Erratum:


SAGE apologizes to the author and readers for any inconvenience or embarrassment caused. The correct version appears below:

On a Bilingual Copto-Arabic Manuscript of 4 Ezra and the Reception of this Pseudepigraphon in Coptic Literature*

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Abstract

The text of 4 Ezra has survived in many ancient languages. Among these, the Sahidic Coptic version is the most poorly attested. The focus of this study is to introduce a new Sahidic fragment of this Jewish pseudepigraphon, which is preserved in a

* The claves quoted hereby are designated as follows: CAVT = J.-C. Haelewyck, Clavis Apocryrophorum Veteris Testamenti (Corpus Christianorum; Turnhout: Brepols, 1998); CPG = M. Geerard, Clavis Patrum Graecorum (5 vols.; Corpus Christianorum; Turnhout: Brepols, 1983–87); M. Geerard and J. Noret, Clavis Patrum Graecorum. Supplementum (Corpus Christianorum; Turnhout: Brepols, 1998); Clavis coptica = Clavis Patrum Coticorum; available online at http://www.cmcl.it (retrieved May 2015).
bilingual Copto-Arabic manuscript from the Monastery of Apa Shenoute. This hitherto unknown fragment is datable to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. The article provides an edition of the newly identified fragment, together with a paleographical description, an analysis of the text, and a survey of the relevant sources pertaining to the reception of 4 Ezra in Coptic and Copto-Arabic literature.

**Keywords:** 4 Ezra, pseudepigrapha, Copto-Arabic literature, Sahidic, paleography, White Monastery.

1. Introduction

4 Ezra (= 2 Ezra 3–14; cf. CAVT 180) is a Jewish apocalypse that comprises seven visions concerning the future fate of Israel. The recipient of the revelation mysteriously introduces himself as ‘Salathiel, who am also Ezra’¹ and claims that the visions occurred ‘thirty years after the destruction of our city’ (3.1). While the sack of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 BCE is probably envisaged here, the historical locus that influenced the author seems to be the destruction of the Holy City by the Romans in 70 CE, a detail that would place the composition of 4 Ezra at the end of the first century at the earliest. This dating aligns well with the reference in 11.1–12.51 to a vision of a three-headed eagle, which may represent the Flavian emperors Vespasian, Titus and Domitian.²

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2. The opinions concerning the identity of the three emperors differ, but the most commonly held view is that the vision refers to the three Flavian emperors. The text mentions that the second emperor will be murdered by the third, which could be a reference to Titus, who is suspected of having been killed by Domitian. For a summary of the views on this issue, see L. DiTommaso, ‘Dating the Eagle Vision of 4 Ezra: A New Look at an Old Theory’, *JSP* 20 (1999), pp. 3-38 (3-7, 36-38). DiTommaso does not accept the hypothesis of the Flavian emperors, although he admits that the late first-century dating of 4 Ezra is possible given the reference to the thirty years that passed since the destruction of Jerusalem.
Most scholars seem to agree that 4 Ezra was composed in Hebrew somewhere in Palestine. If this is indeed the case, then the original is lost. From the Greek version, which is the source of all subsequent ancient translations, only a few quotations are preserved in Clement of Alexandria’s Stromata (CPG 1377) and the Apostolic Constitutions (CPG 1740). While the Hebrew and Greek texts of 4 Ezra are lost, complete or fragmentary translations have survived in Latin, Syriac, Sahidic Coptic, Arabic, Gǝzǝ, Armenian and Georgian.


5. In this and the following notes pertaining to the versions of 4 Ezra, I refer mainly to the standard editions. For a more detailed bibliography, the reader can consult CAVT no. 180. Most of the ancient versions can conveniently be found in German and Latin translations on parallel columns in B. Violet, Die Esra Apokalypse (IV. Esra). I. Die Überlieferung (GCS, 18; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1910). The Latin text is available in A.F.J. Klijn, Der lateinische Text der Apokalypse des Esra (TU, 131; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1983).


7. See infra.

8. The Arabic manuscripts of 4 Ezra contain three different versions of the text. For an introduction to the first two Arabic versions, see G. Graf, Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur (Studi e testi, 118, 133, 146-47, 172; 5 vols.; Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica, 1944–53), I, pp. 219-21. Texts in H. Ewald, Das vierte Ezrabuch nach seinem Zeitalter, seinen arabischen Übersetzungen und einer neuen Wiederherstellung (Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften
The Sahidic is the most poorly preserved of all ancient versions of 4 Ezra. In light of its meager attestation in Coptic, it seems appropriate to introduce here a new Sahidic fragment of this Jewish apocalypse. The following pages provide a description, edition and translation of a hitherto unknown portion of the text in Coptic, together with an analysis of its relevance for our knowledge of 4 Ezra. Finally, the new fragment will be studied in the context of the reception of 4 Ezra in Coptic and Copto-Arabic traditions.

