

LETTERS OF THE CRYPTIC A SCRIPT AND PALEO-HEBREW LETTERS USED AS SCRIBAL MARKS IN SOME QUMRAN SCROLLS

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Although not all the Qumran texts have been analyzed, and certain scribal markings may not have come to our attention, two categories of these markings are described here briefly as they have wider implications for the analysis of the Qumran texts.¹ It is suggested here that individual letters in the Cryptic A script and paleo-Hebrew letters were used as scribal marks in several Qumran scrolls. The former type of notes has not been recognized in the past, while some of the latter have been noticed. For both groups the known samples are listed below. It seems that both groups of scribal markings point either to a sectarian background for the writing of these texts or to the use of the manuscripts in the Qumran community. A relatively large number of *zayins* is recognizable (figs. 1.6, 1.7 (2x), 1.12, 2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1).

1. *Letters in the Cryptic A script designating matters of special interest*

A category of scribal markings which has not been recognized previously pertains to single marginal and interlinear letters which can now safely be identified as belonging to the Cryptic A script, represented by 4QHoroscope (4Q186), 4Q249 (4QpapCryptA Midrash Sopher Moshe), 4Q298 (4QCryptA Words of Sage to Sons of Dawn), 4Q317 (4QCryptA Phases of the Moon), 4Q324c (4QCryptA Calendrical Doc. Cf), as well as the fragmentary 4Q250 and 4Q313.² This script is described by Pfann³ as a develop-

¹ This article is part of an extensive study of scribal practices reflected in the Qumran scrolls covering various types of scribal markings (see n. 17). Other parts will be published elsewhere as "Scribal Practices Reflected in the Hebrew and Aramaic Texts from the Judean Desert."

² Of these texts 4Q186 and 298 (see next note) have been published.

³ S. J. Pfann, "4Q298: The Maskil's Address to All Sons of Dawn," *JQR* 85 (1994) 203-35. Thanks are due to Mr. Pfann for showing me the manuscript of

ment from the Late Phoenician scripts, and it is used for a few texts of a Qumran sectarian nature written in this script. A few individual letters of the Cryptic A script are likewise written between the lines and, more frequently, in the margins of other Qumran texts, where they may well refer to a sectarian code message of some kind. Although the meaning of these scribal markings is not understandable to us, it is clear that they occur irregularly, as is evident from 4QpIsa^c, where only one column is copiously annotated in the margin (frgs. 4-7, col. ii). The scribal markings in this script, consisting of one, two, or three letters, are listed in the analysis below as well as in the Table, together with their parallels in the Cryptic A script, especially in 4Q298, but also in 4Q317 and 4Q186. In 1QIsa^a these signs may refer to the sectarian reading of certain passages,⁴ or to matters of sectarian interest. At the same time, three of the signs (figs. 1.4, 1.6, 1.7) may draw attention to elements lacking in the text in comparison with the MT, but this is an unlikely assumption since there is no evidence for the collation of any of the Qumran scrolls with the MT. In any event, since the connection between the writing in the so-called Cryptic A script and texts using sectarian terminology is solid,⁵ the new evidence clearly shows that at least some of the Qumran biblical texts were either used or copied by the Qumran community. The evidence pertains to the following sectarian writings: 4QSap. Work A^c (4Q417), 4QDibHam^a (4Q504), 4QShir^b, 4QMyst^c, and possibly also 4QpIsa^c (see section 2). In 4QMyst^c in particular the existence of an encoded sectarian message is not surprising (see below). It also pertains to the following biblical texts: 1QIsa^a, written in the Qumran scribal practice, and possibly also 4QExod^k and 4QCant^b. The use of letters in Cryptic A should be discussed in conjunction with that of individual letters of the paleo-Hebrew script which probably served

his article (including charts of the letters of 4Q298 and 4Q317) prior to its publication (the addendum to that article on pp. 233-35 was not available at the time). Mr. Pfann, who is preparing the latter three texts for publication for DJD, also plans further studies on the Cryptic A script.

⁴ Thus already J. C. Trever in M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1950) XVI and M. Martin, *The Scribal Character of the Dead Sea Scrolls I-II* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 44, 45; Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1958) 1.186-87, although they did not recognize the cryptic letters.

