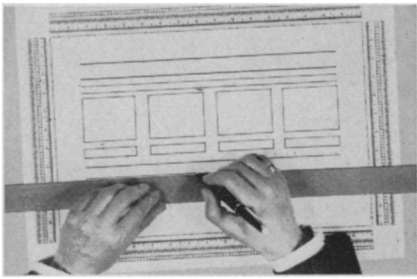


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## ARCHAEOLOGY Scroll Search Controlled By Jordan Government

➤ **FURTHER SEARCH** for the valuable Dead Sea Scrolls by the swift nomadic tribes of Bedouins, who for years have been beating archaeologists to them, has been declared illegal by the Government of Jordan.

Since the first exciting discovery of a crumbling scroll in a desert cave near Jericho by a young Bedouin shepherd in 1947, Bedouins have been eagerly searching, finding and selling at high prices scraps of these 2,000-year-old scrolls, considered the most remarkable manuscripts discovered in modern times.

Extraordinary crews of these skillful tribesmen have climbed over cliffs and into caves no one else can reach and have uncovered valuable sheepskin, linen and copper scraps of the scrolls. Crossing the desert on camels and horses, they have often foiled knowledgeable archaeologists in the search simply by being in the caves first and taking all pieces in their greed for the high prices offered.

Today no one is authorized to search for the valuable documents except by permission of the Jordan government, said Dr. Awani Dajani, director of the Department of Antiquities, Government of Jordan. Dr. Dajani was in Washington, D.C., for the opening of the Smithsonian Institution exhibition of 14 scrolls and 30 artifacts.

The leather and copper scrolls carry the ancient beliefs of the Essenes, a Jewish reform sect that fled into the desert 100 years before Christ and lived in a monastery called Khirbat Qumran for 200 years before the devastating Roman invasion in the first century A. D. During this time they wrote the scrolls and preserved them in sturdy clay jars, which they hid in limestone caves near the site of their monastery.

Since 1947, scholars have patiently unrolled, cut, pieced together and deciphered these Psalms, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, the Book of Job and other scrolls in endeavors that have profoundly influenced their understanding of Biblical and Judean thought. The scrolls throw light on the obscure two or three centuries of transition between the latest books of the Old Testament and the earliest of the New Testament. Major verdict of the scholars is that the scrolls do not shake the foundations of Christianity but have contributed greatly to understanding it.

At present, no particular search is going on in Jordan for further scrolls, said Dr. Dajani. The Jordan government is now engaged in conservation of the scrolls and caves of the Essenes monastery, and are preparing a museum exhibit for tourists in the Jordanian part of Jerusalem.

At the time of the first discovery of the scrolls, Israel did not exist as a nation. Since its emergence, the boundary between Jordan and Israel has been set in such a way that Jordan spans both sides of the Dead Sea to the north and includes the area of the Essenes monastery as well as part of the city of Jerusalem.

• Science News Letter, 87:178 March 20, 1965

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