2. Vestiges of Three Coptic Manuscripts of 4 Ezra

With the addition of the newly identified fragment, there are now three fragmentary Coptic manuscripts containing portions of 4 Ezra. In 1904, Johannes Leipoldt published the edition of P. Berol. 9096, a heavily damaged codex leaf in the collection of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, which contains, with many lacunae, the Sahidic text of 4 Ezra 13.30–33 (recto), 13.40–46 (verso). The fragment was dated paleographically in the editio princeps to the sixth–eighth centuries.


Given that the attempt to ascribe dates to Coptic literary hands most often lacks independent criteria, Leipoldt’s suggestion can be nothing more than a wild guess. A peculiar feature of P. Berol. 9096 is the shape of the letters ṅ, ń, 'n, ŋ, ƕ, whose horizontal strokes end with an oblique left serif.

Aside from the text edited by Leipoldt, portions of Sahidic 4 Ezra 10.32-46 are preserved on a parchment folio from a different Sahidic manuscript, now in the British Library. This badly damaged leaf is kept together with other codicologically unrelated fragments under the shelf mark Or. 6201 C. As the fragment was acquired at a more recent date, it is not mentioned in the two published catalogues of the Coptic manuscripts in the British Library. Hans-Gebhard Bethge, who studied, identified and eventually edited the text, wrote in an unpublished paper available in the reading room of the ‘Asian & African Studies’ department of the British Library, ‘In the collection Or. 6201 C, some text from 4 Ezra 10 can be read on the fragment of one page (scil. folio) containing large parts of one complete column and parts of a second one’. The text of the London fragment is faded


15. I would like to express my gratitude to the staff of the Berlin Papyrussamm lung, for providing me high-quality photographs of P. Berol. 9096.

16. I consulted in situ all the fragments under the shelf mark Or. 6201 C in May 2014. This shelf mark includes the following glass plates: ‘6201 C (1, 2)’, ‘6201 C (3-5)’, ‘6201 C (6) pt. 1-2’ (two long papyrus rolls kept under separate glass plates) and ‘6201 C (Fragments)’. To the latter belongs the 4 Ezra fragment, which is kept under the same glass plates with six other Coptic parchment fragments of various codices.


and partly covered by dirt, especially on the flesh side. The pagination \( \pi \tau \tau \lambda \lambda = 83-84 \) is still visible on the upper outer corners of the pages. Nothing is known concerning the provenance of the Berlin and London fragments.20

A fragment from a third Coptic manuscript of 4 Ezra is preserved in the National Library in Paris under the inventory number BnF Copte 132\(^1\), f. 32. This newly identified manuscript witness contains 4 Ezra 5.33-35 (recto), 37-40 (verso) in the Sahidic dialect, together with an Arabic translation on parallel columns. The Paris fragment will be examined in detail in the following pages.

3. Provenance and Paleographical Assessment of the New Coptic Fragment of 4 Ezra

As with the other Sahidic fragments in the National Library in Paris, BnF Copte 132\(^1\), f. 32 also belonged to the Monastery of Apa Shenoute, or the White Monastery as it is most commonly known, situated in Upper Egypt near the ancient town of Akhmim. The Sahidic codices of the White Monastery, which must have possessed the largest Christian library in Egypt at the turn of the first millennium, has survived only fragmentarily. Starting with the second half of the eighteenth century, fragments of the White Monastery manuscripts were dispersed all over the world and ended up in various collections.21 The 4 Ezra fragment belonged to one of the batches of various Sahidic fragments are bound together and kept with the other catalogues of Coptic manuscripts in the British Library on the shelves of the ‘Asian & African Studies’ reading room.