⁵ See Pfann, "4Q298."

a similar purpose in 1QIsa^a, 1QS, and 5QLam^a, for which see section 2. The appearance of letters in the Cryptic A script obviously has important implications for our understanding of the literature of the Qumran community, in particular of the biblical texts 1QIsa^a, 5QLam^a, and 4QCant^b, and of works the sectarian nature of which is not immediately obvious. All these compositions were annotated, although very rarely, with paleo-Hebrew letters and letters of the Cryptic A script. These letters were written either by the original scribes, later scribes, or readers.

Several signs occur at the beginning of new sections to which they refer as a whole: figs. 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.9, 1.10, 2.1, 2.2, 4.2. Other signs are written above single words: figs. 1.4, 1.6 (2x), 1.7 (2x).

On the difficulty concerning the distinction between the Cryptic script and paleo-Hebrew letters, see further section 2, below.

(i) Several signs are recognized in the margin of 1QIsa^a, occurring in that scroll without any recognizable pattern⁶ and, with one exception, not occurring more than once:

That the signs described below are not related to a system of paragraphing is shown by fig. 1.2, which occurs in conjunction with a *paragraphos* sign.

1QIsa^a col. VII, between lines 7 and 8 (Isa. 7:20; Trever, fig. 2). This sign (fig. 1.1) represents a prolonged form of the *resh* in the Cryptic A script. This sign appears at the beginning of a paragraph.

1QIsa^a col. VIII, 9 (Isa. 8:16; Trever, fig. 3). This sign (fig. 1.2) is identical with the *heth* in the Cryptic A script.

1QIsa^a col. XI, 4 (Isa. 11:15; Trever, fig. 4). This sign (fig. 1.3) probably reflects the *koph* in the Cryptic A script of 4Q298 or a *bet* = *beta* in the script of 4Q186. This sign appears at the beginning of a paragraph in 1QIsa^a.

1QIsa^a col. XVII, 1 (Isa. 21:16) and between cols. XXVIII, 18 and XXIX, 18 (Trever, fig. 5). This circular sign (fig. 1.4), above

⁶ It is difficult to know whether the paragraphs indicated by the signs are of any specific sectarian importance. Martin, *Scribal Character*, 1.184, notes that fig. 1.1, referring to Isa. 7:20, pertains to Babylon and Egypt, often mentioned in the Qumran writings, e.g., in 1QM. Probably an explanation of this kind is behind some of these signs in 1QIsa^a, but it is hard to press this point, as the passages which are most central for the Qumran community are not indicated in this way. Another thought which comes to mind is that some of the signs could be cross-references to the *pesharim* of Isaiah, but this assumption cannot be examined as the relevant sections of the *pesharim* have not been preserved.

שלוש, possibly indicating the lack of that word in the MT, may represent a *kaph* in the Cryptic A script or an *ayin* in the paleo-Hebrew script. It also occurs in XXVIII, 18 where it probably indicates the lack of a long stretch of text in the original text of the scroll, which was subsequently added by a later hand. It occurs also (with a different function?) in the margin to the right of the text of 4QSap. Work Ac (4Q417) 1, col. ii, line 23 (fig. 1.8) and in 4QCant^b col. i, line 7 (as a line-filler?); see fig. 3.2. The same circular form appears as part of a paragraph sign in 1QIsa^a (e.g., XXVIII, 29; XXX, 29; XXXV, 22).

1QIsa^a col. XXI, 23 (Isa. 27:13; Trever, fig. 6). This sign (fig. 1.5) represents the *šade* in the Cryptic A script. This sign appears at the beginning of a paragraph.

1QIsa^a col. XXVII, 21 = Isa. 33:19 (= Trever, fig. 8) contains a *zayin* (fig. 1.6). This sign, written above תראי, which reading differs from MT תראה, may reflect the notation of a variant reading. This letter represents either a *zayin* in the Cryptic A script or a paleo-Hebrew *zayin*.

1QIsa^a Col. XXXIII, 1 (Isa. 40:2; Trever, fig. 8),⁷ occurring above כפלים in the text. This sign (fig. 1.7) represents either the *zayin* in the Cryptic A script or a paleo-Hebrew *zayin*. A similar sign in col. XL, 19 (Isa. 48:14), occurs above בככל in the text. Note also the similar *zayin* in the margin of 4QShir^b 18, iii, 8 (fig. 1.12).

On this scroll, see further below, section 2.

(ii) In 4QSap. Work Ac (4Q417) the circle in the margin before the text of frg. 1, col. ii, line 23 (fig. 1.8; cf. also 4QSap. Work Ac 2, i, 11) probably reflects the Cryptic A letter *kaph*. The context does not help us to understand the sign. The sign occurs also in 4QCant^b col. i, line 7 (as a line-filler? see fig. 3.2).

