} Tigchelaar, “The Scribes of the Scrolls,” 531.
\textsuperscript{41} Wise, “Accidents and Accidente,” 120.
of the small scriptural books, extracted scriptural texts and apotropaic prayers and poems type of scrolls. He suggested a wide range of uses and market, possibly including personal copies, scholar’s study editions, and official and master copies, for sectarian poetic texts and rule texts that show a diversity in format: both elegant and rustic, and both larger and small format copies of the same text. For the liturgical prose prayers, on the basis of their compact format, more rustic appearance, commonplace and varied quality of writing, Falk suggested that these are to be regarded as personal copies, for the recording and aiding of what was an oral performance.\(^\text{42}\)

This range of possible users and markets puts the topic of publishing in terms of production and circulation on the table.

3 Recent Research on “Publishing” in the Roman Mediterranean and Ancient Judaea

For more recent scholarly understandings of publishing in the ancient Mediterranean world, Starr was instrumental. He set out to clarify how publishing in late Republican and early Imperial Rome was very different from modern notions informed by commercial publishing as a large-scale and professional industry. Over against such a modern conception, Starr argued, “Romans circulated texts in a series of widening concentric circles determined primarily by friendship, which might, of course, be influenced by literary interests, and by the forces of social status that regulated friendship. Bookstores and ‘public’ libraries, which made a text available to individuals personally unknown to the author and his friends, were comparatively late developments.”\(^\text{43}\)

The whole process was thus deeply social in terms of network. First came the inner circle of the author’s friends. Only later, Starr argued, came the outermost circles of strangers.\(^\text{44}\) The first phase, for the inner circle of friends, had three stages:\(^\text{45}\) (1) a draft copy was made, in the author’s home at his own


expense by his slaves, and shared with friends, asking for comments and advice upon which (2) an author revised the draft and shared it with a slightly wider group of friends. This could be done by sending draft copies or inviting friends to attend a recital of the composition. These recitals had small audiences with whom the author was already in social contact, including patrons and clients. These first readings were closed and the work remained in the control of the author. In the final stage, (3) multiple copies were made of the final, polished version by the author’s own scribes or by a friend’s librarii, though the testing and revision of a work continued. Gift copies were presented to friends.

After these three stages of the author’s inner circle—with the gift copies of a finished text—came the phase of the outermost circle of strangers. According to Starr, it then was possible for people unknown to the author to acquire a text by making a copy from a friend’s copy. Only at this stage, Starr argues, was a text made public or intended for release. Starr and others prefer the term “release” over “publish” because the latter may imply modern connotations. Starr stresses how the connections are almost always through friends and connecting networks, and no commercial transaction was involved. Of course, there are examples where things went differently, and Starr also acknowledged these. When Atticus circulated a preliminary draft text of Cicero without his approval, he received an angry letter from Cicero. This shows that a draft text could be circulated more broadly without the author’s approval and also that this may have posed a problem for the author.

Starr listed five ways in which an author could make a text available for copying by others: (1) sending a gift copy to a friend without placing any restrictions on its being copied; (2) recitation of the work to friends and allowing copies to be made; (3) depositing a copy in one of the public libraries, placing it in the public domain as it were; (4) encouraging friends to make the book known; (5) depositing a copy with a book dealer.

Starr’s work has been influential, also with regard to thinking about publishing in ancient Judaism. It makes sense, as Steve Mason has argued, for...
Josephus, working and writing in Rome, to have participated in the custom of literary production and dissemination. Mason emphasised that also for Josephus the production and release of his texts was a local and social project. He discussed how Josephus circulated pieces of the War to others, including Agrippa, in Rome while he was writing and that this exchange involved some personal contact. Mason suggested that Josephus’s use of synergoi—co-workers or literary friends—reflects the social nature of writing a book and not the work of an isolated individual. Josephus and his contemporaries probably knew each other’s work in progress, quite possibly through recitation or seeing advance copies or extracts via friends. “They normally wrote in community, sharing their work with friends and acquaintances who lived, ate, and slept in—or were visiting—the same location. Wider dissemination was possible, if supportive others were willing, but that came later.”

Wise discussed publication as an aspect of ancient Judaean book culture, including also reproduction and circulation. Wise posited that an author in the first century CE might publish his work by any of three methods: (1) he could deposit the work in the temple at Jerusalem (this being probably the most frequent method used for publication); (2) an author could also deposit his principal copy, if not with a group, then with a wealthy and influential friend, who would then have copies made and distributed (Wise here refers to the Aramaic version of Josephus’s War); (3) an author might provide an authorial copy to one or more librarii to copy and sell.

Wise understood book production to have been largely a private matter, but he also saw a role for booksellers (librarii), employing one or more professional scribes to produce copies in multiples by dictation if there was a large demand or just one copy to meet the demand of a single order.

With regard to book circulation, Wise considered literacy rates, the cost of books, the breadth of circulation (evidence from Judaean sites other than Qumran), and the availability of libraries. Considering these factors, he argued that fair numbers of Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek literary works circulated in the outlying villages of Judaea. Wise also referred to P.Oxy. XVIII 2192 from

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52 Mason, “Of Audience and Meaning,” 78, 80, 82, 84.
This is a letter from learned individuals, showing at least three different scribal hands, requesting from friends/acquaintances elsewhere copies of books to be made that they do not have themselves, in addition to asking some of their own books to be sent to them. If a bookseller or library was not an option, then books would have been copied and passed around among educated readers, which must have been a common way to obtain books unavailable locally, or to expand a private library at minimal cost, and it would have been in this context that personal copies were produced. Wise also looked specifically at personal copies in the Dead Sea Scrolls as distinct from manuscripts that would have circulated in the regular book trade, signalling out literary works on papyrus, especially if written in a cursive or semicursive script, and especially also opisthographs. Wise concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls had a far wider circulation than exclusively within the confines of a small and insular group and that some of the manuscripts were probably authored or copied in rural villages.

Starr’s proposal has by and large met with broad consensus, but there are some aspects in which other scholars have taken a different stance. Johnson was “inclined to agree that much book circulation in antiquity was informed by ‘a series of widening concentric circles determined primarily by friendship,’” but the important question he put emphasis on was: who is doing the copying?

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59 A high-resolution image can be found on www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/.


63 Thus, Iddeng, “Publica aut peri,” followed, on the one hand, the argumentation of Starr’s article but, on the other hand, and just like Johnson, also went in a different direction with regard to the aspect of recitation and releasing. First, with regard to recitation, Iddeng argued that “the recitatio institution was developed along with an expanding book culture and an increasing demand for written texts” (61, see also 60). He is not convinced that these recitations were attended only by friends with a special invitation (61) and rather compares them to present-day art vernissages (62). Second, with regard to releasing and large-scale distribution, Iddeng agrees with Starr for the Republican period but suggests that in the Imperial period, around the turn of the first century, we can detect, alongside private copying and exchange, a more large-scale system of book releasing, consisting of low-status craftsmen and traders editing and reproducing books for a commercial market (68–69).

64 William A. Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 158.
Johnson suggested that examples like that of Cicero and Atticus are rather the exception than the rule, and that we should not presuppose that “most culturally inclined Greeks and Romans as a matter of course had on staff someone trained to make copies consistent with the rather exacting standards” for manuscript production, which he had detailed in his study. Johnson saw a much closer affinity between booksellers and copyists or scribes, as implied by the Latin term librarius.65

With regard to book circulation, Johnson understood the source of the master copy as essential and he distinguished conceptually between “circulation stemming from the author and his friends, and circulation stemming from ‘public’ sources such as a librarius or a public library.”66 But the production of a book may well have involved a librarius regardless of the source of the master copy. Indeed, “The financial feasibility of a ‘book trade’ in fact makes much more sense if we try to re-imagine a librarius not as a ‘bookseller’ but as a scribe or scribal shop that performs multiple functions.”67 With regard to book production, Johnson argued, the opposition was not between individual and trade or between private and public but rather between private and professional.

A better distinction still is that between trained and untrained copyists in relation to the level of attainment they have achieved. Most of the bookrolls that Johnson studied from Oxyrhynchus for his research show a remarkable uniformity and slight individual variation and stylistic changes over time, with only a few significantly aberrant examples. Thus, one of the most salient features of the bookrolls from Oxyrhynchus is this very professionalism and especially its sheer dominance and near uniformity. In other words, the copyist or scribe takes centre stage.68

Therefore, with a focus on the central role of scribes, I will look anew at the manuscript evidence for Isaiah and the Serekh, not with an eye to what they show us about textual transmission or compositional history, but with a focus on the variance in script styles, quality of writing, and level of writing skills. These allow us to better understand what kind of manuscript a specific specimen may have represented in terms of, for example, a professional or untrained copy, a trade or private copy. A copy of a text made by an author for circulation in a close circle of friends would presumably have looked different from an everyday professional or display copy made by a scribe on order for a client.

65 Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 159.
66 Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 159.
67 Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 159.
68 Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 160.
4 Variance in Script Styles, Quality of Writing, and Level of Writing Skills in Isaiah and Serekh Manuscripts

As noted earlier, absent in scrolls studies when considering manuscripts as evidence for variant editions, or the like, is the simple but crucial question “For whom a specific manuscript was copied?” This is a crucial question because it challenges us to consider whether a specific manuscript was produced for broader use or circulation beyond the particular context of the scribe copying it. Script styles, quality of writing, and level of writing skills should be studied because these can provide further indications of the social context of copying and thus also for whom a manuscript was copied.69

When asking for whom a manuscript was copied, we should consider making certain distinctions. Such distinctions may be between, for example, large scrolls, deluxe scrolls, and smaller scrolls, finely written scrolls and crudely written ones. Another important distinction is that between carefully produced scrolls and those produced with less care. For example, Emanuel Tov reserved the category of “deluxe” editions, in scrolls from 50 BCE onwards, for manuscript having large top and bottom margins, having large or very large writing blocks, reflecting the medieval text of MT, and showing a limited amount of scribal intervention.70 While Tov briefly mentioned fine calligraphy, the feature of script was not put into operation and the four aforementioned features were taken as the indicative criteria for the category of “deluxe” editions. This is also how scholars in the field have usually adopted Tov’s deluxe category, with a perspective limited to the codicological dimensions but foregoing analysis of the quality of the handwriting. This is strikingly different from Greco-Roman manuscript cultures, as evidenced by the slightly later Oxyrhynchus papyri for which, Johnson argued, the typical “deluxe” manuscript often did not show characteristics different from those of an everyday production, except for the fine execution of the script.71 Thus, attention to the quality and level of writing,

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71 Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 156. Cf. also 4: “Analysis of finely written rolls overturns the prejudicial assumption (taken from codex culture, but firmly implanted in the papyrological literature) that a tall roll or column was considered more elegant than a short roll or column.”
the calligraphy, can call into question assessments of specific Dead Sea Scrolls manuscripts to have been deluxe copies.\textsuperscript{72}

Regarding variance in script styles evident in the scrolls, one should be aware that in general the distinctions made between formal, semiformal, and semicursive are often arbitrary, applying “at best to origin or destiny of a tradition.”\textsuperscript{73} Frank Moore Cross was not able to provide exemplary specimens for each style across the continuum of the chronological range covered by the scrolls.\textsuperscript{74} Furthermore, often manuscripts exhibit a mixture of these presumed styles, for example, mixing in some letters that are deemed semicursive in what are otherwise deemed semiformal written manuscripts. This calls further into question some of the distinctions made. These caveats should be borne in mind when I use script styles to characterise Serekh and Isaiah manuscripts for heuristic purposes.

Whereas scholars have commented before on the script styles used in specific manuscripts, mostly for purposes of dating and labelling, not much attention has been devoted to the level of writing skills demonstrated by the manuscripts. Notable exceptions have been Józef Milik, John Strugnell, Ada Yardeni, Émile Puech, Philip Alexander, and Michael Wise, but mostly these have been aside remarks, not sustained analyses.\textsuperscript{75} Wise has discussed the use

\textsuperscript{72} See, e.g., Charlotte Hempel, “Reflections of Literacy, Textuality, and Community in the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls,” in \textit{Is There a Text in This Cave? Studies in the Textuality of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of George J. Brooke}, ed. Ariel Feldman, Maria Cioată, and Charlotte Hempel, STDJ 119 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 78–79, regarding 1QSa–1QSh (see section 3.2) below for the handwriting of 1Q8, which is not finely executed or calligraphic; Laura Quick, “Scribal Habits and Scholarly Texts: Codicology at Oxyrhynchus and Qumran,” in \textit{Material Aspects of Reading in Ancient and Medieval Cultures: Materiality, Presence and Performance}, ed. Anna Krauß, Jonas Leipziger, and Friederike Schücking-Jungblut, Materialtextkulturen 26 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 37–54, regarding 4Q242 and 4Q550, but the handwriting of 4Q242 is not calligraphic, and the letter and inking variance in 4Q550 is not the hallmark of neat handwriting, nor—with an average letter size of ~3 mm—is the handwriting particularly small.

\textsuperscript{73} Cross, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” 144 (1961), 12 (2003); although he said this explicitly for the distinction between formal and cursive, this also applies to semiformal and semicursive.


\textsuperscript{75} E.g., Philip S. Alexander, “Literacy among Jews in Second Temple Palestine: Reflections on the Evidence from Qumran,” in \textit{Hamlet on a Hill: Semitic and Greek Studies Presented...
of semicursive and cursive script styles with respect to manuscripts deemed personal copies. Falk also gave some attention to varying writing skills of multiple copies of the same composition, using qualifications such as commonplace, rustic, and elegant, although some of his assessments can be disputed.

Recently, Drew Longacre has argued that the notion of formality in handwriting can be understood as an overall impression of the level of handwriting based on the type of model script chosen to reproduce (morphology), the skill and care with which it was written (execution), and the purpose for which the manuscript was created (function). For script styles in Dead Sea Psalm Scrolls, Longacre suggested different usage registers in relation to a manuscript's form and function. Tigchelaar especially has raised the issue of judging calligraphy and levels of skilled writing and care among Dead Sea Scrolls' scribes by paying attention to how the basic forms of the letters were executed, to how letters relate to each other (regularity) in size, ductus, height, and inking, and to how letters, words and lines of words are vertically and horizontally arranged (proportion and arrangement).

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Falk, "Material Aspects of Prayer Texts."