20. Walter E. Crum’s suggestion that the Berlin fragment came from the library of the White Monastery is unlikely. No other fragment of this codex, or at least in the same scribe’s hand, is known to survive among the White Monastery manuscripts. See H.E. Winlock and W.E. Crum, The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes (The Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2 parts, 1926), I, p. 197.

dismembered White Monastery manuscripts that were deposited to the National Library in Paris between 1885 and 1887, following a series of acquisitions made by Gaston Maspero in Egypt.\textsuperscript{22}

BnF Copte 132\textsuperscript{1}, f. 32 is a damaged paper leaf of which only the lower part has survived. Although the main text is in Sahidic, the fragment features also an Arabic translation on the outer margins of the pages. The Coptic script is the sloping uncial of later date, which is common in some bilingual Sahidic–Arabic paper codices.\textsuperscript{23} It appears that such artifacts belong to very last stage of production of Sahidic manuscripts in Egypt. Similar codices contain scalae (i.e. grammars and lexica),\textsuperscript{24} lectionaries but also some peculiar literary works like the Triadon\textsuperscript{25} or the so-called Mysteries of the Greek Alphabet (clavis coptica 0240).\textsuperscript{26} It seems reasonable to suppose that

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\textit{24. A. Sidarus, ‘La tradition sahidique de philologie gréco-copto-arabe (manuscrits des XIII\textsuperscript{e}–XV\textsuperscript{e} siècles)’, in N. Bosson (ed.), \textit{Études coptes VII. Neuvième journée d’études, Montpellier, 3–4 juin 1999} (CBC, 12; Louvain: Peeters, 2000), pp. 265-304.}
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\textit{26. This work has survived in the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Huntington 393. The codex was published in A. Hebbelynck, ‘Les mystères des lettres grecques d’après un manuscrit copte-arabe de la Bibliothèque Bodléienne d’Oxford’,}
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these codices were originally intended for an audience no longer able to understand Coptic, one which needed an accompanying Arabic translation. At the same time, they witness an attempt by the Arab-ized Coptic intellectuals to preserve the Sahidic idiom, which had already been out of use for some centuries. As these manuscripts provide Arabic translations of the Coptic texts, they served the European scholars of the seventeenth century as philological tools to read the Coptic language.

Among the Copto-Arabic paper manuscripts, the fragment of 4 Ezra bears the closest resemblance with several membras disjecta of a Holy Week lectionary from the White Monastery, which are preserved in the Vatican and the National Library in Paris. The surviving folios of this codex accommodate the following biblical lections:

Vatican, Borgia copto 109, cassetta 23, fasc. 98, ff. 1-428 = Mk. 14.25; Lk. 22.14-30; Ps. 100.6-7; John 13.21-30; Isa. 31.9-16
Paris, BnF Copte 132, f. 32 = 4 Ezra 5.33-40
Paris, BnF Copte 102, f. 2 = John 17.17-26

From the fragments mentioned here, the four leaves in the Vatican have received some attention in scholarly literature. In their list of


the Sahidic manuscripts of the gospels, Franz-Jürgen Schmitz and Gerd Mink assigned them the siglum ‘sa 349L’.\textsuperscript{30} For his part, Karlheinz Schüssler’s \textit{Biblia coptica} designated the same codex as ‘sa 74L’.\textsuperscript{31}

The fragment of \textit{4 Ezra} and those of the Copto-Arabic Holy Week lectionary are written in a very similar, albeit slightly different, hand. The paleographical differences between the fragments are so superficial that, at first glance, one is tempted to ascribe all of them to the same codex.\textsuperscript{32} It is only a careful examination of the two scripts that allows us to determine that they were inscribed by different copyists. For example, the two arms of \(\text{	extdegree}\) never connect to the stem of the letter in the surviving leaves of the Holy Week lectionary, unlike in the \textit{4 Ezra} fragment. Moreover, the vertical stroke that forms the basis of \(\dot{x}\) is much longer in the lectionary, being used as a ligature that connects with the preceding letter. This paleographical feature is absent in the \textit{4 Ezra} fragment. Finally, the scribe of the Holy Week lectionary pointed out, by means of a supralinear stroke, each autosyllabic vowel (e.g. \(\dot{\text{e}}\), \(\text{voke}\), \(\text{vole}\), \(\dot{\text{v}}\text{ey}\)), unlike the copyist of \textit{4 Ezra}, who used a more classical system of supralineation. Therefore, despite their similarity, the two manuscripts are arguably not the work of the same scribe.


