From Ink Traces to Ideology: 
Material, Text, and Composition of Qumran *Community Rule* Manuscripts

by

James Milton Tucker

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This study is a fresh analysis of a collection of scrolls and fragments grouped under the rubric, The Community Rule or Serekh ha-Yahad. As part of the manuscripts discovered in the Judean Desert, the Community Rule manuscripts are all fragmentary to various degrees, yet attest to important issues of legal dispute and community formation in the Second Temple era. Whereas the previous 70 years of scholarship bifurcated some of these scrolls into different “works,” I argue for a process of compositional development which revolved around issues of legal authority and purity. It is my contention that textual similarities and differences—ink traces as it were—provide opportunity to probe into the legal ideology of the tradents, in terms of how anterior sources were configured to establish and project political authority in contradistinction to the tradents’ opponents. Consequently, I propose a compositional hermeneutic model that accounts for textual stability and change with respect to disputes of legal authority and notions of textuality in the Second Temple era. In addition, I provide several new editions, most importantly a new edition of 4QSerekh ha-Yahad (± olim 4Qotot), 4Q Serekh ha-Yahad, and 1QS+ab (= 1QS, 1QSa, and 1QSB). These new editions were made by drawing on advanced manuscript studies in the digital humanities and material philology. Consequently, I provide a plethora of new textual readings and reconstructions. In short, this study observes and takes account of the various semantic and textual drifts in the compositional development attested in, among, and between the manuscripts of the so-called Community Rule at Qumran.
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