For example, regarding 1Qu which Falk, “Material Aspects of Prayer Texts,” assessed as expertly made, but looking, e.g., at the irregular letter proportioning, the range of letter variance, and the uneven beginning of the lines from the right margin, not flush, may indicate that the scribe is not so skilled or expert. Furthermore, regarding 4Q400 (Falk, “Material Aspects of Prayer Texts,”) the letter size is irregular between frg. 1 and frg. 2, there is more variance in frg. 2 in how the basic forms of the letters were executed, and there is also more inking variation especially in frg. 2. It seems possible to me that we have here two different scribes at work in 4Q400 1 and 2. See the images of frg. 1 and frg. 2 at the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library: https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-295361 and https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-295360.

Longacre, “Disambiguating the Concept of Formality.”


See, on YouTube, Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, Beautiful Bookhands and Careless Characters: An Alternative Approach to the Dead Sea Scrolls,” (paper presented as the 8th Annual Rabbi Tann Memorial Lecture, University of Birmingham, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thBAtHkwUtU; idem, “Elementary and Unskilled Hands,” (paper presented at the Groningen conference on Digital Palaeography and Hebrew/Aramaic Scribal
Tigchelaar has also been the first to systematically address the issue of writing skills in multiple copies of the same composition.\(^8^2\) However, we must not only gain insight into how one copy compares to another copy of the same composition. Taking this approach further, we would also need to compare each of the multiple copies of the same composition with multiple copies of other compositions that can be attributed to the same style and period. This will allow us to gain a better overall understanding of the level of writing skills at a certain time and place.

The aspect of chronology is important to take into account when assessing writing skills. Over the course of the few centuries that are covered by the manuscript evidence from the Judaean Desert, developments in writing took place that were caused, for example, by a greater demand for texts and thus an increased need of trained scribes,\(^8^3\) or by shared developments in the ancient Mediterranean.\(^8^4\) These developments affected not only how the writing looked but also determined the standards of skilled and careful writing so that what may seem skilled writing in one period was not so in another period.\(^8^5\) An increase in demand and in circulation of texts in ancient Judaea and thus an increased production of books must be factored in when examining the extant manuscript evidence as snapshots of developments over time. We should not assume one model to have been in operation throughout Hellenistic and early Roman Judaea.

Having said that, it is not straightforward to determine what the standards were in different periods. For ancient Judaea we do not have, for example, something akin to a school-book papyrus that demonstrates what was likely to have been the standard script taught in schools,\(^8^6\) or an edict setting out...
the payment of scribes according to the quality of their writing.\textsuperscript{87} For the Oxyrhynchus papyri, admittedly from a slightly later period with regard to the development of the Greek script and book production, Johnson was able to divide the scripts into three categories: deluxe or elegant; everyday professional; and substandard.\textsuperscript{88} Most papyri fall in the first two categories. Only a minority is of substandard quality.\textsuperscript{89}

The overwhelming bulk of bookrolls ... show ... the mix of general uniformity and slight individual variation, with stylistic changes over time .... For bookrolls ... the evidence for untrained copying is slim: for most ancient readers, the professional look and feel of the bookroll was an essential aspect of its utility, since the bookroll's sociological function as a cultural icon was as important as its contents.\textsuperscript{90}

For the Herodian-period evidence, it seems easier to determine a quality standard, but this seems more difficult to do for the Hasmonaean period material. Cross singled out only 4Q30 (4QDeut\textsuperscript{c}) as typical formal Hasmonaean, also including 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a}, but he did not explain why this was so.\textsuperscript{91} Scholars have simply followed suit and assumed that especially 4Q30 represents the typical Hasmonaean formal. This unclarity regarding standards means that the comments regarding writing quality and skills, sometimes in agreement with previous assessments, sometimes in disagreement, that follow below are a first and preliminary attempt at clarifying some of the outstanding issues and challenges.

4.1 Isaiah Manuscripts

Let us turn to the evidence for variance in script styles, quality of writing, and level of writing skills in the Isaiah manuscripts from the Judaean Desert. Scholars have identified twenty-two manuscript remains as Isaiah manuscripts: 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a}, 1Q8 (1QIsa\textsuperscript{b}), 4Q55 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{a}), 4Q56 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{b}), 4Q57 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{c}), 4Q58 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{d}), 4Q59 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{e}), 4Q60 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{f}), 4Q61 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{g}), 4Q62 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{h}),

\textsuperscript{87} Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 102.
\textsuperscript{88} Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 7, 102–103, 122–23, 155–56.
\textsuperscript{90} Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 160.
4Q62a (4Qlsa¹), 4Q63 (4Qlsa²), 4Q64 (4Qlsa³), 4Q65 (4Qlsa¹), 4Q66 (4Qlsa⁴), 4Q67 (4Qlsa⁵), 4Q68 (4Qlsa³), 4Q69 (4Qpaplsa¹p), 4Q69a (4Qlsa⁴), 4Q69b (4Qlsa¹), 5Q3 (5QIsa), and Mur3 (Murlsa). All these need not be considered fragments of once full copies, as they can also include excerpts.

Regarding material aspects of the manuscript evidence, scholars have considered, for example, scribal marks and layout of the text in order to understand how a scribe may have understood the prophetic book, which by that time had a largely stable text tradition and a single main edition. Probing the data, I will present here preliminary considerations that show how attention to the quality and level of writing skills can shed fresh light on the social context of copying Isaiah manuscripts.

For heuristic purposes, I have divided, as Johnson did for the Oxyrhynchus papyri, the scripts of the Isaiah manuscripts into three categories of writing skills or quality (deluxe or elegant, everyday professional, or substandard). Furthermore, I have also correlated these script categorizations with the size of letters according to their average heights because this has not been systematically done before and also because, for the Oxyrhynchus evidence,

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92 Images of the smaller fragments of 1Q8 (1Qlsaᵇ) and all the fragments of the Cave 4 Isaiah manuscripts are available online on the website of the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library: www.deadseascrolls.org.il/. Images of 1Qlsa⁴ are available online on the website of the Shrine of the Book (Israel Museum): dss.collections.imj.org.il/shrine. Images of all the fragments of 1Q8 (1Qlsaᵇ), including the larger fragments, can be seen in Ulrich and Flint, DJD 32/1, plates LV–LXXIV. The two fragments of 5Q3 can be seen in Maurice Baillie, Józef T. Milik, and Roland de Vaux, with a contribution from H. Wright Baker, Les ‘petites grottes’ de Qumrân, DJD 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), plate XXXVI.

93 Brooke, “Isaiah in the Qumran Scrolls,” 435.

94 Of course, the distinctions from the Greek manuscript evidence cannot be easily transferred to the Hebrew and Aramaic script evidence in the scrolls. Johnson, Bookrolls and Scribes, 102, divided his sample set of elegant, everyday professional, and substandard as follows: the first class of script contains formal, semiformal, or pretentious; the second contains informal and unexceptional (but for the most part probably professional); the third class contains substandard or cursive. Since for the scrolls the stylistic categories of formal, semiformal, and semicursive are often arbitrary (see above) and we have no literary manuscripts in cursive, there is no straightforward analogy to be made with Johnson’s underlying categorizations for Greek bookrolls.

95 Cf. the observations regarding letter size to distinguish between individual scribes in Tov, Scribal Practices and Approaches, 17. For Dead Sea Psalm manuscripts, see Mika S. Pajunen, “Reading Psalm and Prayer Manuscripts from Qumran,” in Material Aspects of Reading in Ancient and Medieval Cultures: Materiality, Presence and Medieval Performance, ed. Anna Krauß, Jonas Leipziger, and Friederike Schücking-Jungblut, Materiale Textkulturen 26 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 55–70.
Johnson argued for the majority of very large scripts to be elegant.96 I readily issue two caveats regarding my procedure. First, unlike the Oxyrhynchus evidence, we cannot be sure that the Isaiah manuscript evidence are all originally from bookrolls.97 While for a bookroll one may expect certain quality standards of writing, this may not apply to other types of text such as excerpts or writing exercises. Second, my qualifications as to a script being elegant, everyday professional, or substandard are inherently subjective because there is no state of the art for this in our field yet.98 By explicating some of the reasons why I put one manuscript in one category and not in the other, I aim to generate further discussion as to its appropriateness and thus to a certain degree of intersubjectivity of assessing such scripts.99 The differentiation based on these correlations is not meant as an absolute classification. It is meant, nevertheless, to contribute heuristically what we can learn by ordering according to writing quality and script size, and therefore to contribute also what we can

96 Cf. chart 3.9a in Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes*, 155. The average letter sizes or heights for the Cave 4 Isaiah manuscripts are not provided in DJD 15, except for a remark once or twice that letter size varies noticeably, but I was able to easily measure them, as well as for 1Q8 (1QIsa b) and Mur3, using the scale bar in the images on the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library. For 1QIsa a, I based myself on the images in DJD 32/1, see Ulrich and Flint, DJD 32/2:21. The small fragments of 4Q69a (4QIsa b), 4Q69b (4QIsa a), and 5Q3 (5QIsa a) are only available on PAM images, but I was not able to easily measure their average letter sizes. My letter size measurements are averages based on letters such as aleph, bet, gimel, he, khet, kaph, mem, pe, resh, shin, and I acknowledge that some letters may be smaller or larger, not least because of their basic morphology, such as yod or lamed. Nonetheless, the estimations give a fair illustration of the general trend of average letter size by height in a manuscript, and the distinctions are not meant as an absolute classification.

97 Cf., e.g., Eugene Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4.x: The Prophets*, DJD 15 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 139, regarding 4Q69 (4QpapIsa): “Because of the small amount preserved, one cannot be certain that this was a manuscript of the complete biblical Book of Isaiah.” This may also apply to other Isaiah manuscripts that are only preserved in one or more smaller fragments.

98 Tigchelaar, “Beautiful Bookhands and Careless Characters,” see at 55:35 minutes, suggested to distinguish between skilled (often on larger scrolls, entire works, probably copied for the use by others) and unskilled (often on smaller scrolls, perhaps only sections of texts, for private use, and in the process of learning by copying).

99 This attempt to distinguish between manuscripts according to quality of writing and the level of writing skills demonstrated by them, whether that is according to skilled or unskilled or elegant, everyday professional, or substandard distinctions, or a combination thereof or otherwise invites further research questions such as: Is a skilled copied manuscript the same as a carefully copied one? Is an unskilled copied manuscript different from an uncarefully copied one, or can a very skilled scribe have uncarefully copied a manuscript, and if so, how can we recognize that and differentiate between those? How exactly do we differentiate between trained and professional scribes, assuming they are not exactly the same thing; and Is an untrained scribe the same as a scribe in training?
reveal about a manuscript’s purpose or character, together with other scribal and content features.

Bearing the above considerations in mind, the data for the Isaiah manuscripts is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Script Size</th>
<th>Elegant</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Substandard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~2–2.5 mm</td>
<td>4Q57?</td>
<td>1Q8, 4Q55, 4Q56, 4Q58</td>
<td>4Q64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~2.5–3 mm</td>
<td>4Q69?</td>
<td>1QIsa¹, 4Q59, 4Q60, 4Q61, Mur3</td>
<td>4Q63, 4Q65, 4Q66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~3–3.5 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4Q67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~3.5–4 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4Q62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~4–4.5 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4Q68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~4.5–5 mm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4Q65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let us zoom in on the manuscripts and categorizations. First of all, regarding script size, the Isaiah scrolls do not demonstrate a correlation between elegant scripts and very large letter size such as is demonstrated by the Oxyrhynchus evidence. The script of most of the everyday professional copies falls within the range of 2–3 mm, which may be an indicator for what was deemed a regular size for bookrolls of the entire book of Isaiah, since 1QIsa¹, 1Q8 (1QIsa²), 4Q56 (4QIsa³), and 4Q57 (4QIsa⁴) fall within this range.¹⁰⁰

4.1.1 Elegant and Everyday Professional Isaiah Copies
It is difficult to classify manuscripts in the highest quality category of elegant script. Only two seem to qualify. Regarding 4Q57 (4QIsa⁴), the quality of its formal Herodian script can be regarded as elegant and that of a skilled scribe. But the interlinear spacing is inconsistent, varying from 4.5–8 mm.¹⁰¹ The tetramgrammaton is written in palaeo-Hebrew, including prefixes and suffixes, as are also אדונ, תצבאו, and אלהים, though they also appear in Aramaic or square characters. There are a number of corrections and insertions.¹⁰² The manuscript is estimated to have had 40 lines per column and the original scroll would have

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¹⁰⁰ All manuscript evidence should be examined on script size so as to quantify and qualify categorizations such as petite, small, normal, regular, large, etc. This is not available at the moment and there are different estimations in the field about what constitutes, for example, normal-sized script; cf., e.g., Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:66; Tov, Scribal Practices and Approaches, 17.

¹⁰¹ Ulrich, DJD 15:45.

¹⁰² Ulrich, DJD 15:49.
contained the entire prophetic book.\textsuperscript{103} Tov listed this manuscript as a possible deluxe edition.\textsuperscript{104} While the script is finely executed, the inconsistency in interlinear spacing casts doubt on this manuscript being a deluxe edition.

Regarding 4Q69 (4QpapIsa\textsuperscript{p}), the quality of its writing is clearly professional, maybe even elegant writing. From what little material is left, the impression is that of a skilled scribe whose handwriting shows fine and regular lettering and who can keep straight horizontal lines. This is the only Isaiah manuscript extant on papyrus, but too little material is left to be even sure whether the original manuscript may have been more than an excerpt. So, it is doubtful whether the two small fragments of 4Q69 were once an elegant bookroll of the entire book of Isaiah. The script size of 4Q69 is also larger than that of 4Q57, but perhaps the difference in writing material (leather, papyrus) between the two specimens may account for that.