\textsuperscript{32} My first hypothesis was actually that BnF Copte 132\textsuperscript{1}, f. 32 belonged to this lectionary manuscript. However, Diliana Atanassova (Göttingen Academy) rightly pointed out some paleographical features that helped me to differentiate the two hands.
4. The Date of the New Manuscript Fragment

Nevertheless, the close paleographical resemblance indicates that the two Copto-Arabic manuscripts belong to the same period. Agostino Ciasca and George Horner tentatively dated the Vatican fragments of the Holy Week lectionary to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. However, a date between the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century seems more palatable on the basis of the extant evidence. This assumption is based on the similarity between the fragments examined here and two dated bilingual Sahidic-Arabic manuscripts. Thus, Ms. Huntington 393 (the Mysteries of the Greek Alphabet), kept in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Copte 44 (Scala) are dated to the Era of the Martyrs, 1109 (= 1393 CE) and 1105 (= 1389 CE) respectively. On the basis of these two comparanda, we may subscribe to the view that the manuscript from which the fragment of 4 Ezra was dismantled can also be ascribed to the same period, that is, the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

5. Text and Context

As noted above, the newly identified fragment contains 4 Ezra 5.33–35 (recto), 37-40 (verso). The surviving text features a part of the second vision of Ezra, during which the angel Uriel instructs him about the fate of Israel. Ezra wants to know why the creator has abandoned Israel. The angel explains to the seer that if humans cannot understand even the things surrounding them, they will not be able to penetrate the mystery of the divine plans.

The recto preserves vestiges of sixteen lines in Sahidic, having the text of 4 Ezra 5.33b-35a. The Arabic text is particularly damaged on this side, remnants of eleven lines being still visible, all incomplete. The first three lines in Sahidic, pertaining to verse 5.33b, are the most heavily damaged, but they can be safely restored with the help of the Latin version,

In your [heart about the] people of Israel? Have you [loved it] more than the one who [created it]?

Valde in excessu mentis factus es in Israel; aut plus dilexisti eum super eum qui fecit eum?

The following lines, which contain 4 Ezra 5.34-35a, also agree with the Latin translation and do not contain significant variae lectiones. Although the doublet παντές παντείς (‘Lord, Lord’) on recto’s line 5 (4 Ezra 5.34) is not supported in any other version, it is likely that this is not simply a dittography committed by the Coptic scribe. One may suspect that the underlying Greek text in this case was κύριε, κύριε, and that this formula was rendered differently from one version to another. For example, the Latin text usually has Dominator Domine (‘Sovereign Lord’) in those places where the Syriac reads ‘Lord, my Lord’ (חייאכ מזר), together with the Arabic and Γς̱ς. However, the reading of the Coptic text seems to find support in Armenian, which has the same repetition at 5.38, ܪܡܐ, ܪܡܐ. The verso preserves fifteen lines in Sahidic. The surviving text has 4 Ezra 5.37b-40, vv. 35b-37a being lost. The text is more difficult to reconstruct on this side because from verse 5.37b only a few words and strings of letters have survived. One may tentatively restore the first part of the lacuna as [καὶ ὁ ὅτε ἐγέρθης ὑμεῖς ἐξῆλθεν ὑμῖν] (‘[and] then [I shall inform you about the] works that […]’) on the basis of the parallel Latin text, et nunc ostendam tibi eum laborem quem rogas videre. However, the reconstruction of the whole text is further complicated by the fact that the Sahidic continues with the preposition ‘and’, μή-, followed by another lacunose sentence. This does not seem to be supported either by the Latin or by the Arabic text on the parallel column.

35. Klijn, Apokalypse des Esra, p. 36.
36. Cf. 4 Ezra 3.4; 4.38; 5.23, 38; 6.11, 38 (Syriac only), 55 (Syriac only); 7.17, 45 (Syriac only), 58, 75 (Syriac only); 8.6 (Syriac only), 36 (Syriac only), 45 (Syriac only); 9.29 (Syriac only); 12.7; 13.51.
phrases united by the conjunction ‘and’ in 5.37, and which could thus resemble more or less the Sahidic text, are the Syriac and the Arabic translation from Mount Sinai, the latter being arguably based on a Syriac model,\(^\text{38}\)

> And then I will inform you concerning the work and the time that you asked to see.\(^\text{39}\)

> وحينئذ أخبرك بامر الدنيا والدهور التي طلبت ان تراها

> And then I will inform you concerning the world and the times that you asked to see.\(^\text{40}\)

Based on these two versions, we may very carefully propose the following reconstruction of BnF Copte 132\(^1\), f. 32v, lines 3-4, ἡμείς[йте][σα] τη[ς] \[γ]ε\[ν]ώσις \[της\] τ[ου] \[Ἰσραήλ\]

> διὰ τι γάρ σύν ἐγένετο ἡ μήμα τῆς μητρός μου τάφος, ἵνα μή ἰδον τὸν μόχθον τοῦ Ιακώβ καὶ τὸν κόπον τοῦ γένους Ἰσραήλ

> \(\text{4 Ezra 5.35 – versio sahidica}\)

> (BnF Copte 132\(^1\), f. 32r, ll. 14-16)

> εἶτε ό γάρ· ἴσως τὸ ἡκατοντάκατον ῥτάφος εὑρήκας [..]