(iii) In 4QDibHam^a (4Q504) 1-2, col. v, line 3 (not vi, 2 as recorded by Baillet in DJD VII) in the margin to the right of the text, the sign (fig. 1.9) reflects a *mem* in the Cryptic A script, at the beginning of what is probably a new section.⁸

⁷ Trever incorrectly combines his transcription of three similar shapes into one sign.

⁸ The evidence is not clear for a few additional markings in DibHam^a for which detailed drawings were presented by Baillet in the presentation of the text in DJD VII, although these shapes are not visible as such on the plates themselves, nor on PAM 43.611: 1-2, vi, 2 (on the plate this sign has the appearance of a parenthesis sign); 1-2, vii, 4 and 10 (both at the beginning of new sections).

(iv) The three signs in 4QMyst^c frg. 3, lines 2-4, written one above the other (fig. 1.10), are probably letters in the Cryptic A script. The top letter is a *samekh*, followed by an *ayin*, while the third letter could be a *shin/sin*. The context does not help us to understand the mystery of these signs, but the existence of a sectarian cryptic message in this text is not surprising. 4QMyst^c frg. 3 resembles 4QHoroscope (4Q186), since both compositions are of a physiognomical nature and both contain encoded messages written in the Cryptic A alphabet. If our explanation is correct,⁹ strictly speaking the three letters are not scribal signs, since they are part of the composition, as in 4QHoroscope.

(v) 4QExod^k, of which merely one fragment has been preserved, has a sign (fig. 1.11) in the upper right corner, above the center of the first word, which is very similar to the *lamed* in the Cryptic A script of 4Q317. The place of the sign could reflect a numbering system.¹⁰

(vi) The function of the *zayin* in the margin of 4QShir^b 18, iii, 8 (fig. 1.12) cannot be determined because of the fragmentary context.

(vii) Frg. 5 of 4QpPs^b contains the word לאל written in unusual letters. Allegro named them "some cryptic form" (DJD V, 53), while Skehan speaks of "distorted, unnatural paleohebrew lettering."¹¹ The letters look like Greek and Latin letters in mirror writing with Hebrew values (α = א and L = ל), and therefore resemble the Cryptic A script of 4QHoroscope, which includes a few Greek letters.

⁹ The text to the left of the letters has not been preserved. It is more likely that the three letters constituted the beginning of a three-line heading or note written in the middle of the text rather than constituting a three-letter note written one above the other. The three signs are preceded by blank spaces and the remnants of two letters written in the square script, like the remainder of the document. If our explanation is correct, no word סעש needs to be explained, but rather the three letters from the beginnings of three words starting three lines, of which the first one started with a *samekh* (ספס?).

¹⁰ For some examples, see J. T. Milik, "Numérotation des feuilles des rouleaux dans le scriptorium de Qumrân," *Semitica* 27 (1977) 75-81. For further examples, see my paper mentioned in n. 1.

¹¹ P. W. Skehan, "The Divine Name at Qumran, in the Masada Scrolls, and in the Septuagint," *BIOSSS* 13 (1980) 27.

2. *Paleo-Hebrew letters designating matters of special interest*

Several individual letters in the paleo-Hebrew script, written in the margins of some compositions (1QIsa^a, 1QS, 4QpIsa^c, and 5QLam^a) and at the ends of lines in 4QCant^b (see below), probably draw attention to certain matters or to passages of special interest. It must be admitted that the exact purpose of these letters has not been established. These symbols, like all other symbols in the Qumran manuscripts, were probably inserted in the text after the writing was completed.

The decision whether a certain letter belongs to either the Cryptic A script or the paleo-Hebrew script is sometimes difficult, in particular since some of the letters are ornamented or stylized. Nevertheless, for the sake of the description, a distinction between these two scripts is made here, although letters of both types were used together, even in juxtaposition, in the text of 4QHorsoscope and in the margin of 1QIsa^a. The use of single paleo-Hebrew letters (as opposed to the writing of complete scrolls in that script), with the exception of the use of the paleo-Hebrew *waw* as a paragraph sign, probably reflects the same sectarian background as the use of letters of the Cryptic A script.¹²

(i) Several signs are recognized in the margin of 1QIsa^a, occurring in that scroll without any recognizable pattern and not occurring more than once in that scroll.