It is sometimes hard to decide on whether certain manuscripts could still be regarded as professional or should rather be qualified as substandard. Consider, for example, 4Q56 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{b}). Tov listed this manuscript as a possible deluxe edition.\textsuperscript{105} It is estimated to have had 45 lines per column and would have contained the entire prophetic book.\textsuperscript{106} The script style can be categorized as formal early Herodian. While the manuscript may have been meticulously ruled,\textsuperscript{107} the scribe, for one reason or another, was often not able to write his letters horizontally straight, or keep the interlinear space consistent, showing irregularity in this regard, although his writing seems more consistent in some fragments than in others. There is also irregularity in inking in a number of the fragments. The scribe’s ability to write the basic letter forms is clear, though certainly not elegant. There is also rather much variance in writing individual letters (see, e.g., aleph and shin in frg. 26). The spacing of individual letters within words often gives the impression that his flow of writing was somehow less skilled. These aspects of irregularity, inconsistency, and spacing raise doubts about whether 4Q56 should be considered as a professional copy, let alone a deluxe edition. On the other hand, classifying it as a substandard copy would seem unwarranted since the scribe evidently had attained a certain level of training. We might, therefore, qualify this scribe as one with intermediate skills. Also, we should reckon with a certain bandwidth or range of attained skills within a category. Thus, perhaps a manuscript such as 4Q56 should be

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[103] Ulrich, DJD 15:45.
\item[104] Tov, Scribal Practices and Approaches, 129.
\item[105] Tov, Scribal Practices and Approaches, 129.
\item[107] Ulrich, DJD 15:19.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
regarded as one at the lower end of the professional spectrum. Tigchelaar has suggested that some of the manuscript evidence of the scrolls, especially small scrolls with short sections of biblical books, can be regarded to have been writing exercises.\textsuperscript{108} But the explanation for 4Q56 to have been a writing exercise is unsatisfactory, since the manuscript would not have contained one section or a few sections but probably the entire prophetic book.

If we consider two other manuscript remains that originally would have contained the entire book of Isaiah and come from the same Herodian period, broadly speaking, then the idea of a certain bandwidth of attained skills within a category makes sense. (For 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a}, see below.) Comparing 4Q56 with 1Q8 and 4Q57 shows that 4Q57, also probably at the later range of the period, stands out because of the fine execution of the script, which may be regarded as elegant.\textsuperscript{109} The comparison also illustrates that the script in 1Q8 is more consistent and regular than in 4Q56 so that 1Q8 can be regarded a copy of better quality than 4Q56.\textsuperscript{110}

This range in writing quality is also demonstrated by the other manuscripts that I have categorized as professional. 4Q55 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{e}) contains material from various chapters of the first part of Isaiah up until Isa 23:12 and perhaps also Isa 33:6–17. The remaining fragments show a consistent and skilled execution of the letter forms in a formal script. Although there is variance in interlinear spacing, the lines are horizontally straight, demonstrating this to be a professional copy, possibly from the higher end of the spectrum.

4Q61 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{f}), preserving text from Isa 42:14–25 and Isa 43:1–4, 16–24, likewise demonstrates a nicely executed script with care, regularity, and consistency from the higher end of the professional spectrum.

The same may apply to the professionally and carefully copied 4Q58 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{d}), preserving various parts of the text from Isa 45:20 until 58:7, as well as to the nicely copied 4Q60 (4QIsa\textsuperscript{f}), preserving various parts of the text from Isa 110 until possibly Isa 28:22 or 29:8, although some fragments show more consistent interlinear spacing than others (cf. frg. 12 and frg. 17).


\textsuperscript{109} Ulrich, “Identification of a Scribe Active at Qumran,” suggested that the scribe of 4Q57 also copied 1Q1 (1QPs\textsuperscript{b}) and 11Q14 (Sefer ha-Milhamah). However, contrary to what Ulrich claimed, the size of the script of 4Q57 (~3 mm) and 11Q14 (~4 mm) is not the same, but the identification of this scribe is not under discussion here.

\textsuperscript{110} Cf. DJD 32/2:199, comparing 1Q8 with 4Q51 (4QSam\textsuperscript{a}) and 1QM, but less stylish and graceful than the latter. Tov, Scribal Practices and Approaches, 129, lists 1Q8 as a possible deluxe edition based on the number of lines per column being 35. See, however, DJD 32/2:199, for the average being 51 lines per column.
4Q59 (4Qlsa³), however, may not be from the higher end of the professional spectrum but be the work of a fairly skilled scribe, as the remaining material, preserving part of the text from Isa 2:1 until 14:24, shows evidence of uneven lettering, inconsistent vertical lining, and sometimes little space between words.

Finally, 4Q62a (4Qlsa¹), preserving only part of Isa 56:7–57:8, is to my mind a wonderful example of a very experienced, skilled scribe who, however, did not apply himself here fully by demonstrating an elegant script. The fragments rather give the impression of a skilled but quickly written text (cf. variance in letters, see, e.g., ayin, mem and he in the two fragments). The writing skill may be that of a professional scribe, yet the copy seems originally not to have been a professional bookroll but rather an excerpt, possibly also indicated by the rather large size of the script (~3.5–4 mm). On the other hand, the clear evidence for stitching in frg. 2 (the thread of the stitching and some of the leather of the previous sheet are preserved) may indicate this either to have originally been a bookroll, with the full text of Isaiah or only the second half, or to have been a series of excerpts from Isaiah or also other texts.

4.1.2 Substandard Isaiah Copies

Some of the substandard specimens are relatively easy to qualify, yet at the same time these examples are more difficult to assess as to what kind of copies they originally may have represented. Regarding 4Q64 (4Qlsa¹), the five small fragments of a single column preserve text from Isa 28:26–29:9. The script can be qualified as rather crude writing: the letters are unevenly arranged, the lining is not regular, and there is much variability in letter execution. This does not give the impression of a skilled scribe, let alone a carefully copied bookroll. The remains may attest to textual variance and the editors wondered whether these fragments “hold clues either for a sound text or at least as a further witness to one form of the text as it circulated in the first century BCE.” Instead of treating these remains as signifying what was once an Isaiah bookroll, 4Q64 should instead be treated as a substandard specimen copied by an unskilled or inexperienced scribe. I am not sure 4Q64 illustrates a copy by a scribe in training, one who is still developing his writing skills. But, then again, how are we to distinguish between a copy made by a scribe who has had a basic training but did not turn into a professional scribe (and so remained a trained

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111 It is not certain that frg. 25 (Isa 59:15–16) belongs together with the other fragments, Ulrich, DJD 15:97.
112 Ulrich, DJD 15:125.
but inexperienced scribe developing his own particular way of writing) from a copy made by a scribe who is still learning to write?

Regarding another unskilled, substandard specimen, 4Q68 (4QIsa\(^a\)) shows a somewhat consistent and regular execution of individual letters (using final \textit{mem} in all positions), with cursive tendencies, but the interlinear spacing and especially the inter-word spacing and arrangement of letters, giving the impression of careful but slow letter-by-letter writing, indicate a scribe that was not very skilled. One might perhaps think of a training exercise, but I am not sure because of the possible evidence for stitching between skins, assuming that training exercises were not made on multiple sheets. Another possibility is that of a collection of excerpts, not meant for trade but for private circulation. If that were the case, then 4Q68, containing part of Isa 14:28–15:2, may be evidence of copies made of parts of the book of Isaiah for private consumption, and perhaps this may also apply to 4Q64.

Evidence of a training exercise may be clearer for 4Q63 (4QIsa\(^b\)). The fragment is tiny, but what little that remains shows irregular inking, letter variance, and irregular interlinear spacing, giving the impression of an unskilled, substandard execution. Given that this fragment contains the beginning of Isaiah, and also given its script size being slightly larger than what was perhaps the regular size, perhaps 4Q63 represents a training exercise by a scribe developing his writing skills.

We should also consider a range of writing quality and skills for the substandard category, not least in correlation with the possible type of text they originally represented. 4Q65 (4QIsa\(^b\)) shows a skilled scribe in individual letter execution, but also demonstrates irregular letter variance (consider, e.g., \textit{he}) and irregular horizontal lining.

Yet, the scribe of 4Q65 seems to demonstrate a better grip of his pen than the scribe of 4Q66 (4QIsa\(^m\)). The irregularity in letter variance, arrangement of letters, and horizontal lining in 4Q66 shows a somewhat adequate but not very skilled scribe. Whereas the scribe of 4Q66 clearly demonstrates a substandard specimen, perhaps the scribe of 4Q65 may have been in the higher end of the substandard or even in the lower end of the professional category.

As another substandard example, 4Q62 (4QIsa\(^b\)) illustrates distinctive but not careful handwriting. The letter proportioning and arrangement are uneven. The script seems to show trained handwriting but not that of a professional scribe. 4Q62 gives the impression of a particular manner of writing, considering, for example, the positioning and execution of the \textit{lamed}.

My final example of a substandard specimen is 4Q67 (4QIsa\(^a\)). With an average of 4.5–5 mm, its letter size is the largest to be encountered in the extant Isaiah manuscripts. Although in some instances, the ductus of letter strokes
seems that of a skilled scribe, the variance in inking, letter size and execution, and the little amount of space left between words and between lines demonstrates this to be a substandard copy, containing Isa 5:13–14.

Like 4Q64 and 4Q68, 4Q66 (containing Isa 5:3–6), 113 4Q62 (containing Isa 42:4–11), and 4Q67 may be considered to have been excerpts by non-professional scribes. 4Q65 preserves two columns, containing text from Isa 7:14–15 and 8:11–14, and may originally have been a series of excerpts or perhaps a copy of a larger part of the book by a non-professional scribe. If all of these five manuscripts originally were excerpts, the considerable variation in letter size between them is perhaps a further indicator for the non-professional character of their scribes.

4.1.3 Implications of Writing Quality and Skills for the Question for Whom Isaiah Manuscripts Were Copied

Based on the above, a preliminary consideration of the quality of writing and the level of writing skills in Isaiah manuscripts makes it possible to differentiate between the evidence and to assess it in new ways. This differentiation demonstrates a diversity and pluriformity in the production of Isaiah manuscripts so that we should no longer treat all manuscript evidence as representing editions of the biblical book of Isaiah.

Also, this differentiation can improve our understanding of the social context of the production of these Isaiah manuscripts. In general, those fragments that demonstrate a lower level of writing quality and skills seem to be best regarded not as editions or bookrolls of the book of Isaiah, but rather as excerpts or some even as training exercises. In answering the question for whom such manuscripts were produced, the most obvious answer seems to be that it was for the individual himself who had copied it. However, we cannot exclude that some of these were copied for the benefit of others. Thus, a copy such as 4Q65 may have been copied on order for someone other than the scribe who made it. In any case, we should not simply equate our modern assessment of low-quality writing or level of writing skills with individual or private use of the original copies.

The manuscripts of everyday professional and elegant quality, in general, originally covered the whole book or the first or second half of the book. 114

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113 I am not sure that fragments 1–3 and 4–5 belong to the same manuscript as argued for in Ulrich, DJD 15:231, as the handwriting seems that of a different scribe, so I leave fragments 1–3 out of consideration here.

114 On the bisection of Isaiah manuscripts, see, e.g., Brooke, “Isaiah in the Qumran Scrolls,” 432, 438–41.
although 4Q62a may be an exception. For whom were these manuscripts copied? I have not yet included Mur3 (MurIsa) in the discussion because so little material is left. Yet, the following considerations raised by this manuscript help to differentiate between different aspects that help to think about for whom the Isaiah manuscripts from Qumran of everyday professional and elegant quality were copied. These aspects relate to how we think of book market contexts in terms of quality in relation to supply and demand as well as to how we understand the circumstances of trade and private.

Given the very wide right margin that has been preserved it seems reasonable to assume that Mur3 was the beginning of a scroll containing the entire book of Isaiah. Mur3 shows fairly straight horizontal lining, very little to no space between words, and Milik noted the badly formed tet in line 5. The writing is skilled but does not give the impression of the best professional scribe; the letter spacing within words is irregular resulting in spaces within words. Based on the quality of writing this manuscript would not come to mind as a deluxe edition, although that is exactly what has been suggested on the basis of other criteria than the quality of its handwriting. Mur3 was found not at Qumran but at Murabba‘at. I have argued previously that copies such as Mur3 were owned by individual families from local elite background. However, I would now qualify at least one of my earlier considerations. I do not think that most literary copies found at sites in the Judaean Desert other than Qumran were deluxe editions. Mur3 is a case in point to consider such qualifications anew. This also applies to most of the other Isaiah manuscripts that have previously been regarded as deluxe editions but erroneously so in light of their writing quality, as demonstrated above.

But if Mur3 is a candidate for a book produced on order for an educated Judaean from the local elite stratum, and therefore an example of book trade and market in ancient Judaea, then this indicates that different categories of

116 Tov, Scribal Practices and Approaches, 126, classified Mur3 as a deluxe edition, only according to the bottom margin, and then again (129) as a possible deluxe edition, on the basis of bottom margin as well as the number of lines per column. For the number of lines per column, see Milik, DJD 279.
production quality were part of that market, and not only the highest one of elegant, deluxe copies. Such a differentiation of the book products on offer in terms of production quality adds to previous references to book trade and market (Wise, Falk; see above) by allowing for further distinctions and nuances. We do not know much of what book market circumstances looked like in ancient Judaea. Perhaps we should allow for various standards in different parts of the region. Thus, quality standards for bookroll or excerpt production were perhaps higher in some areas, such as cities, and lower in others, such as rural areas, but this may be a biased assumption. Another possibility is that the quality was determined by various other factors, or a combination thereof, such as the availability of trained scribes or the amount of money people were able to spend.

In any case, the considerations raised here about lower and higher quality text production stimulate us to further qualify what we mean by book production and circulation in terms of market, trade, private, professional, and untrained. Here, the distinction between book production and book circulation, which Johnson emphasized (see above), is important to keep in mind. In terms of book production, we need to distinguish between private and professional or, even better, between trained and untrained copyists. Regarding book circulation, the source of the master copy is essential, differentiating between circulation originating from an author and his friends and circulation originating from sources other than the author such as a public library or a scribe or a scribal shop that performed multiple functions.