38. The Syriac Vorlage of this Arabic version has been underlined for the first time in M.E. Stone, ‘A New Manuscript of the Syro-Arabic Version of the Fourth Book of Ezra’, \textit{JSJ} 8 (1977), pp. 183-84.


The Sahidic translation shows full congruity with the Greek text quoted by Clement, offering a word for word parallel. Unfortunately, the text breaks off with the conjunction χρησίμ = ἵνα and we do not have the possibility further to check the accuracy of the translation. In any case, no conclusion can be drawn on the basis of such a small amount of text.

6. Indirect Egyptian Sources Concerning the Books of Ezra

Although the codex from which came the Paris fragment of 4 Ezra is a late product, the text itself must be considerably older since it is unlikely that any literary works had been translated into Sahidic for many hundreds of years before the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries. Unfortunately, the age of the Sahidic translation of 4 Ezra is impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy. The British Library fragment can tentatively be dated on paleographical grounds to the sixth–seventh centuries, a fact which, even if reliable, would provide only a relative terminus ante quem for the translation. 41 Moreover, given that the fragments of the three manuscripts do not overlap, we have no occasion to decide whether they belonged to the same translation from Greek or, rather, more than one Coptic version of 4 Ezra existed.

Our evidence concerning the circulation of 4 Ezra in Coptic Egypt is meager. What is more, it is not immediately clear if all the sources amassed below refer to our pseudepigraphon or rather to one of the other books attributed to Ezra. For example, the Monastery of Apa Elias library catalogue, inscribed on an ostracon tentatively dated to the seventh century, mentions among the Old Testament writings ‘the (books of) Esdras’ (Ῥεδρα). 42 Most likely, this oblique reference pertains to what the Septuagint calls 1 and 2 Ezra, since the two books feature immediately after the Chronicles (Ῥεδραληπομενον).


This order corroborates well with that supplied by Athanasius of Alexandria in his thirty-ninth *Festal Letter* (CPG 2102), in which he evokes the biblical canon of the Egyptian church. Thus, Athanasius mentions among the canonical writings of the Old Testament, ‘First and Second Chronicles, …reckoned as one book; then First and Second Esdras, likewise as one’.  

Similarly, the two Ezras are counted among the historical books and are named after the Chronicles in some of the most important biblical manuscripts, such as Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, Basiliano-Venetus, but also in the lists of canonical writings transmitted by Origen (= Eusebius, *HE* vi.25; CPG 3495), Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catech.* iv.35; CPG 3585) and others.  

According to this order, 1–2 Ezra usually close the series of historical books.  

The books of Ezra are mentioned as well on a damaged papyrus fragment written in Sahidic, discovered by an archeological mission from the Macquarie University, Sydney, in the Theban tomb TT233, situated on ḏịrāʾ Abī n-Naḡā, in Western Thebes (inventory number, TT233: 39).  


44. See the lists in H.B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn, 1902), pp. 201-14. One should note that the list of Origen transmitted in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* is preserved as well in the Arabic *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, whose author borrowed extensive material from Eusebius; see B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria. I. S. Mark to Benjamin I* (PO, 1.2; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907), p. 172 [74].  


late antiquity as a monastic cell. The fragment seems to provide a portion from a list of Old Testament writings. The surviving text lists, on separate lines, the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Esdra (Esdras), then again, Esdraz (Esdraz), and Judith. Unfortunately, as the original length of the lines remains unknown, we cannot estimate with any degree of accuracy how much text has been lost on each line. As in the case of the ostracon from the Monastery of Apa Elías, this document likely refers to the LXX 1 and 2 Ezra. This is suggested by the position of the books of Ezra, which follow Daniel, being thus integrated among the prophetic texts. More or less similar orders are attested in Alexandrinus (Judith, 1–2 Ezra), in Melito of Sardes (= Eusebius, HE iv.26) (Daniel, Ezekiel, 1–2 Ezra), Epiphanius, Adv. haer. (CPG 3745) (Daniel, 1–2 Ezra), Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila (CPG 7794) (Daniel, 1–2 Ezras, Judith) etc.47 Notably, the succession of books in the Theban papyrus closely resembles that extant in the fifth- or sixth-century Dialogue of Timothy, which has the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) followed by 1–2 Ezra and Judith.48

Walter Ewing Crum published a Coptic ostracon preserved in the Papyrussammlung of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin (Ostr. Berlin P. 1069),49 which features a list of extracanonical writings, including ‘Esra of Southiel’ (Esdras Νόσογωνων). Although the reference is vague, it is reasonable to suppose that it refers indeed to 4 Ezra, as Crum suggested. In this case, ‘Southiel’ must be a variant of ‘Salathiel’ mentioned in 4 Ezra 3.1 as an alternative name of the seer (ego Salathiel,

texts discovered in TT233 will be published by Malcolm Choat, Heike Behlmer and Matthew Underwood.