The sign in 1QIsa^a in the margin to the right of col. VI, 22 (fig. 4.1) referring to Isa. 7:8 (= Trever, fig. 1) represents a *waw* in the paleo-Hebrew script (cf. especially the shape of the *waw* in the patch in 4QpaleoExod^m, col. VIII). This sign should be compared with the similar use of the paleo-Hebrew *waw* in the margin of 1QS (see below) and in a different way in the margin of 4QPs^b, as well as in the text of 4QpaleoExod^m and 11QpaleoLev^a. This paleo-Hebrew *waw*, like other ones, could indicate a new paragraph, but there is no indication in the spacing or context that this is the case.

1QIsa^a col. XXII, 10 (Isa. 28:9; Trever, fig. 7). This sign (fig. 2.1) is an embellished representation of the *zayin* in the paleo-Hebrew script with an ornamented vertical line above (like fig. 2

¹² See the present writer's forthcoming study, "The Socio-Religious Background of the Paleo-Hebrew Biblical Texts Found at Qumran," *Festschrift M. Hengel*, referring to both the texts written *in toto* in paleo-Hebrew and to the writing of the tetragrammaton in paleo-Hebrew characters.

in 1QIsa^a). This sign appears at the beginning of a new section.

(ii) The two signs in 1QS in col. VII and col. IX, 3 (figs. 2 and 2.2) probably seal off a content unit. Both are composite signs, and they resemble in character, though not in shape, the *koronis* used in the Greek scribal tradition. The *koronis*, written at the end of literary units, was likewise shaped as a Greek paragraph sign with ornaments above and below it.¹³ The character of the Greek sign thus resembles that of 1QS IX, 3 (fig. 2.2) of which the top element likewise is a paragraph sign.

The sign occurring at the bottom margin of 1QS VII (fig. 2) is composed of a paleo-Hebrew *zayin* with an ornamental line on top (similar to 1QIsa^a XXII, 10 [fig. 2.1]) and a triangular form below.¹⁴ It could indicate the end of a content unit, since a new unit starts at the beginning of the next column. On the other hand, the sign could also be taken to denote a numbering system (cf. n. 11).

The composite sign in 1QS col. IX, 3 (fig. 2.2) (with elements in common with the sign in 1QIsa^a XXII, 10 = Trever fig. 7; see our fig. 2.1) is composed of the paragraph sign and below it a paleo-Hebrew *zayin* and a *samekh*¹⁵ similar to the one found in the Cryptic A letters in 4QHoroscope (4Q186). The paragraph sign indicates a new section, while the letter combination may convey a sectarian message.

The paleo-Hebrew *waw* in 1QS V, 1 (fig. 4.2) appears at the beginning of a major content division. It probably indicates this major division, since almost all other paragraphs in this scroll are indicated with a regular paragraph sign. See the discussion of fig. 4.1 (1QIsa^a VI, 22) above.

(iii) The sign in the bottom margin of 5QLam^a col. II (fig. 2.3) resembles a truncated *waw* in the paleo-Hebrew script or a *waw* in the Aramaic script of the sixth century BCE (suggestion of É. Puech).

¹³ Cf. E. G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged by P. J. Parsons; Bulletin Supplement 46; London: University of London Institute of Classical Studies, 1987) 12 (with bibliography).

¹⁴ É. Puech, "Une Apocalypse Messianique (4Q521)," *RQ* 60 (1992) 482 explains the triangular form as an *ayin* and the two signs together as (א)ע (א)י.

¹⁵ Allegro reads the letter as a *waw*, but it is identified as a *samekh* by J. Carmignac, "Les horoscopes de Qumran," *RQ* 5 (1965) 199-206, and J. Strugnell, "Notes en marge du Volume V des 'Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan,'" *RQ* 7 (1970) 163-276, esp. 274. Puech, "Une Apocalypse," 482 explains the sign as (א)ם (א)י referring to the end of an edition.

(iv) Several signs in the margin of 4QpIsa^c frgs. 4-7, col. ii resemble letters either in paleo-Hebrew or Cryptic A. Fig. 4.3 probably is a paleo-Hebrew *waw*. It is written in the margin, after a blank line, at the beginning of a new section, just like the position of the sign in 1QIsa^a VI, 22 (fig. 4.1) and in 1QS V, 1 (fig. 4.2). Fig. 2.4 probably represents a stylized *shin/sin* in paleo-Hebrew, almost of the Samaritan type, introducing a scriptural quotation in the *pesher*.

(v) 4Q398 14-17, i, 4 has a sign in the margin which the editors explain as a single cursive ³*aleph* (fig. 2.5). It is not impossible that this is a reference to the books of Scripture mentioned in the text.