In this regard, the Isaiah manuscripts that I have studied here are especially interesting because the extant copies certainly do not originate from the author. Should we then assume that the Isaiah manuscripts from Qumran of everyday professional and elegant quality were copied for the general book trade? Perhaps some were, such as Mur3, but for a manuscript of low handwriting quality like 4Q56 this does not make sense. It makes better sense to understand 4Q56 and Mur3 as different products in different settings. Therefore, in addition to a scribe or scribal shop producing copies on order within the

118 Chris Keith, “Urbanization and Literate Status in Early Christian Rome: Hermas and Justin Martyr as Examples,” in The Urban World and the First Christians, ed. Steve Walton, Paul R. Trebilco, and David W. J. Gill (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 187–204. Discussed a similar phenomenon for second-century CE Rome. He argued that though literacy rates and literacy acquisition were also, statistically, tied to whether an individual was in a rural or urban area that does not mean we can use rural or urban environments as predictors or as decisive evidence because there were exceptions all over the place. Stated otherwise, urban and rural contexts were a factor, but not the only factor. Keith argued that social class was the more determinative factor in the acquisition of a literate education.
context of a general book trade, we should allow for the possibility that some were produced in a more private setting.\textsuperscript{119}

Here, private need not be restricted to a sense of individual or personal, but could also encompass a broader sense that includes a group of people, whether friends, acquaintances or otherwise like-minded people.\textsuperscript{120} Such a broader sense of private book production and circulation can be connected with various scholarly models of the presumed community behind the scrolls because these models are determined by the communal aspect that defines them.

This sense of a private, communal environment enables differentiating between manuscripts copied within such a context from manuscripts copied within a commercial book market environment. Regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls, this does not mean that every professional or elegant manuscript that was not copied in a commercial market context must automatically be regarded as one copied within the presumed community behind the scrolls.

The specific identification of a manuscript written within this or that context is not straightforward. The writing quality can be an important criterion, such as the low quality of 4Q56, to argue persuasively against a commercial market context. But writing quality is not the only or decisive factor in each and every case. Other factors need also to be considered. For example, was 4Q57 copied for the general market? One might argue that it was not because of the writing of the divine names in palaeo-Hebrew characters, though not consistently so. Yet, one might question whether a special link between the writing of the divine names in palaeo-Hebrew characters and the Qumran community has been proven.\textsuperscript{121} If apart from writing quality there are no other clear factors, such as for 1Q8, 4Q55, 4Q58, or 4Q61, how then to decide between communal or commercial market context? This is not possible in each and every case.

\textsuperscript{119} Starr, “The Circulation of Literary Texts,” 216, argued, “Private circulation was not restricted to new works. Non-current works, ranging from the very old to the relatively recent, also circulated privately, without the substantial intervention of any commercial system of distribution. The channels of circulation ran from one friend to another, never between strangers.” Johnson, \textit{Bookrolls and Scribes}, 158 n. 81, observed that this does not adequately account for the fact that texts from the classical canon (and not ‘new’ texts) form the bulk of the literary texts recovered in Egypt, implying that also professional scribes produced such classical copies on order. If for ancient Judaea we consider “biblical” texts to have been classical texts, I suggest that there too both options may have been in operation.

\textsuperscript{120} On public and private contexts with regard to ancient reading practices, see Chris Keith, \textit{The Gospel as Manuscript: An Early History of the Jesus Tradition as Material Artifact} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 171–73.

\textsuperscript{121} For a convenient overview, see Tov, \textit{Scribal Practices and Approaches}, 238–46.
The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa\textsuperscript{a}) as a Communal, Scholarly Copy

The one copy of Isaiah that I have not yet discussed, 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a}, illustrates what a broader sense of private or, rather, communal book production and circulation, including trained and untrained scribes, may have looked like, covering also a longer period of time. The Great Isaiah Scroll, or 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a}, from Qumran Cave 1 preserves a complete copy, with an average scroll height of \(\sim 26.2\) cm and length of 7.34 m.\textsuperscript{122} It is also the oldest known manuscript of the book. The general style of writing is formal.\textsuperscript{123} In a recent publication, Maruf Dhali, Lambert Schomaker, and I have demonstrated that two scribes originally produced the two halves of this complete bookroll, one copying columns 1–27 and the other copying columns 28–54. We suggested that the mimetic ability of one scribe to mirror another scribe's handwriting testifies to their professionalism, although our tests also showed that the range of variance increases with the second scribe, which is indicative of more variable writing patterns with this scribe.\textsuperscript{124} Although the script of both scribes is clearly professional and the horizontal lining is quite consistent, other features such as the variance in column widths, the variance in inking, the prominent scribal marks,\textsuperscript{125} and the many corrections and insertions argue against classifying this copy as an elegant edition but rather as an everyday professional copy. However, 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a} is not just any everyday professional copy, but, I suggest, a scholarly copy. This is indicated by the many scribal marks throughout the copy and by the various other scribes that added their handwriting to the copy.

Here, I focus on the intervention of those subsequent scribes. Although scholars may not agree on all the specifics of what text exactly should count as an insertion or to whom or to what period such text should be attributed, it


\textsuperscript{123} Cross qualified 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a} as a characteristic, Hasmonaean formal hand, together with 4Q30, also an example of a typical Hasmonaean script, see Cross, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” 138, 167 (1961), 9, 27 (2003); idem, “Introduction,” in \textit{Scrolls from Qumrân Cave I: The Great Isaiah Scroll, the Order of the Community, the Pesher to Habakkuk}, ed. John C. Trever, Frank Moore Cross, David Noel Freedman, and James A. Sanders (Jerusalem: The Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and the Shrine of the Book, 1972), 3; see also Ulrich and Flint, DJD 32/2:61.


\textsuperscript{125} See Ulrich and Flint, DJD 32/2:86–88.
is generally agreed that not long after the original production of 1QIsa\(^a\) other scribes worked on the bookroll, scribes from decades to perhaps as much as a century later. John Trever was the first to suggest, already in 1948 and 1949, that insertions were made, not only by the original scribe (assuming there was only one), such as in 1QIsa\(^a\) 30:10–12 (in two and a half lines left blank), crossing over to the next sheet and continuing vertically in the intercolumn space, but also by other scribes from the Hasmonaean and later Herodian period: 1QIsa\(^a\) 28:18–19 (in two lines in a line left blank by the original scribe); 32:14 and vertical margin; 33:4–16 (in two and a half lines left blank by the original scribe); the supralinear insertion of שלוחני in 49:26 from the Hasmonaean period. Trever was also the first to suggest the scribe of another scroll from Qumran Cave 1, 1QS, as one of the scribes who after the production of the scroll had made an insertion in the copy, specifically in column 33, starting in the interlinear space above line 7 and continuing vertically along the edge of the sheet. Trever argued for this identity on the basis of what he saw as almost identical forms of aleph, bet, dalet, he, kaph (medial), lamed, mem, ayin, and tsade.\(^{126}\) Cross distinguished between late Hasmonaean and early Herodian scribal insertions and also suggested, although without further clarification, identifying more insertions as having been made by the scribe of 1QS in his Hasmonaean semiformal script: 1QS scribe (28:25[?], 33:7, 54:15, 16 [one letter, tav]), a late Hasmonaean hand, ca. 50–25 BCE (32:14 and left margin; 33:4–16, 19), and an early Herodian hand, ca. 30–1 BCE (28:19f.).\(^{127}\) In the official DJD edition of 1QIsa\(^a\), Ulrich and Peter Flint distinguished between the insertions as follows:\(^{128}\)

Original scribe, ca. 125–100 BCE:

- Heavy overwriting in the final column, and other such heavy letters throughout, such as in 40:13, 21, and 29
- Original or not original scribe: large insertion 30:10–11b and the last four words in 44:15

\(^{126}\) John C. Trever, “Preliminary Observations on the Jerusalem Scrolls,” \textit{BASOR} 111 (1948): 6 plate 1, 8 (especially 8 n. 16); idem, “A Paleographic Study of the Jerusalem Scrolls,” \textit{BASOR} 113 (1949): 6, 15–16. As an aside, Trever’s suggestion that the insertion in 1QIsa\(^a\) 32:14 was made by the scribe who copied 1QH\(^a\) has not received the same traction as his suggestion for the insertion made by the scribe of 1QS.


\(^{128}\) Ulrich and Flint, \textit{DJD} 32/2:64–65, 110, and in the section on notes on the manuscript and readings.
Similar Hasmonaean hand, but another scribe:
- Large insertion at 32:12–14 and the supralinear correction of שלחני at 49:26\(^{129}\)

A generation later, ca. 100–75 BCE, the scribe of 1QS:
- Inserted 33:7, using the series of four dots for the tetragrammaton

About a century after the original production, ca. 30–1 BCE, one or as many as three Herodian-period scribes:
- Same hand in 32:14 and 33:14–16
- The tiny script of the long insertion at 28:19a–19b and the two-word insertion at 33:19 are possibly the same hand
- Cursive tav at 10:15 shows no signs of connection with any of the other hands

What does the fact that subsequent scribes over time intervened in 1QIsa\(^a\) say about for whom the copy was made? This evidence demonstrates at least the prolonged engagement with this manuscript by multiple scribes. Furthermore, the quality of writing and perhaps also the writing skills of the scribes that intervened varies greatly as comparison of the various insertions shows. This may indicate that, different from the original scribes, who were professionals, and also different from the other professional scribes that intervened later, there were less well trained or less professional scribes that left their writing contributions on this copy.

If the original copy can be regarded as at least a good quality professional copy, would that be what one expects from a trade copy? Or should we see this as a private copy? Private, not in the sense of personal, being of one individual, but private in terms of not for trade, or, rather, private in the sense of copied for the benefit of a group of people, whether friends, acquaintances or otherwise like-minded people. If we are to regard the study of such texts as a learned and scholarly endeavour—and the presence of the many scribal marks throughout the copy may indicate just that—then perhaps a social context for 1QIsa\(^a\) not wholly dissimilar to P.Oxy. XVIII 18.2192 (see section 2 above) may apply, where learned people could ask for copies of books to be made for them. Such copies could be made on order by professional scribes, or perhaps there were scribes within the group of sufficient professional training that could see the

\(^{129}\) I disagree that these two are the same handwriting. Letters such as khet, nun, and shin in 49:26 seem too different from those in 32:12–14. The insertion in 49:26 is likewise different from the one in 33:7; see also Trever, “A Paleographic Study of the Jerusalem Scrolls,” 15.
job through. The latter option seems very well possible given that a number of the later insertions clearly show a level of writing skills that can be judged to have been that of a professional scribe. And if such a group existed for a longer period of time (cf. perhaps Herculaneum), then a prolonged scholarly engagement of study and research, also including textual additions, may be exactly what we now see in the copy of 1QIsa as it came to be over time.

In addition to scribes directly intervening in this copy, there is other evidence, I suggest, for a scribal or learned engagement with 1QIsa by at least one scribe from another scroll from Qumran Cave 1, the well-known commentary, or pesher, on Habakkuk. Bärry Hartog has argued that the quotation of Isa 13:18 in 1QpHab 6:11–12 comes from that verse, as it is also attested in 1QIsa 11:25–26, but not in the Masoretic text. Together, 1QIsa and 1QpHab can illustrate in different ways how the manuscript copies from the Dead Sea Scrolls can be studied to understand part of the learned, scholarly context in which people in ancient Judaea worked with texts.

We have to be careful when reasoning back from the archaeological deposition context to a lived context in which these copies were actively used, but the fact that both these copies were found together by the Bedouin in the first cave, presumably well-enclosed wrapped in linen and put in a jar, and possibly also together with 1QS, is suggestive of these two scrolls, that were produced in different time periods perhaps a century apart, having been used in tandem for at least some period of time, as may be indicated by some of the Herodian-period insertions in 1QIsa being more or less contemporary with the style of writing in 1QpHab. If such a scenario is correct, then for some

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period before their deposition, at the least, they were kept together and then put together in the cave.

No Scribe of 1QS in 1QIsa. Finally, I will review the insertion attributed to the scribe of 1QS in 1QIsa 33:7. (I ignore the other suggestions by Cross for insertions by the scribe of 1QS because they are too unclear.) As I will also look at the Serekh manuscripts, the suggestion that the scribe of 1QS was one of the scribes that also handled the copy of 1QIsa warrants this further attention, also because past scholarship has assumed the scribe of 1QS to have been active at the site of Qumran.

Methodologically, any palaeographic comparison between 1QS and the few inserted words in 1QIsa 33:7 will be unbalanced. Whereas particular instances of the letters in the insertion only amount to one (dalet, ayin), two (aleph, shin), or up to four (he), five (bet) or six (yod), the instances in 1QS run in the hundreds (e.g., aleph: 875; bet: 951; dalet: 577; he: 1008; yod: 662; ayin: 634; shin: 678). Also, many of the letters run vertically, cramped against the edge of the sheet. Finally, 1QS shows a range of variance in the execution of letters that could be turned into heatmaps representing the aggregated visualizations of the shape of each letter, but this cannot be done for the few instances in 1QIsa 33:7 so that it is questionable what any similarity or difference between them might indicate.

Despite these limitations that hinder palaeographic comparison, the following observations may cast doubt on the assumption that it was the scribe of 1QS who was at work in 1QIsa 33:7. A closer examination of individual letters, of the arrangement of a combination of letters, such as shin following

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133 See, e.g., Frank Moore Cross, Donald W. Parry, Richard J. Saley, and Eugene Ulrich, *Qumran Cave 4.111: 1–2 Samuel*, DJD 17 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 247. Regarding 1QIsa, Ulrich and Flint, DJD 32/2:98, mention it being a common but unproven assumption that, since 1QIsa was found at Qumran, it was copied at the site, but the early date of the copy reduces the likelihood that it was copied at Qumran; Brooke, “Isaiah in the Qumran Scrolls,” 433 states that 1QIsa was almost certainly not copied at Qumran. In both cases these authors argue so presumably because of the palaeographic date of 125–100 BCE being incongruent with the date of the Qumran settlement having been established in the first half of the first century BCE (see section 2 above).


nun,136 or bet following shin,137 or shin following bet,138 or of whole words that occur in both manuscripts, such as וב/ב,ו,139 do not demonstrate a striking similarity or them being nearly identical beyond sharing a similar style. On the contrary, the letter forms in their individual execution as well as the letter arrangement and proportioning look rather different in 1QS than in the insertion in 1QIsa133 33:7. One might assume a range of letter variance. Since creating heatmaps is not possible, however, as explained above, this must remain a general, and unproven, assumption. There is not enough evidence to make a robust analysis that can show the concrete range of variance.