47. See Swete, Introduction, pp. 201-14.
49. Winlock and Crum, The Monastery of Epiphanius, I, p. 197; cf. also the description of the item in W. Beltz, ‘Katalog der koptischen Handschriften der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (Teil II)’, Archiv für Papyrusforschung 27 (1980), pp. 122-222 (133). One should note that, although it was mentioned by Crum in his study of the Coptic material found at the Monastery of Apa Epiphanius at Thebes, the Berlin ostracon did not come from this location, as Denis wrongly stated more than once, see Denis, Introduction aux pseudépigraphes grecs, p. 198; A.-M. Denis and J.-C. Haelewyck, Introduction à la littérature religieuse judéo-hellénistique (2 vols.; Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), I, p. 837.
qui et Ezras). Likewise, in the Georgian text his name appears as Sutieli.50 A similar form of the name is attested in the Gǝǝz version, which notes that the prophet is also called Suta’el (ሌƎ: ጌ-
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; ‘I, Suta’el, who am called Ezra’).51 This name was a current way to designate the prophet Ezra in Ethiopic literature, no doubt as a consequence of the inclusion of our pseudepigraphon in the biblical canon of the Tewahedo church. For example, in the Acts of Bäšālotā Mikā’el, who lived in the fourteenth century, it is said that Ethiopian saint was a miracle-worker like Elisha and drunken spirit like Ezra Suta’el (ፋ-
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; ‘I, Suta’el, who am called Ezra’).52 Similarly, the Life of the thirteenth-century legendary king Nā’akkʷato Lā’ab (ፋ-
ፉ-
; ) praise him by saying that he loved solitary life like Daniel and had a sharp tongue like Sutu’el.53

One may remark that in the Berlin ostracon quoted by Crum Southiel is not Ezra’s name, but rather that of his father. This shows congruity only with two other sources. Thus, in the Arabic translation of 4 Ezra published by Johann Gildemeister after Vaticanus arabicus 462 the seer introduces himself in 3.1 as ‘I, al-Usza’ir (sic!), the son of Salaqîl’.54 Similarly, in the Georgian version of Epiphanius’ De XII gemmis (CPG 3748), distinction is made between Ezra the priest from the time of Nebuchadnezzar and another Ezra, who was the son of Salathiel and lived approximately one hundred years later.55

However, the Latin and the Sahidic translations of the same work of Epiphanius probably have a better reading at this point. The Coptic text of De gemmis is preserved in a single fragmentary manuscript

51. Dillmann, Libri Apocryphi, p. 153, mentions that the form (Sutu’el) is also attested in the manuscript tradition.
54. Gildemeister, Esdrae liber quartus arabice, p. 3.
from the Monastery of Shenoute. We can establish on paleographical grounds that this parchment codex dates from the tenth century and that it was copied in the Touton scriptorium in the Fayyum.56 Unlike the Georgian, the Sahidic version of De XII gemmis refers to ‘Ezra the one who is called Salathiel (εκάρα πετομογτε εροι χε σαλασαοι) and the one who was the fellow (πετργγοοφ) of Zorobabel, this being the son of Jeconiah’.57 M.R. James speculated that Epiphanius did not know 4 Ezra, but he was rather using a venerable exegetical tradition that identified Ezra with Salathiel because of a misreading of 1 Chron 3.17.58 However, as none of the sources quoted by James predates Epiphanius, I think it is quite clear that the Christian bishop referred in the aforementioned passage to 4 Ezra 3.1, where Ezra is identified with Salathiel. Therefore, the Sahidic translation on De gemmis must be added to the attestations of 4 Ezra in Coptic literature, although nevertheless through the intermediary of a translation from Greek.

