

SCHOLARS, SOLDIERS, CRAFTSMEN, ELITES?:
ANALYSIS OF FRENCH COLLECTION OF HUMAN
REMAINS FROM QUMRAN*

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Introduction

Physical anthropologists “look for life in patterns of death”¹ by synthesizing biology and culture into a biocultural framework for viewing the past. Skeletal and dental remains offer a unique perspective on antiquity because they provide a composite record of humans as biological entities within a cultural and environmental setting. When this evidence is merged with the historical and/or archaeological records of a people, a powerful tool for understanding life in the past becomes available. The purpose of this study was thus to explore the possibility of such synthesis for the community at Qumran.

There has long been a call in the literature for a detailed anthropological analysis of the human remains from Qumran exhumed by Roland de Vaux, OP in the 1950s.² In 1999, that call was answered

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¹ D. Martin et al., *Black Mesa Anasazi Health: Reconstructing Life from Patterns of Death and Disease* (Carbondale, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991) 27.

² “Of all the skeletons found, only one was studied in detail and reports of all the