Orthography is not a clear indication for identity either, or against it for that matter. The scribe that made the insertion in 1QIsa133 33:7 started with וי, as it is in the Masoretic text of Isaiah. In general, the scribe of 1QS is said to have used the fuller form of spelling.141 In 1QS, the scribe overwhelmingly used the fuller form וי (33 times), but only once וי, in 5:14 (perhaps the aleph dropped out there because of ופ following directly afterward; see also QSa 110, though damaged). One might argue that the scribe of 1QS in his insertion in 1QIsa133 33:7 simply followed a text akin to the Masoretic one. Such an argument may find support in referring to 4Q175 (4QTest) 17, if indeed this was copied by the scribe of 1QS. Here the scribe, quoting from Deut 33:9, followed the defective spelling וי. However, with biblical texts or quotations the evidence is not that clear-cut. If we assume that this scribe also copied 4Q53 (4QSam15) and if indeed frg. 5 ii line 2 would attest to the fuller form וי,142 then that may demonstrate that the scribe of 1QS had no problem using the fuller form contrary to the defective form of a biblical text known from the Masoretic tradition. To add to the confusion, whereas the scribe of the insertion in 1QIsa133 33:7 followed the defective

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136 Cf. 1QS 5:37. nun connects with shin, and also nun and shin look different from the 1QIsa133 33:7 insertion; 1QS 6:25. nun also looks different from the 1QIsa133 33:7 insertion; 1QS 7:2. 4, 8, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, nun, shin, nun seems somewhat similar but mostly not and shin is not similar.

137 Cf., e.g., 1QS 2:24. different shin, bet also small, but the arrangement of both letters is different from the 1QIsa133 33:7 insertion: in 1QS 2:24, bet does not touch baseline as shin does; 1QS 31. 4. different; 1QS 315. כמאתבות, and 1QS 316. כמאתבות, different manner of writing the letters bet and shin than in the 1QIsa133 33:7 insertion; 1QS 6:4, 8, 9, shin, different from the 1QIsa133 33:7 insertion.

138 Cf. the instances of בות in 1QS 3:9; 4:21; 9:4; 11:7, 9, 12; these are different from the 1QIsa133 33:7 insertion.

139 כות occurs also in 1QS 2:21 and 6:9. The occurrence in 1QS 2:21 is not exactly the same: all three letters are written differently. 1QS 6:9 is also not exactly the same: ayin is broader and curves more to the left, touching the final mem.

139 Cf. e.g., 1QS 214, 24, 26; 3:2, 6; 5:21 (twice), 14; 6:4; 93; 102, 16; 11:7.

141 See, e.g., Tigchelaar, “In Search of the Scribe of 1QS,” 447–450.

142 See Ulrich, DJD 17:261.
spelling with ב, a few words further down the line he departed from the usual spelling by writing נב instead of ב, which is something that the scribe of 1QS did not do, as far as the extant material shows.

In addition to palaeography and orthography, there is the occurrence of writing four dots for the tetragrammaton, which is taken as indicative for the scribe of 1QS.¹⁴³ However, this particular practice for writing the divine name also occurs in other manuscripts, mostly in copies from the Hasmonaean period.¹⁴⁴ This indicates that this manner of writing the tetragrammaton was not limited to the scribe of 1QS but was a scribal practice shared by other scribes as well, extending over a longer period. To argue that the scribe of 1QS was the only one to employ this practice in biblical manuscripts¹⁴⁵ depends on whether the insertion in 1QIsa³ 33:7 is indeed from that scribe, but the four dots alone cannot be evidence for that.

Perhaps that further comparison with more of the other manuscripts attributed to the scribe of 1QS will turn up evidence to support a positive identification with the insertion in 1QIsa³ 33:7. Thus far, however, the comparison does not provide sufficient reasons for a positive identification between the handwriting in 1QIsa³ 33:7 and in 1QS. Therefore, the idea that the scribe of 1QS intervened in the copy of 1QIsa³ should be abandoned.

### 4.2 Serekh Manuscripts

Let us turn to the evidence for variance in script styles, quality of writing, and level of writing skills in the Serekh manuscripts.¹⁴⁶ Scholars have identified twelve manuscript remains as Serekh manuscripts: 1QS, 4Q255 (4QpapS⁴), 4Q256 (4QS⁵), 4Q257 (4QpapS⁶), 4Q258 (4QS⁵), 4Q259 (4QS⁴), 4Q260 (4QS⁵), 4Q261 (4QS⁵), 4Q262 (4QS⁵), 4Q263 (4QS⁴), 4Q264 (4QS⁵), and 5QS (5QS).¹⁴⁷ Recent overviews of the Serekh manuscripts include material considerations

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¹⁴³ The possible occurrence in 35:15 I leave out of consideration here; see Ulrich and Flint, DJD 32/2:311.


¹⁴⁵ Tigchelaar, “In Search of the Scribe of 1QS,” 441–442.

¹⁴⁶ Tigchelaar, “Beautiful Bookhands and Careless Characters,” also comments on 1QS and the Cave 4 Serekh manuscripts, see at 49:45 minutes.

¹⁴⁷ 1Q29a and 1Q29 I leave out of consideration here because the first is possibly a shorter and alternative form of the Two Spirits Treatise but there is nothing else to indicate other parts of the Serekh that warrant qualifying it as a second Serekh manuscript from Cave 1, and the latter contains so little legible text that one cannot conclude whether it is part of a Serekh copy or from a different composition which relates or refers to it; see Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “These Are the Names of the Spirits of . . .: A Preliminary Edition of 4QCatalogue of Spirits (4Q230) and New Manuscript Evidence for the Two Spirits Treatise (4Q257 and 1Q29a),” *RevQ* 21 (2004): 545; Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J. C.
but they do not provide analyses of the script styles, except for general considerations of palaeographic dating, or writing skills evident in the Serekh manuscripts.¹⁴⁸

Bearing in mind the same caveats as for the Isaiah copies (see section 3.1 above), the data for the Serekh manuscripts is as follows:¹⁴⁹

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Elegant Professional

Substandard

Let us zoom in on the manuscripts and categorizations. First of all, regarding script size, the Serekh copies, like the Isaiah copies, do not demonstrate a correlation between elegant scripts and very large letter size. On the contrary, if a

¹⁴⁸ Metso, The Community Rule, 2–6; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 15–51; Nati, Textual Criticism and the Ontology of Literature, 45–59. And see also the overview of the Cave 4 materials in the official publication, Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26, 4–12, 18–21, who in discussing the particular manuscripts in some cases do make brief observations as to the quality of writing.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. also the measurements in Alexander and Vermes, DJD 6:8–19, table 4, and see also Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:8 n. 18, 22–23, reproducing some of the traced letter forms according to actual size. In some cases, my measurements differ slightly, possibly because I use smaller ranges of 0.5 mm. For 1QS, Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:18 noted 3 mm, but on p. 23 1QS looks slightly larger than 4Q263 which Alexander and Vermes, also put down as 3 mm. Unlike at the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library, the online image of 1QS at the Shrine of the Book has no scale bar. However, since I was able to measure 4Q263 at ~2.5–3 mm and 1QS is slightly larger than 4Q263 in the representation in DJD 26:23 it is reasonable to put 1QS in the average range of 3–3.5 mm. Moreover, if this same scribe also copied 4Q53 (4QSam³) and if we assume he wrote in both copies with the similar average letter height, which is ~3–3.5 mm (sometimes 4mm) in 4Q53, then this is further support for the measurements given here for 1QS.
correlation between size and quality were to exist, then with the Serekh manuscripts it seems that the copies with the smallest average letter size, between the range of 1.5–2.5 mm, show, relatively, the best quality of handwriting: 4Q256 (4Q59b), 4Q258 (4Q59d), 4Q260 (4Q59h), and 4Q264 (4Q59j); and, conversely, the larger the letter size, the lower the quality of writing: 4Q255 (4Qpap5a), 4Q259 (4Q59e), 4Q261 (4Q598), 4Q262 (4Q59h), and 1QS and 4Q257 (4Qpap5c) in between.

4.2.1 Everyday Professional Serekh Copies

Here too, we have to reckon with a range in writing quality for the manuscripts that I have categorized as professional. It is difficult to decide which copy represents the best professional one for the Serekh, 4Q256 (4Q59b) or 4Q258 (4Q59d). In the execution of the basic letter forms, 4Q258 shows a bit more regularity than 4Q256, but the spacing between letters in words is slightly better in 4Q256 than in 4Q258. Regarding interlinear spacing, with an average of ~5 mm 4Q256 shows even more distance between the lines than 4Q258 (average of ~4 mm), but the letter size is also slightly larger in 4Q256 than in 4Q258.

For heuristic purposes, we can compare these two Serekh copies with professional copies of Isaiah of similar size, although that is not exactly possible for the small size of 4Q258, as the smallest letter size Isaiah copies are a bit larger: 1QS, 4Q55, 4Q56, and 4Q58. The quality of writing in 4Q258 clearly is better than in 4Q56, which I qualify as a copy at the lower end of the professional

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150 Frank Moore Cross, “Palaeographic Dates of the Manuscripts,” in The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations, ed. James H. Charlesworth, PTSdSSP 1 (Tübingen and Louisville, KY: Mohr Siebeck and Westminster John Knox, 1994). 57 characterized 4Q256 as written in a typical early Herodian formal script, 30–1 BCE, but Józef T. Milik, “Numérotation des feuilles des rouleaux dans le scriptorium de Qumrân (Planches X et XI),” Sem 27 (1977): 78, thought the script was transitional between Hasmonaean and Herodian, 50–25 BCE. Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:45 only mentioned Cross, while Metso, The Community Rule, 4; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 35; Nati, Textual Criticism and the Ontology of Literature, 49, mentioned both Cross and Milik without deciding between the two. I think 4Q256 could also be late Hasmonaean but this depends on how exactly one defines the defining features to distinguish between late Hasmonaean and early Herodian. For example, if “full uniformity of letter size” (Cross, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” 136, n. 27, 173 [1961], 6 n. 28, 32 [2003]) is such a distinguishing feature then 4Q256 does not show that. Cross, “Palaeographic Dates of the Manuscripts,” 57, characterized 4Q258 also as early Herodian formal (see also Metso, The Community Rule, 4; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 37; Nati, Textual Criticism and the Ontology of Literature, 51). In addition, Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:89, noted that despite the similarities in script, date of writing, and in recension, the differences in orthography between 4Q256 and 4Q258 were all the more striking, with 4Q256 showing predominantly full spelling and 4Q258 demonstrating predominantly defective spelling but also in two instances the scribal practice of writing the divine name in palaeo-Hebrew script (8:9 and 9:8).
spectrum. When it comes to spacing between letters in words, the level of writing skills in 4Q55 is better. In terms of being a copy by a professional scribe, 4Q258 can be reckoned as such but not one of the highest professional quality; it is similar perhaps to 1Q8 and 4Q58.

4Q256 shows a general resemblance in style with 4Q55, but the latter seems to be the work of a slightly more skilled scribe. Regarding the spacing between letters in words, the scribe of 4Q256 seems to have done a better job than the one in 4Q58. Again, these are not absolute distinctions. And no decision is needed on which one is the best professional copy. To discuss the difficulty of which one represents the better Serekh copy means to highlight different aspects of writing skills, such as basic letter form execution or spacing of letters, that can inform our impression of the overall quality of writing.

4Q264 (4QSj) is an interesting example because of the mixed impression it gives of skilled and somewhat careless handwriting. Philip Alexander and Geza Vermes described the handwriting as neat and very regular. But the execution of the basic letter forms is irregular (cf., e.g., aleph, he, lamed, ayin, pe), showing more variance perhaps than 4Q258 with similar-sized letters. The spacing between letters within words is better here than in 4Q258. Also, sometimes the letter strokes give a sense of talent or skill (see, e.g., line 8: ימשיש ובמעשי פלאך; yet, this is also a good example for not leaving any space between the two words, but that is a practice that can occur in high quality manuscripts, as in 4Q57, for example). It is this combination of irregularity and skill that may indicate this to have been a skilled scribe that did not produce his most careful copy with 4Q264. With an average of ~1.5 mm interlinear spacing, 4Q264 has far less spacing between the lines than 4Q258. The small fragment preserves an upper and left margin, and perhaps also a bottom margin and would then measure only ~4.4 cm in height. The ten preserved lines of writing parallel the final lines of 1QS (11:14–22), with variants of course. Stitching on the left edge of the fragment indicates another sheet followed; whether that was a blank handle sheet or another sheet with writing cannot be determined. Scholars have considered whether this fragment was the end of the manuscript or more text followed that may have corresponded to 4Q256 23:2 or something else. Scholars have also wondered whether 4Q264 was a miniature scroll containing the whole of the Serekh text, but the length of such a scroll being disproportionate to its height of only ~4.4 cm would seem to argue against

152 The mem is damaged in the fragment.
154 Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:201; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 47.
that. Another possibility, suggested by Alexander and Vermes, is that 4Q264
contained only a short liturgical miscellany, including the Maskil's Hymn from
the Serekh, and should therefore better be called 4QS-Hymn, as suggested
by Jutta Jokiranta.

Given the mixed quality of handwriting, and especially the very small inter-
linear spacing, it is doubtful whether 4Q264 would have been a scroll instead
of an excerpt copy of some sort. Although 4Q258 is similar in its small letter
size, the average height of that copy is surmised to have been ~8.4 cm, which
is still quite miniature and easily portable. In any case, there is no need to label
4Q264 a Serekh manuscript in the sense of it being a version or edition of the
Serekh or containing rule material similar to other copies such as 1QS, 4Q256,
or 4Q258.

In this sense, as with some of the Isaiah manuscripts discussed earlier such
as 4Q62a (4Qlsa), 4Q264 not being a bookroll complicates efforts to categorize
it as a professional copy. The level of writing skills is professional, but this is not
a professional copy of a bookroll. At the same time, the level of writing skills
that 4Q264 shows argues against seeing it as a writing exercise of some sort; for
that, the handwriting is too skilled.

4Q260 (4Qsl) consists of the remains of five columns that preserve text such
as in 1QS 9–10, with variants of course. Although the manuscript was clearly
ruled, the scribe was not consistent in keeping his lines of writing horizon-
tal; frg 5 looks a bit better than frgs. 4a and 4b, but, overall, the horizontal
arrangement is inconsistent. The basic letter forms are not regular and expertly
formed, but often irregular: compare, e.g., in frg. 5 ayin in line 1 with ayin,
twice, in line 2, or in frg. 4a aleph in lines 1, 2, 4, 5, and 9. In frg. 1 line 2 letters
are cramped in really small to make them fit. The scribe has certainly attained
a more than basic level of writing skills but he also shows flaws in the quality of
his writing. 4Q260 is perhaps not yet a substandard copy but if its handwriting
can be characterized as professional then 4Q260 was a lower quality profes-
sional copy.