In addition to the sources examined above, 4 Ezra 5.44 is quoted in Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria’s sermon on Mt. 20.1-16 (CPG 2181; clavis coptica 0060), which is preserved only in Sahidic, ‘It is well said in Ezra, “for the creature cannot hasten more than the creator”’ (καλος ρυν αχοες καρα χε πεπνντ γαρ ςερι αμ νρογε επρεκσνντ).59 This passage conforms well to the Latin non potest festinare creatura super creatorem.60 The quotation is relevant because Ps.-Athanasius explicitly attributes the saying to Ezra, a fact which seems to imply that the author of the sermon took the pseudepigraphon as scriptural authority. It is possible that Ps.-Athanasius’ sermon on

56. After the publication of the Sahidic text by de Vis, another fragment of De gemmis has surfaced, E. Lucchesi, ‘Un fragment copte ignoré du De XII gemmis d’Épiphane de Chypre’, OLP 31 (2000–2005), p. 82. The fragment is kept in the collection of the Louvre museum (call number E 10 050 [R 168]) and belongs to the same codex.


58. James, ‘Salathiel qui et Esdras’.


60. Latin text in Klijn, Apokalypse des Esra, p. 37.
Mt. 20.1-16 goes back to a lost Greek original. This is suggested by the fact that the only manuscript preserving this text (London, BL Or. 5001) is a papyrus codex which contains a series of patristic homilies, whose Greek original is known in almost each case. Therefore, although transmitted only in Sahidic, the quotation in Ps.-Athanasius must be added to the scanty attestations of the use of 4 Ezra in patristic literature.

Other documents attest the circulation and reception of 4 Ezra in Coptic Christianity, albeit they are written in Arabic. Nevertheless, the bilingual manuscript to which BnF Copte 132, f. 32 belonged represents a juncture in the history of the reception of 4 Ezra in the Coptic church, as it gives the text both in Sahidic and in Arabic. Thus, it demonstrates that Sahidic manuscripts of 4 Ezra were still available in the Arabized Egypt even as late as the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, a period in which it is certain that the Copts already possessed at least a couple of Arabic versions of the same text. Thus, the two Arabic codices of Egyptian provenance used by Gildemeister for his edition of 4 Ezra, Vat. ar. 462 (1311 CE) and Oxford, Bodl. 251 (1335 CE), are slightly older than the Copto-Arabic fragment that interests us here. Similarly, the Egyptian codex published by

61. The entire manuscript was published by Budge, Coptic Homilies. It features the following texts, John of Constantinople, De poenitentia et abstinentia (clavis coptica 0182); John Chrysostom, In Susannam (clavis coptica 0178; CPG 4567); Athanasius of Alexandria, De misericordia et iudicio. In Rom. 1.28 (clavis coptica 0079; CPG 2180; CPG 2929); Theophilus of Alexandria, De poenitentia et abstinentia (clavis coptica 0393; CPG 2623); Athanasius of Alexandria, In Mt. 20.1-16 (clavis coptica 0060; CPG 2181); Proclus of Constantinople, De Incarnatione (clavis coptica 0317; CPG 5822); Proclus of Constantinople, De Pascha (clavis 0318; CPG 5812); Basil of Caesarea, De templo Salomonis (clavis coptica 0076; CPG 2965); Athanasius of Alexandria, De anima et corpore (clavis coptica 0223; CPG 2004); Eusebius of Caesarea, De Chananaea (clavis coptica 0147; CPG 4529).

62. The patristic quotations from 4 Ezra were gathered by Albert-Marie Denis, cf. n. 4 supra.

63. Description of the Vatican manuscript in A. Mai, Scriptorum veterum nova collectio (4 vols.; Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1827–33), IV, p. 522. Mai mentions only that the manuscript dates to the fourteenth century. For his part, Graf, GCAL 1, p. 220 gives the precise date, 1311 CE. The Oxford manuscript is dated 1051 Era of the Martyrs, which corresponds to 1335 CE; see A. Nicoll and E.B. Pussey, Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum orientalium Bibliothecae Bodleianae: Arabicos complexens (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1821), II, pp. 13a-4b (13a-b) (= no. 6).
Heinrich Ewald, which contains a different Arabic version of 4 Ezra, is roughly contemporary with the manuscript edited by Gildemeister, being dated 1051 Era of the Martyrs = 1354 CE.

The Copts were familiar with 4 Ezra in Arabic even earlier than the fourteenth century. Thus, Buṭrus Ibn al-Rāḥib’s Kitāb al-Burḥān (thirteenth century) includes several extracts from 4 Ezra.64 Finally, in an entry note dedicated to the celebration of Uriel in the Copto-Arabic synaxary it is written that the angel taught the righteous prophet Ezra about the divine mysteries. We have here, unambiguously, a reference to the revelation of Uriel from 4 Ezra.65

Although nothing speaks in favor of the inclusion of 4 Ezra in the biblical canon of the Coptic church, it seems appropriate to suppose that the Copts considered this Jewish pseudepigraphon as an inspired text, worthy to be copied and quoted as scriptural authority.