(vi) The paleo-Hebrew letters in 4QCant^b (figs. 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6), described elsewhere as possible line-fillers,¹⁶ could also denote matters of special (sectarian) interest since their use as line-fillers is not consistent.

This short note, focusing on two types of scribal markings, does not list other types of scribal markings in the Qumran texts. For these groups,¹⁷ see the more extensive article mentioned in n. 1. It seems that the two groups of scribal markings discussed here point to a sectarian background of either the writing of these texts or of the use of the manuscripts in the Qumran community.

¹⁶ See the article mentioned in n. 1 and the preliminary publication of this text by the present author in *JJS* (1995), in press.

¹⁷ (1) Marks, almost always in the margin, and other scribal systems, pertaining to the content division of the text into paragraphs; (2) marks pertaining to scribal intervention, mainly for the correction of errors; (3) marks drawing attention to certain matters; (4) marks written at the ends of lines as line-fillers; (5) separation dots between words; (6) marks numbering content units and sheets.

Table

Fig. 1.1

- a) 1QIsa^a VII, 7-8
b) 4Q298 3-4, ii, 5
(*resh*)

Fig. 1.2

- a) 1QIsa^a VIII, 9
b) 4Q298 1-2, i, 4
(*heth*)

Fig. 1.3

- a) 1QIsa^a XI, 4
b) 4Q298 1-2, i, 4
(*qoph*)

Fig. 1.4

- a) 1QIsa^a XVII, 1
b) 1QIsa^a XXVIII, 18
c) 4Q298 3-4, ii, 6
(*kaph*)

Fig. 1.5

- a) 1QIsa^a XXI, 23
b) 4Q298 3-4, ii, 6
(*zade*)

Fig. 1.6

- a) 1QIsa^a XXVII, 21
b) 4Q298 3-4, ii, 4
(*zayin*)
c) palco-Hebrew *zayin*
(1QpaleoLev frg. 2, 5)

Fig. 1.7

- a) 1QIsa^a XXXIII, 1
b) 1QIsa^a XL, 19
c) see fig. 1.6 (b, c)

Fig. 1.8

- a) 4QSap. Work A^c
(417) 1, ii, 23
b) see fig. 1.4 (c)

Fig. 1.9

- a) 4QDibHam^a
1-2, v, 3
b) 4Q298 3-4, ii, 7
(*mem*)

Fig. 1.10

- a) 4QMyst^t
frg. 3, lines 2-4
b) 4Q317 frg. 5, 4
(*samekh*)
c) 4Q317 frg. 5, 10
(*ayin*)

Fig. 1.11

- a) 4QExod^k
top margin
b) 4Q317 frg. 2, i, 10
(*lamed*)

Fig. 1.12

- 4QShir^b 18, iii 8
(*zayin*)
cf. figs. 1.6, 1.7



Fig. 2
1QS VII
bottom margin
(paleo-Heb. *zayin* + ?)



Fig. 2.1
1QIsa^a XXII, 10
(cf. paleo-Heb. *zayin*)



Fig. 2.2
a) 1QS IX, 3
(*paragraphos* + paleo-Heb. *zayin* + paleo-Heb. *samekh*)
b) 4Q186 1, I, 5
(*samekh*)



Fig. 2.3
5QLam^a II
bottom margin
(paleo-Heb. *waw*?)



Fig. 2.4
4QpIsa^c 4-7, II, 18
(paleo-Heb. *sin/shin*)



Fig. 2.5
4Q398 14-17, i, 4
(*aleph*?)



Fig. 3.1
4QCant^b 1, 4
(paleo-Heb. *zayin*?)



Fig. 3.2
4QCant^b 1, 7
(paleo-Heb. *ayin*?)



Fig. 3.3
4QCant^b 1, 9
(*epsilon*?)



Fig. 3.4
4QCant^b 1, 11
(paleo-Hebrew *sin/shin*?; *sigma*?)



Fig. 3.5
4QCant^b 1, 13
(paleo-Hebrew *bet*?)



Fig. 3.6
4QCant^b 3,
last line
(*gamma* or *diple obelismene*?)



Fig. 4.1
1QIsa^a VI, 22
(paleo-Heb. *waw*)



Fig. 4.2
1QS V, 1
(paleo-Heb. *waw*)



Fig. 4.3
4QpIsa^c 4-7, ii, 10
(paleo-Hebrew *aleph*
or *waw*?)