4Q260 has been aligned with 4Q264 in terms of its format as small and
portable, but in terms of scroll height 4Q260 is with an estimated height of

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155 Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:20. See also Falk, “Material Aspects of Prayer Texts,” 64.
from Qumran, 47.
157 Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:85. See also Sarianna Metso, The Textual Development of
the Community Rule, STDJ 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 36.
159 Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:154; Falk, “Material Aspects of Prayer Texts,” 64; Hempel,
The Community Rules from Qumran, 44.
~8.3 cm rather more akin to 4Q258 (~8.4 cm). Also, 4Q260 clearly preserves material from consecutive columns, 4Q264 does not and what more preceding text in addition to what is preserved it originally may have had is unknown. In terms of letter size, 4Q260 is only slightly larger than 4Q258, and 4Q260 too has a wide interlinear space; its average of interlinear space of ~4.5–5 mm is a bit more than in 4Q258 (~4 mm), but it is also more irregular and sometimes even has an interlinear space of more than 5 mm. In terms of level of writing skills, 4Q260 was from a less skilled scribe than 4Q256 and 4Q258, but in terms of format 4Q260 and 4Q258 are more alike than 4Q256.

4Q257 (4QpapSc) is on papyrus and the fragments preserve text that parallels 1QS 1–4. It has the largest average letter size of the Serekh copies that can be characterized as professional, albeit of a lower skill level than the other professional copies. If for Serekh copies large letter size is indicative for lower writing quality (see above), then 4Q257 may be a good example of the spectrum across the dividing line between professional and substandard. Cross described the script as somewhat unusual, but nonetheless a Hasmonaean semiformal, close to the script of 4Q502 (4QpapRitMar), and he compared it to 1QS, dating it also to 100–75 BCE. Alexander and Vermes have described 4Q257 as carefully and expertly written, its writing bold and firm, and the letters well shaped. But the quality of writing is less than expert. The scribe shows inconsistent arrangement of his horizontal lines. The execution of basic letter forms as well as his spacing of letters within words show that the scribe had attained a practiced level of writing skill but there is much irregularity in writing the individual letters that indicate he was not very skilled.

4Q257 may have had one of the highest scroll sizes of professional Serekh copies, with an estimated scroll height of possibly ~20.1 cm. Only 1QS has a higher scroll size, with an average height of ~24.1 cm. This height is significantly more than the next copy in height, 4Q256 (~12.5 cm), not to mention 4Q258 (~8.4 cm) and 4Q260 (~8.3 cm), and illustrates the different formats used, over time, for Serekh copies of considerable length.

The final example of a professional copy is 1QS. This is a practically complete scroll of five sheets with eleven columns, two to three columns per sheet, and

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160 4Q256 differs from both 4Q258 and 4Q260 in scroll height with ~12.5 cm; see Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:41.
161 See also Tigchelaar, “These Are the Names,” 538–42.
162 Cross, “Palaeographic Dates of the Manuscripts,” 57.
164 Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:66, 68, but cf. also Metso, The Textual Development of the Community Rule, 34 n. 50.
165 Cross, “Introduction,” 4. See also, in general, Tov, Scribal Practices and Approaches, 84–90.
with an average height of ~24.1 cm and a scroll length of 1.86 m.\textsuperscript{166} In addition, originally 1QSa was probably stitched to the end of 1QS, and 1QSB to 1QSa.\textsuperscript{167}

The scribe of 1QS is often made out as a careless and less competent scribe with a relatively undisciplined calligraphy, but especially also because of the many errors and corrections, mainly in columns 7 and 8.\textsuperscript{168} The scribe clearly knew how to execute the basic form of letters, but the impression of carelessness comes from the irregularity of individual letters. Many examples can be given, but compare, e.g., the mems in column 3, the ayins in column 5, or the alephs in column 9 (although the aleph in \(\text{שנ} \) in line 12 is beautiful, but, then again, this word and the final \(\text{שנ} \) are horizontally irregularly arranged with the preceding part of line 12). There are clear irregularities in how the writing in different columns was executed. For example, columns 1–3 show irregular horizontal lines, whereas columns 4–6 show more regularity in this regard, yet still not completely straight horizontal lines. Columns 1–3 also show several instances of irregular inking. Columns 7–8 show great irregularity and many corrections.

If we compare 1QS with 1QIa, which is thought to be earlier in date and also has a somewhat different writing style and slightly smaller average letter size, then the scribe of 1QS shows greater irregularity in his execution of the basic letter forms and also demonstrates greater inconsistency in his horizontal lining.

Is 1QS on the dividing line between professional and substandard, or is that too harsh a judgement of the writing quality and skills? We also have to take

\textsuperscript{166} Cross, “Introduction,” 4.

\textsuperscript{167} On the evidence for stitching along the left side edge of the final sheet carrying 1QS 11, see Jokiranta, “Thinking About Ancient Manuscripts,” 618; Michael Brooks Johnson, “One Work or Three? A Proposal for Reading 1QS-1QSa-1QSB as a Composite Work,” \textit{DSD} 25 (2018): 155 n. 51; Hempel, \textit{The Community Rules from Qumran}, 17. Stitches on the left side of column 2 of 1QSa are clearly visible as is part of the next sheet and even the remains of some writing, parallel to lines 18–19 of 1QSa 2; see \textit{DJD} 1: plate XXIV. For further discussion of the connection of 1QS with IQSa and IQSB, see, e.g., Hempel, \textit{The Community Rules from Qumran}, 16–19; Nati, \textit{Textual Criticism and the Ontology of Literature}, 46–47.

\textsuperscript{168} Cf., e.g., Ulrich, “4QSam: A Fragmentary Manuscript,” 1, 2; Tigchelaar, “In Search of the Scribe of 1QS,” 450–52; Jokiranta, “Thinking About Ancient Manuscripts,” 628; Hempel, \textit{The Community Rules from Qumran}, 19. In terms of script style, Cross, “The Development of the Jewish Scripts,” 158, 167 note 116 (1961), 22, 27 note 126 (2003), put 1QS as a Hasmonaean semiformal in the tradition of the Archaic semiformal, as exemplified by 4Q109 (4QQoh\textsuperscript{a}) and 4Q504 (DibHam\textsuperscript{a}), but also influenced at a number of points by the standard Hasmonaean style, by which he presumable meant the formal style. The problem is that Cross did not give much consideration to the Hasmonaean semiformal and no exemplars are given, except the two mentioned for Archaic/early Hasmonaean, 4Q109 and 4Q504; see also Tigchelaar, “Seventy Years of Palaeographic Dating,” 267, 270.
into account that the complete copy of 1QS has been preserved. If only remains of column 8 would have been preserved, then an assessment of it being a sub-standard copy would make sense. But other columns, e.g., column 4 or column 9, show better writing quality. Moreover, in terms of writing skills, there are worse examples of less competent writing skills than the scribe of 1QS, such as 4Q68 or 4Q56, though both of a different style and the latter also of later date (see section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 above). 4Q56 would have been a sizeable book-roll containing the entire book of Isaiah and possibly with an average height of ~29 cm.\(^{169}\)

This goes to show that entire works could be copied by unskilled scribes, and that on “a stately manuscript of thin, light brown leather with yellow tones” (4Q56) or on “fine white leather” (1QS).\(^{170}\) With respect to the scribe of 1QS, it is difficult to decide whether he was an unskilled scribe, a moderately trained scribe, or a professional scribe that was for whatever reason careless in his writing. But it goes too far to regard 1QS as a whole as a substandard copy in terms of its writing quality. Rather, it seems to be somewhere in the lower spectrum of a professional copy.

4.2.2 Substandard Serekh Copies

Certainly, no extant Serekh manuscript would qualify as an elegant copy on the basis of its handwriting quality, but half of the copies are of substandard quality (and even over half of them if 4Q260 or 1QS were to be counted as such). This is relatively more than with the extant Isaiah copies, although no statistical conclusions of course can be drawn.

Despite the remains of two columns stitched together, too little writing is left of 5Q11 (5QS) to say much about it here,\(^{171}\) except that it shows irregular handwriting (cf., e.g., hes and tavv) and that it probably was not a writing exercise if the evidence for text on two stitched together sheets would argue against that (cf. also 4Q68 in section 3.1.2 above). Although 5Q11 is written in relatively small letter size, it seems to be a substandard copy of an unskilled scribe.\(^{172}\)

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171 Cf. also Jokiranta, “Thinking About Ancient Manuscripts,” 620.
172 See also Milik DJD 3:280. As an aside, Józef T. Milik, “Milki-šedeq et Milki-reša‘ dans les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens,” JJS 23 (1972): 129, suggested that the scribe of 4Q280 (“rustic semiformal hand” from the first century BCE) also copied 5Q3 and perhaps 5Qn, among two more, but in DJD 3:281 Milik compared 5Q3, especially frg. 27, materially and palaeographically to 5Qn, dating 5Q3 to the first century CE.
The next substandard example in terms of letter size is 4Q263 (4Q81), which consists now of two fragments, as recently one more fragment was identified.\textsuperscript{173} The text that is preserved parallels that in 1QS 5:26–6:5 and in 4Q258 2:5–9, although 4Q263 seems to agree more with 4Q258 than for two cases where it sides with 1QS.\textsuperscript{174} What remains of 4Q263 clearly represents far from regular handwriting,\textsuperscript{175} shown by the variance in executing basic letter forms (especially the lameds stand out, also in terms of their positioning vis-à-vis other letters such as in למלך, which is also a misspelling for למלך, the inconsistent spacing of letters within words, and the alternating thin strokes and thick strokes probably due to irregular inking).\textsuperscript{176}

The editors characterized 4Q263 as a typical Herodian formal, but it is very different from other such Serekh copies as 4Q256, 4Q258, or 4Q260 for that matter; look, e.g., at the hes in 4Q263. Tigchelaar observed that the script of 4Q263 is only formal in the sense that it is not cursive, and he also noted that the scribe alternated between formal and informal forms of the letters.\textsuperscript{177} Yet, this very irregular and particular way of writing is not necessarily the work of an unskilled scribe. It is perhaps somewhat comparable to examples discussed earlier, such as 4Q62 (see section 3.1.2 above), though a bit more extreme in being careless. So, it may have been “a scribe who was not primarily concerned with the neat and correct appearance of their writing.”\textsuperscript{178} Only very little material is left, but perhaps the interlinear space of ~5 mm may be a further indication of 4Q263 being an excerpted copy of some sort.\textsuperscript{179}

4Q259 (4Q86) preserves material that correlates with text from 1QS 7:8 until 9:24 or 9:26, while somewhere in the middle of column 4 it continues, after the Statutes for the Maskil and instead of the final hymn, with calendrical material known as 4Q319 (4QTot).\textsuperscript{180} 4Q259/4Q319 demonstrates a distinct and irregular way of writing, also of mixed quality.\textsuperscript{181} The scribe clearly knew the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{173} Eibert Tigchelaar, “4Q263 (S?): Hand, Text, Another Fragment,” RevQ 32 (2020): 267–71.
\item \textsuperscript{174} Tigchelaar, “4Q263 (S?),” 270; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{175} Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:397.
\item \textsuperscript{176} Tigchelaar, “4Q263 (S?),” 267–68, 269–70.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Tigchelaar, “4Q263 (S?),” 267, 269–70.
\item \textsuperscript{178} Tigchelaar, “4Q263 (S?),” 270.
\item \textsuperscript{179} Some of the possible Isaiah excerpts (see section 3.1.2 above) show wide inter linear space, such as 4Q62 (~4 mm), 4Q64 (varies, can be ~3 mm, can be ~5 mm), or 4Q66 (~5 mm), but not all of them do: 4Q67 varies from 2–3 mm and 4Q68 has ~2 mm.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 29, 39–40, 266.
\item \textsuperscript{181} Cross, “Palaeographic Dates of the Manuscripts,” 57, described 4Q259 as written in an unusual semiformal with mixed semiformal and semiformal script features, referring to semiformal and semiformal (looped) tav and dating it to the same time as 4Q398, 50–25 BCE. However, Józef T. Milik, The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran
\end{itemize}
basic forms of the letters, but there is much variance in the letter forms. There is irregularity in inking and letter size varies considerably. On some fragments, letter size can be as small as ~2 mm, e.g., ayin in 4Q259 212 (followed by a final mem of 4 mm height) to ~2.5–3 mm in that same column, while in other parts such as column 1 or column 3 the average letter height varies respectively between ~3.5–4.5 mm or between ~3.5–4 mm. Yet, sometimes the quality of writing looks maybe even nice, though still particular, such as intermittently in 4Q319 5. The spacing between letters within words varies from not awful to not excellent. All this gives a mixed impression of the scribe’s writing skills, varying between substandard to skilled beyond basic training. There are two instances of Cryptic A script in 4Q259 3:3–4, possibly added by another scribe, although the reading of some letters is clearer than others.\textsuperscript{182}

4Q259/4Q319 would have been a scroll of some significant size. The average scroll height has been estimated to be ~14.2 cm,\textsuperscript{183} which would be slightly larger in height than 4Q256 (~12.5 cm) but not yet as large as 4Q257 (~20.1 cm) or 1QS (~24.1 cm). The copy 4Q259/4Q319 may have had at least nine columns and with an estimated column width of 13–15 cm,\textsuperscript{184} the length of the scroll could have been at least between 1.17–1.35 m. The material reconstruction is difficult due to the many fragments that cannot be placed.\textsuperscript{185}

This then is another example of a copy written by what seems an unskilled scribe, and it may be comparable to 4Q257 and 1QS, which were written by

\textsuperscript{182} See, e.g., Metso, The Textual Development of the Community Rule, 53–54; Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:45–46; Puech, "L'alphabet cryptique A"; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 39, seemed to imply that she follows Milik and Puech, although it is not clear which date exactly, as Puech proposed a slightly later date than Milik and was in agreement with the date attributed to Cross by Milik that Puech notes (433 n. 14).

\textsuperscript{183} Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:30–31.

\textsuperscript{184} Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:31.