Edition of Paris, BnF Copte 1321, f. 32 (= 4 Ezra 5.33-40)

Recto

5 33 [...] [r]ήπεκ[ρήτ ἐτβε π] 5 33 [...] in your [heart about the]
people of Israel? Have you [loved it]
more than the one who [created it]?’

2 [λ]α[ς] ἵππηκ· ἑακι|[εφτην η] 34 I answered and said to him,
τὸκ ερωτε πενταμε[οντη]· ‘No, Lord, Lord, but
grieving, my reins
are testing me
every hour as I look and
desire for the way of the
Most High, and I search
for a part of his judgment.’

4 [λ]ογωκαβ πεξαλ ηακ χε [Η] 35 He said, ‘You cannot
ΜΟΝ ΠΧΟΛΙΟΙ ΠΧΟΛΙΟΙ· ΑΛΑΑ
understand’. I said, ‘O Lord,
then why was I born? Or
then why my mother’s womb

6 έιωκξ ιριτν· εφυκξαζε[66] ούνει έκναλολοοτε· κατα
inh β ηιιαλολοοτε· κατα
every hour as I look and
desire for the way of the
Most High, and I search
for a part of his judgment.’

8 ουνευ ηνι· εκοτε χυ ηοουκαε· εγερουμε· ετας τηηε ηηπεπ
\t\t\t\t\t\t\

10 χοεε· αυε υταογετερ ικουευεροεσ· ιτεηεκριαες·
‘You cannot
understand’. I said, ‘O Lord,
then why was I born? Or
then why my mother’s womb

12 35 Πεξαλα Με ιηηηηοι ηοικ Πεξαλι ηακ χε οω ΠΧΟΛΙΟΙ
\t\t\t\t\t\t\

14 η έτβε ου ρδ· χιπςιοι· η έτ
\t\t\t\t\t\t\

16 ρταφοσ εροι· ξεκας
\t\t\t\t\t\t\

64. A. Sidarus, ‘Les sources d’une somme philosophico-théologique copte arabe (Kitāb al-burḥān d’Abū Ṣākir ibn al-Rāḥib, XIIIe siècle)’, Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae 17 (2010), pp. 127-63 (130-32). It remains to be studied from which Arabic version of 4 Ezra were extracted the fragments.


66. The manuscript reads εφυκξαζε but the feminine singular does not go well with the plural ηαολοοτε, ‘my reins/my kidneys’.
37 [-----------------------] [αὐτῶν] ὑπερεξεῖ ἐδέχεται 37 [-----------------------] [and then]
2 [ἵνα τὴν ἥμεραν ἑτέρην ηυπέρβησεν ἐφ' ἓν
[-----------------------] [I shall inform you about the] works that
[-----------------------] [and the]
4 [οὐκ ἤκουσεν ἐκείνην ἐκούσας ἑτέρην]
38 [πεπλήρωσεν] ἡμέραν τὸ ἐμπορικόν ἑύθεμον
38 [I said to] him, ‘My Lord, who
[-----------------------] [time that you] asked to know.’
[-----------------------] [except] one whose place
[-----------------------]
6 [ἐπεξήγαγεν] ἑκούσας ἑνάντια ὑπερεξεῖ
[-----------------------] [is the one who will be] able to know these
[-----------------------]
8 [ὡς] ᾠδοὶ οἱ ἡμῶν ἡμῖν ὑπερεξεῖν
39 [ἂν] ἦν οὐκ ὑπερεξεῖν
39 [As for me, I am an ignorant one]
10 [ἐκεῖνοι] ἐγὼ ἔπεμψα· πᾶν γὰρ [-----------------------]
10 [that lives] in humility, then how
[-----------------------] [shall I teach you about these?] 40 He replied
12 [πεπλήρωσεν] εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἑυθείαν ὑπερεξεῖ
[-----------------------] [and said] to me, ‘If
[-----------------------] you are not able to do any of these,
14 [τὰ] ὡς ἔτει ἡμῶν· ἡμὼν· ἑκούσας·
14 [likewise, you are not able to know]
[τῇ] ἐκείνῃ· ἡ πάντα ἡ τάξις ἡμῶν.
[the] judgment or the fullness of my love…’