\textsuperscript{185} Metso, The Textual Development of the Community Rule, 49–51; DJD 26:30–32; Shemaryahu Talmon, Jonathan Ben-Dov, and Uwe Glessmer, Qumran Cave 4.xvi: Calendrical Texts, DJD 21 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 195–201.
moderately skilled but not highly professional scribes. However, the writing in 4Q259/4Q319 looks so much more particular and distinct than that in 4Q257 or 1QS that it does not seem apt to merely describe it as unskilled. One way to explain this unique or unusual handwriting is to suggest individual idiosyncrasy. Another possibility is to suggest a different geographical provenance of the scribe, but apart from the style of the script that would not explain the other irregular and inconsistent features of the writing skills that are demonstrated by 4Q259/4Q319.

Hempel suggested that this manuscript may be what she calls an eclectic, avant-garde experiment by a scholar who inserted one of his calendric documents into a copy of the Serekh. The analysis here further supports the understanding of 4Q259/4Q319 as the copy of a scholar-scribe. On the basis of the writing quality and skills, and in combination with the content matter of the text, especially its calendrical material, 4Q259/4Q319 may very well represent the personal bookroll of a learned individual.

From a material perspective, the size of 4Q259/4Q319 demonstrates that this was not some scrap material from someone practicing his writing skills. As distinct and particular though the handwriting may be, the better-looking parts of the mixed writing quality and skills can indicate that the scribe had attained at least a basic level of writing skills. Yet, as a bookroll copy the overall quality is substandard. This may indicate that this was not a copy produced for the broader circulation beyond that of the scribe. In terms of being a personal bookroll, 4Q259/4Q319 may have been something like a learned scribe’s scribbled notes, adding calendrical considerations after the Statutes for the Maskil material from the Serekh.

From a content perspective, the calendrical concerns were quite complex, probably not the matter of elementary school training. While the structure of the Otot-text seems clear, there are basically two interpretations for the 294-year otot roster: the text provided either a mechanism to harmonize different sacred time-schemes, synchronizing the lunar and solar calendars within the mishmarot system of the 364-day calendar, counting the signs for doing so and integrating them in the jubilee system; or the otot roster was

186 Tigchelaar, “The Scribes of the Scrolls,” 530.

Whatever the correct interpretation may be of the otot roster, the fact that this calendrical part was connected to Serekh material demonstrates this scribe’s concern with certain learned information, and may also show a particular understanding of the connection between the Statutes for the Maskil and creation context and calendrical concerns as that relates to the opening rubric and first section of the final hymn in Serekh material.\footnote{Hempe, The Community Rules from Qumran, 33, 113, 266–268.}

In this case, the substandard quality of handwriting indicates this not to have been a copy made on order by a professional scribe. If not for trade or for broader private circulation (see section 3.1.3 above for a broader sense of private), for whom then was this manuscript copied? It was copied for the scribe himself, although the possible insertion by another scribe in Cryptic A script in 4Q259 3:3–4 can indicate use by someone else but such a scenario does not have to conflict with the copy originally being meant for personal use. Therefore, the connection between this specific calendrical material and the Statutes for the Maskil may be the scribe’s own doing. The content matter and the mixed quality of writing indicate this not to have been a learning exercise by a scribe in training but rather, I suggest, to have been the bookroll for the personal use of a learned individual, a scholar-scribe, who in his education had a basic scribal training.

The four extant fragments of 4Q255 (4QpapS\(^a\)) represent a fascinating example of a reused manuscript, with two fragments preserving material from 1QS 1:1–5 and 3:7–12 while the other two cannot be exactly paralleled in 1QS. For the largest of these latter two fragments, fragment A, a connection with the Two Spirits Treatise has been suggested but recently Hempel suggested that there may also be a connection with the Statutes of the Maskil and the fragmentary introduction to the calendrical material in 4Q319 4.\footnote{Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:27–28; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 31–33.}

Like 4Q257, 4Q255 is on papyrus, but what makes it an exceptional Serekh copy is the fact that it is an opisthograph: 4Q255 was written on the back of another manuscript, 4Q433a (4QpapHodayot-like Text B).\footnote{4Q257 was perhaps also an opisthograph, but the traces of a few of words on the verso cannot be identified anymore.} Cross characterized the writing on 4Q255 as a crude, early cursive script and dated it to the
second half of the second century BCE, preferably the late second century BCE,192 but Ayhan Aksu recently suggested a slightly later date to the early first century BCE.193 Scholars have debated which side was the recto and which side the verso and consequently which of the two texts was written before the other. Aksu, following Alexander and Vermes, made a strong case for 4Q255 having been written on the verso after 4Q433a had been written on the recto.194

With regard to the writing quality and skills evinced by 4Q255, the scribe was, first of all, very irregular in lining his writing horizontally and arranging his letters properly; some lines run even almost diagonal. His letters are written with great variance.195 Interlinear space varies, from ~5 mm to often only ~3 mm interlinear space, which with an average letter size of 4.5–5 mm creates the impression of a very densely written surface. 4Q433a on the recto also shows some irregular lining but not like 4Q255 on the verso. The interlinear space can vary as well (~3–4 mm) and the average letter size of ~3.5–4 mm is slightly smaller than in 4Q255.196 The writing quality looks better and 4Q433a gives the impression of having been written with more skill and attention.197 While the writing style in 4Q433a can be characterized as semiformal, the script style in 4Q255 shows a mixture of cursive and semicursive.198

Both texts were written in different styles, presumably by different hands, and 4Q255 was written on the back (verso) of 4Q433a. This can be taken to

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194 Aksu, “A Palaeographic and Codicological (Re)assessment.” See also, e.g., Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:28, 30; Tow, Scribal Practices and Approaches, 72; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 30; Nati, Textual Criticism and the Ontology of Literature, 48. George J. Brooke, “Choosing Between Papyrus and Skin: Cultural Complexity and Multiple Identities in the Qumran Library,” in Jewish Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World, ed. Mladen Popović, Myles Schoonover, and Marijn Vandenbergh, JSup 178 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 126, also followed DJD 26:28, 30 regarding 4Q433a being on the recto and 4Q255 on the verso, yet, at 128, he also maintained the palaeographic dates given by the DJD editors so that 4Q255 has the earlier palaeographic date (125–100 BCE) and 4Q433a the later (75 BCE), which in this case is not possible if 4Q433a was to be written on the recto at an earlier date than 4Q255. For this confusion, see also Aksu, “A Palaeographic and Codicological (Re)assessment,” 2.

195 Cf., e.g., aleph, dalet, he, pe in Aksu, “A Palaeographic and Codicological (Re)assessment,” 15.

196 Eileen Schuller in Esther Chazon et al., Qumran Cave 4.xx: Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part 2, DJD 29 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 238, gives different measurements, especially for the interlinear space.


198 Cf. Aksu, “A Palaeographic and Codicological (Re)assessment.”
indicate that the scribe of 4Q255 reused the copy of 4Q433a in a different context, and that the original text, 4Q433a went defunct.\footnote{199}

For whom was 4Q255 copied? The fact that it was written in such poor manner on the back of another text suggested to scholars that it may have been an early draft or a personal, possibly scholarly copy of the Serekh.\footnote{200} A slightly different possibility is suggested by Hempel, who interpreted 4Q255 fragment A to contain material parallel to the hymnic material following the Statutes for the Maskil in 1QS and parallel to the calendrical introduction in 4Q319. She proposed to understand 4Q255 and 4Q433a together as part of a Community Rules manuscript with hymnic material following the statutes. This then could be evidence not so much of a draft or a personal copy, but of the efforts of scribes to collect and gather material at a time when the framework for the long text of the Serekh as most fully preserved in 1QS was still being drafted.\footnote{201} However, if 4Q255 was written on the verso later than, and perhaps also separately from, 4Q433a, then the material evidence does not support Hempel’s interpretation because the statutes (4Q255) follow the hymnic material (4Q433a), and not the other way around. Moreover, the hymnic character of 4Q433a is doubtful. Eileen Schuller concluded that 4Q433a was more likely some type of extended sapiential-type reflection or instruction than a hymn.\footnote{202}

While the writing quality and skills evinced by the scribe in 4Q255 are substandard and 4Q433a makes a better impression in this regard, it would be difficult to qualify 4Q433a as a professional copy either because of the irregularity in interlinear spacing. The two interpretations for the character of this opisthograph by Alexander and Aksu on the one hand and Hempel on the other hand need not exclude each other. The writing quality and skills on both sides could be taken as evidence of works-in-progress by scholar-scribes. They knew how to write, the one better than the other, but they were not doing the copying work of a text available in some sort of edition, such as in the case of Isaiah, but rather the work of drafting or collecting and gathering various materials. Whether this happened separately or in tandem is difficult to determine, but can have consequences for how we think of a Serekh manuscript.

The final two examples of substandard quality Serekh copies are 4Q261 (4QS\textsuperscript{g}) and 4Q262 (4QS\textsuperscript{h}). The very little material that is left of 4Q261 can

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\footnote{199} Aksu, “A Palaeographic and Codicological (Re)assessment,” 14.
\footnote{201} Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 33–34.
sometimes be correlated with 1QS 5–7 with some shorter variants and possibly independent readings. With an interlinear space of ~4 mm little more than the average letter size (~4–4.5 mm), and sometimes even smaller, the writing makes a very dense impression, which is reinforced by the small spacing between words that is sometimes unclear. Fragment 3 shows evidence of ruling and the cursive/semicursive seems sometimes to have been written with some skill, although there is also a good deal of variance in the execution of the letter forms, especially in some of the smallest fragments preserved.

Regarding 4Q262, it is not clear whether the third fragment, fragment B, belongs together with the other two. It is very different in terms of proportion and arrangement of letters and lines. The material is difficult to connect with the Serekh except for fragment 1, which preserves material relating to 1QS 3:4–6. Whether this represents a Serekh copy, or some anthology or something else, depends also on the view one has, or the expectations one has, of what a Serekh copy was like. In any case, 4Q262 shows irregularity in inking, variance in basic letter forms, and irregular execution of the letter strokes, indicating its substandard quality.

4.2.3 Implications of Writing Quality and Skills for the Question for Whom Serekh Manuscripts Were Copied

Based on the above, a preliminary consideration of the writing quality and skills in Serekh manuscripts makes it possible to differentiate between the evidence and to assess it in new ways, reinforcing also suggestions put forward by other scholars. Similar to the Isaiah manuscripts, here too the differentiation according to writing quality and skills demonstrates a diversity and pluriformity in the production of Serekh manuscripts.

An important difference is that, unlike for the Isaiah material, for the Serekh material we cannot reckon with a single edition to have been in circulation at the time. As James Nati succinctly observed,

There is a clear tension that needs to be resolved in how we imagine a tradition such as the Serekh. It is, on the one hand, abundantly fluid, especially in comparison with other biblical books ... On the other hand, we have a collection of manuscripts, each of which constitutes a discrete physical object. At issue ... is how to most productively hold these two facts in tandem.

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204 Nati, Textual Criticism and the Ontology of Literature, 237–38.
Sarianna Metso and James Tucker argued that copies representing various stages of redaction were circulating simultaneously, without any particular copy representing the definitive one. Rather, the period of developing composition and the period of copying and creating textual variants were coterminous, while the fluidity of the material raises the question: what constitutes the Community Rule?\footnote{Metso and Tucker, “The Changing Landscape of Editing Ancient Jewish Texts,” 270–72. See also Jokiranta, “Thinking About Ancient Manuscripts.” Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 2, 34, suggested using the plural Community Rules manuscripts not only so as to challenge preconceived notions of what a Serekh manuscript should look like but also to indicate both the concurrent family resemblance and distinctiveness of the witnesses.}

David Hamidović, who, like Metso and Tucker, also drew on Ulrich’s concept of variant literary editions, tried to capture the textual fluidity not in terms of different versions but in terms of different editorial projects of the individual scribes that worked on a particular manuscript.\footnote{Hamidović, “Editing a Cluster of Texts,” 198, 201–8; idem, “Living Serakhim,” 69–84.}

Nati took these considerations a step further by asking how scribes thought of their own task with respect to textual variation. He argued for 1QS and 4Q258 that, rather than being two manuscripts of a single work with textual variants, or even variant editions, they both claim for themselves two different essential qualities. These claims would have been part of the ways in which these texts were imagined in their context of production.\footnote{Nati, Textual Criticism and the Ontology of Literature, 165–214, 238–39.}

It is difficult to approach how exactly the scribes behind what we categorize as Serekh manuscripts thought of their own task. Yet, through their handwriting, we come closer to certain aspects of the social context in which they were copying. By focusing on their writing quality and skills we can keep the two facts of textual fluidity and the manuscripts as discrete physical objects in tandem, and sharpen our understanding of what each piece of manuscript evidence may have represented for the one copying it as well as for those it was copied for.

For example, scholars have previously suggested that the smaller exemplars were portable and that the larger scrolls were used for study or reading in public.\footnote{Alexander and Vermes, DJD 26:5, 154, 201; Falk, “Material Aspects of Prayer Texts,” 64; Hamidović, “Editing a Cluster of Texts,” 201; Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 44.}

Moreover, 4Q264 is possibly not a bookroll copy at all but rather an excerpt copy of some sort from a professional scribe, perhaps a scribble for his own use. The fragment shows very small interlinear spacing, so that one may ask...
what kind of excerpt copy this may have been. Possibly there were excerpt copies for trade. But was 4Q264 a personal, individual one? Perhaps it is even possible to consider a scenario in which 4Q264 was a scrap paper that came from the bottom part of the sheet of another scroll and that was reused to put down, in quick and dense handwriting, this hymnic material from the Serekh.

Over against these smaller examples stand large examples such as 1QS (~24.1 cm) and 4Q257 (~20.1 cm). These can still be characterized as professional, albeit of a lower quality and skill level than other professional copies such as 4Q256 and 4Q258. Somewhat in between stands 4Q256 with an average height of ~12.5 cm. This illustrates the different formats used, over time, for Serekh copies of considerable length. But what to make of these different formats? 4Q256 could, conceivably, still count as a portable scroll but it is equally imaginable to have been used in a public setting for study or reading. Then again, portable does not stand over against public study or reading. These are different categories. If we take into account average letter size, then 1QS (3–3.5 mm) and 4Q257 (3.5–4 mm) might seem better equipped for public study or reading than 4Q256 (2–2.5 mm). I do not believe that the average letter size mattered in this case, and the better-quality writing of 4Q256 may have been a benefit in this regard. For that matter, the notions of “portability” and “public” with regard to the scrolls as material artefacts are in need of further reflection.

For the Serekh material there does not seem to be a correlation, in general, between the quality of writing and the length of the material being copied. In this regard, the Serekh material contrasts with the Isaiah copies, where manuscripts of everyday professional and elegant quality, in general, covered the whole book or the first or second half of the book and those lesser, substandard quality, generally, may have been excerpts or some even training exercises.

From the substandard copies, 4Q255 and 4Q259 stand out. Their writing quality and their content matter may indicate them to have been something like the result of works-in-progress by scholar-scribes, not copies of professional quality that would have been made on order for someone other than the scribes themselves. The analysis of the writing quality may support a scenario such as that suggested by Hempel, that 4Q259 (or a 4Q259-like Vorlage) was one of the sources used by the scribe of 1QS, and also her suggestion that 4Q255, together with 4Q257, represents a manuscript of the type used by the compiler(s) of 1QS when drawing up the framework of the long text of the Serekh.209

The analysis of the writing quality and skills supports previous research that argued we should not treat all manuscript evidence as representing separate versions or editions of the Serekh. There were copies of considerable length in different formats that may have functioned in broader settings of studying or reading together, while others may have been personal copies by scholarscribes, and then there were excerpts and possibly also training exercises. Perhaps some copies exemplify not so much training in writing as learning by writing. Writing and copying helps memorization and learning, and manuscripts could have been written as support of study and memorization. This also means we need not assume that every manuscript that is now categorized as a Serekh manuscript served a different community, whether Essene, Yaḥad or otherwise; not every Serekh copy was a Serekh for a community somewhere.

5 Concluding Considerations

I claim no absolute judgements, distinctions, or categorizations on the basis of my palaeographic analysis regarding the writing style, quality, and skills of all Isaiah and Serekh manuscripts. But the approach has proven valuable from a heuristic perspective to get a better, differentiated understanding than before of the material evidence in terms of a manuscript’s purpose or character and certain aspects of the social context of its copying.

43. When suggesting that 4Q259 was the source text used by the scribe(s) of 1Q8 Hempel, The Community Rules from Qumran, 40, suggests that textual variants can be attributed to the scribe of 1Q8 struggling with the idiosyncratic hand of 4Q259, but while his handwriting may be idiosyncratic it would not have been difficult to read. Instead of 4Q259, Alexander, “Literacy among Jews in Second Temple Palestine,” 17–18 refers to 4Q255 as an example of a difficult to read exemplar, copying the text by eye, but while the mixture of cursive/semicursive may have made it perhaps somewhat of an effort for someone else to read I doubt it would have been very difficult.

210 Tigchelaar, “Elementary and Unskilled Hands,” see at 31 minutes, observed that many Serekh manuscripts show elementary, unskilled handwriting and asked whether these are indicative for the Serekh as part of the curriculum of learning to write? However, I am not so sure that many can be seen as such; it seems clearer with a number of Isaiah manuscripts. 4Q262 was perhaps a training exercise? 4Q263 may have been an excerpted copy of some sort or perhaps a training exercise? These considerations are meant to stimulate further questioning into our criteria and assessment of writing quality and level.

211 Popović, “Reading, Writing, and Memorizing Together.”

212 Tigchelaar, “Beautiful Bookhands and Careless Characters,” see at 53 minutes. Hamidović, “Living Serakhim,” 8, also invokes memorization, but in a different way, for a scenario in which after a group discussion scribes could record the changes by adding a new passage from memory.
My analysis and considerations are preliminary in so far as the twenty-two Isaiah copies and twelve Serekh copies are still a limited number of scrolls. These must be complemented by analyses of other batches of copies. Yet, the selection is useful to think about book production and circulation in a broader sense for ancient Judaea and in a specific sense for the people behind the scrolls from Qumran, as it contains complete bookroll copies (such as 1QIsa\textsuperscript{a} and 1QS), biblical and sectarian texts, and copies from various periods and from various Qumran caves and also from Murabba‘at elsewhere in the Judaean Desert. It should be clear from the above that not all Isaiah manuscript evidence represents an edition of the biblical book, and that not all Serekh manuscript evidence represents a separate version or edition of the Serekh.

Here, I consider some of the general palaeographic conclusions regarding writing quality and skills, how these bear on the question for whom a manuscript was copied, and what that means for the social context of producing and circulating the Dead Sea Scrolls, also in relation to models of textual communities.

As a general, tentative conclusion I observe that what is striking when considering the writing style, quality, and skills in the Dead Sea Scrolls is, contrary to Johnson’s assessment of the Oxyrhynchus papyri, not the overwhelming near uniformity and sheer dominance of professionalism. Rather, my analysis of the Isaiah and Serekh copies from the Judaean Desert demonstrates a diversity and pluriformity in their production and quality. Only the everyday professional may perhaps come nearest to representing somewhat of a homogenous grouping of copies, and this seems clearest for the formal Herodian-period script style. Often, whether for the formal hand or for what Cross has called the semiformal or the semicursive hand, the execution of these hands or styles, their quality, is not neat, especially, but not only, in copies from the Hasmonaean period.

Contrary to what Johnson has argued for the majority of very large scripts in the Oxyrhynchus papyri (see section 3.1 above), the scrolls do not show a very large script size to have been the norm for the highest quality professional or elegant copies. The Isaiah copies do not demonstrate such a correlation, while the Serekh copies with the smallest average letter size show, relatively, the best quality of handwriting, whereas those with a large letter size show the lowest quality of writing. Perhaps for the scrolls, smaller script size is to be associated with better quality copies, but this needs to be assessed in future research.

When it comes to Dead Sea Scrolls “deluxe” copies, this category will need to be considered anew in light of the analysis here. Thus far, scholars have mainly limited the focus on codicological dimensions when applying the deluxe category to copies, ignoring writing quality. Not only is this contrary to what has been observed for Greco-Roman writing culture, where the fine execution of
the script was the distinguishing characteristic of a typical “deluxe” from an everyday production. But also, clearly badly written copies from Qumran cannot have been “deluxe” copies only on the basis of their codicological dimensions, though this is exactly what has been suggested, especially for specific copies of Isaiah but also for 1QS, as well as for copies of other texts. For example, both 4Q56 and 1QS have been assessed as possible deluxe copies, only on the basis of codicological dimensions. But the analysis of the quality of handwriting has shown it to be professional at best. Both of these manuscripts have been copied by unskilled or moderately skilled scribes, which disqualifies them to have been “deluxe.”

Regarding scroll length, amount of text, and quality of handwriting, the Isaiah copies of everyday professional and elegant quality, in general, covered the whole book or the first or second half of the book and those of lesser, substandard quality, generally, may have been excerpts or some even training exercises, while such a correlation is not evident for the Serekh copies. However, copies like 4Q56 and 1QS show that entire works could be copied by unskilled or moderately skilled scribes. This evidence should caution against general inferences about a manuscript’s purpose or character drawn from scroll length or amount of text only.

The palaeographic conclusions regarding the writing quality and skills bear on the question for whom a manuscript was copied, in a general sense of trade and private circumstances and in a specific sense of trained and untrained scribes, though these contexts often cannot be sharply separated.

In a specific sense, and following Johnson’s distinction between book production and circulation, the Isaiah and Serekh copies present many examples of unskilled or untrained scribes producing lower quality copies, not all of which were actual bookrolls. Regarding Isaiah, we have reviewed a fair number of substandard copies that were probably not full editions but excerpts or even training exercises. These copies of unskilled scribes were most likely for the benefit of the scribe himself, whether for intellectual study of some sort (4Q62, 4Q65, 4Q66, 4Q67) or for writing training (4Q63). Regarding the Serekh copies, half of them are of substandard quality. These may have been personal copies by scholar-scribes (4Q255/4Q433a, 4Q259/4Q319), excerpts or possibly training exercises (4Q262, 4Q263). Yet, we should also allow for the possibility that excerpt collections of substandard quality could have been copied for others than the scribe, such as for private circulation (e.g., 4Q64 and 4Q68), or perhaps even for trade (4Q61), while in some cases it may not be possible to decide whether an excerpt copy was produced either for personal, private or even trade (4Q62a) or for personal or private (4Q264, if an excerpt). Circumstances may have changed also. So that what was originally, for example, a personal copy turned into a private, communal one. So, with Serekh copy 4Q259/4Q319
there is also the possibility that what was originally meant as a personal copy was further worked on by other scribes and may have circulated privately in a communal context.

In a general sense, the question is whether manuscripts were copied for a general market of book trade or for a private, communal context. I have argued for understanding “private,” distinct from “individual” or “personal,” in a broader sense to include a group of people (see section 3.1.3 above). A group or a social network, whether at one location or at various locations, provides a context in which manuscripts could conceivably have been produced by trained as well as untrained or unskilled scribes. I have discussed how the Great Isaiah Scroll was a communal, scholarly copy (see section 3.1.4 above). Whether that was intentional from the start or that is how it came to be used cannot be decided. But the continuous use of this manuscript as evidenced by the interventions of later scribes over possibly more than a century suggests that after its original production by two scribes it was read, used, and worked on in a private or communal setting, not in a market context. The idea that the scribe of 1QS intervened in the copy of 1QIsa should be abandoned (see section 3.1.4.1 above). But the possible use of one of the readings in 1QIsa in Pesher Habakkuk may be evidence to suggest that these two scrolls were used simultaneously for at least some period of time in the same social context of a private or communal setting.

As discussed above, there seems to be an assumption in the field that Qumran manuscripts were copied for the communal benefit of the community. But Wise suggested that the great majority of the scrolls constitute a cross-section of the book trade and Falk suggested a commercial market, also for sectarian rule texts (see section 1). Using Mur3 as an example, I argued that we have to reckon with different market circumstances and varying levels of quality in relation to supply and demand (see section 3.1.3). But such differentiation does not change that a careful consideration of the handwriting quality and skills shows that many of the Isaiah scrolls from the caves near Qumran are unlikely to have been produced for a general trade market. They were of too low quality for that. This does not only apply to substandard shorter copies or excerpts. A copy of a complete book could also be of questionable scribal quality. It is difficult to imagine how a copy such as 4Q56 could have been produced for a commercial market. So, contrary to Wise’s suggestion, many of the scrolls from the caves near Qumran were not copied for the general book trade because they are of low writing quality and hardly market material; future research may further validate this.

The better-quality copies (elegant and professional) could conceivably have been produced for a general book trade. But often it is not possible to decide whether they were produced for a communal setting or for a commercial

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market context. How to decide whether professional copies of varying quality such as 1Q8, 4Q55, 4Q58, or an excerpt like 4Q61 were for a communal or a market context? Moreover, does it matter whether we are considering “biblical” or “sectarian” texts? It would seem that we would readily accept biblical copies to have been part of a book market and sectarian copies not so. Why? Is that because of the assumption that Qumran manuscripts were copied for the communal benefit of the community, and sectarian texts especially so? Is that because biblical texts would have been read by Jews more generally so that a book market is more feasible and sectarian texts were read only by Jews from a specific social network so that a book market would not have been feasible, for example, because of scale? Falk seems to have suggested a commercial market for sectarian rule texts but he gave no further explanation. Regarding the Serekh copies, half of them are of substandard quality and from those of professional quality only two, 4Q256 and 4Q258, seem to stand out for good but not deluxe writing quality, while 4Q264 is from a skilled scribe but possibly an excerpt of some sort. Were these kinds of Serekh copies, or the Isaiah copy 4Q57 with the divine name in palaeo-Hebrew characters, part of a commercial market of a specific social network? Here, our models of the textual communities determine how we envisage the social context of production and circulation.

When linking the site, the scrolls, and a group of people, palaeographic consideration of the writing quality and skills must be taken into account when looking at the scrolls as material evidence. Palaeography is a necessary method to study the scrolls as archaeological artefacts, and it should be part and parcel of any material philology approach. Thus, the diversity and pluriformity of the handwriting as discussed here can complement the much-studied textual pluriformity and fluidity to enhance our understanding of the literary and reading culture of ancient Judaea. As Tigchelaar reminded us, “The presence of scraps of writing exercises among the other scrolls of Qumran Cave 4 needs to be taken into account in any hypothesis about the collection in the caves.” Hempel discussed a number of texts from Cave 4 that appear less finessed and purposeful in their final shape to argue for their workaday quality. White Crawford observed that the presence of notes and exercises in Cave 4 indicate the local nature of the collection as it is unlikely that such notes were transported to Qumran from elsewhere but must have been written at Qumran. These hints of the real or “reality literature” can be reinforced by looking anew at the

215 White Crawford, Scribes and Scrolls at Qumran, 144.
written evidence through the lens of writing quality and skills. Any hypothesis that aims to explain the collections from Qumran must also take these aspects into account alongside other textual and archaeological approaches. Such an approach enables to differentiate not only between for whom a manuscript was likely copied but also where a manuscript was copied. Sometimes such an assessment entails a local explanation, but that does not mean of course that all written evidence was produced and circulated only locally.

If we ask for whom Serekh manuscripts were copied, the distinction between book production and book circulation may be different than for Isaiah manuscripts. With the Isaiah manuscripts it is clear that the extant copies certainly do not originate from the author, but how should we envisage that for the Serekh manuscripts? If we identify the Serekh manuscripts with the specific interests of a particular group or movement, then what does that mean for how we understand the production and circulation of such copies? If there was not a master copy or a single edition, what then was, in sociological terms, the source for circulation if not the author? On the basis of the above evidence and on the basis of a broader understanding of “private” as “communal,” I suggest that a private, communal setting of a group or a social network provides a better context for understanding book production and circulation of such texts than does a trade or market context. There were Serekh copies of considerable length in different formats that may have functioned in broader settings of studying or reading together, next to scholars’ personal copies, excerpts and training exercises. There was no publisher or other agent functioning as a gatekeeper. In sociological terms, the group acted as a gatekeeper for the production and circulation of texts. This gatekeeper function must have been the product of a complex social interaction, about which the extant sources from ancient Judaea do not tell us much. Fortunately, hints of this complex social interaction, hints of the real, can be glimpsed through the handwriting of the scribes of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

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