The Cochin Hebrew New Testament Manuscripts at Cambridge (MS Oo.1.32, Oo.1.16.1, Oo.1.16.2): Late Copies with Signs of an Early Semitic Tradition

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Abstract

This article re-examines the Hebrew New Testament manuscripts associated with Cochin and now held at Cambridge University Library, especially MS Oo.1.32, MS Oo.1.16.1, and MS Oo.1.16.2. Although these manuscripts are early modern codices, they preserve a recurring Hebrew profile that warrants closer philological and codicological attention than it has typically received. The study does not argue that the extant Cambridge manuscripts are ancient, nor does it claim direct proof of descent from a single early exemplar. Its narrower aim is to test whether selected features of their language, idiom, and internal differentiation are fully explained by current models that treat the corpus simply as a late polemical or missionary translation. Methodologically, the article first situates the manuscripts within the multilingual world of eighteenth-century Cochin, where Jewish, Christian, Dutch, Portuguese, and other textual influences may have shaped the surviving witnesses. It then examines representative passages and lexical patterns to distinguish, as far as possible, evidence of Hebrew register, translation technique, and possible layered transmission. Particular attention is given to post-biblical Hebrew diction, Hebrew-Aramaic contact features, bounded variation across books and sections, and selected readings that are not easily reduced to straightforward dependence on familiar Greek, Syriac, or European source models.

The argument is exploratory and cumulative rather than definitive. It does not claim that the corpus preserves a recoverable early Hebrew New Testament in any simple sense. Rather, it argues that the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts should be treated as a stratified textual complex, with uneven, mixed, and historically significant internal evidence. On that basis, the article proposes a methodological reassessment: rather than dismissing the corpus as uniformly late and derivative, scholars should evaluate it book by book and passage by passage as evidence of a layered multilingual history of Hebrew New Testament transmission.

Keywords: Hebrew New Testament; Cochin Jews; Post-Biblical Hebrew; Syriac Peshitta; Manuscript Studies; Codicology; Textual Transmission; Semitic Philology

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1. Introduction

Among the Hebrew manuscripts of Christian scripture preserved in European collections, the group commonly known as the Cochin Hebrew New Testament warrants renewed study. The Cambridge witnesses considered here—especially MS Oo.1.32, together with the related manuscript units MS Oo.1.16.1 and MS Oo.1.16.2—are early modern codices associated with Cochin and later transferred to Cambridge by Claudius Buchanan. They have often been treated primarily as late Hebrew translations produced for polemical consultation, reference, or missionary and colonial mediation. However, that broad classification does not determine the manuscripts' textual profile.

This article re-examines the Cambridge Cochin Hebrew New Testament manuscripts as a stratified textual complex rather than as a uniform late translation. Its claim is limited. It does not argue that the extant codices are ancient, nor does it offer direct proof of descent from a single early exemplar.[1] Rather, it asks whether recurring features of language, idiom, internal differentiation, and selected comparative readings are fully explained by current models that treat the corpus simply as a late polemical or missionary translation.

The scholarly stakes are substantial. Earlier judgments by Franz Delitzsch and Solomon Schechter tended to treat the Cochin corpus as linguistically inferior, derivative, polemically altered, or textually secondary, whereas more recent discussion by Justin and Michael van Rensburg and Mascha van Dort has renewed attention to questions of source language, layered production, and the role of Dutch and German intermediaries in eighteenth-century Cochin. The present study engages those debates directly but proceeds methodologically in two stages: it first considers the

[1] This claim is narrower than direct proof of a single ancient exemplar. It concerns the recurring internal profile of the Cambridge Cochin witnesses and the possibility that this profile reflects a layered history of Semitic transmission. For a wider background on Hebrew, multilingualism, and textual culture in Roman-period Judaea, see Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus*; Wise, *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea*; Hezser, "Jewish Literacy and Languages in First-Century Roman Palestine"; Smelik, "The Languages of Roman Palestine"; and Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew*.

multilingual colonial environment in which the extant codices were copied and used, including plausible European intermediary channels, and only then turns to Greek, Syriac, and other Semitic comparanda as controls for selected passages.

1.1. Method, scope, and thesis in brief

The scope of this section is deliberately limited. The argument focuses on the textual profile evident in the surviving witnesses rather than on the physical age of the extant codices, and it asks how far the recurring linguistic and comparative features of the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts can be explained by existing late-translation models. The central issue is therefore methodological: how to distinguish register, translation technique, and possible layered transmission without collapsing them into a single claim.

This ordering is deliberate. Because the surviving Cambridge manuscripts belong to an early modern multilingual environment, possible European and colonial mediation must be considered before making narrower claims about Greek, Syriac, or other Semitic languages.

The central thesis is that the Cambridge Cochin witnesses—especially MS Oo.1.32, MS Oo.1.16.1, and MS Oo.1.16.2—preserve a recurring pattern of post-biblical Hebrew diction, Hebrew-Aramaic contact phenomena, bounded internal differentiation across books and sections, and selected readings that resist simple harmonization with familiar source models. No single feature is decisive on its own. The argument depends instead on the cumulative distribution across the manuscript complex. For that reason, the Cochin corpus should be approached not as a uniform witness with a single, simple origin but as a layered multilingual transmission environment requiring book-by-book and, at times, section-by-section evaluation.

1.2. AI-assisted comparative controls (Leoni system): Septuagint, Tanakh, and Mishnah controls

This study makes limited use of an AI-assisted comparative tool developed by Justin Leoni to support the structured comparison of selected Cochin readings with relevant Hebrew and Semitic controls. Its function is narrowly methodological. The tool is used only for passages already identified as significant on philological grounds, and its outputs are treated as provisional comparative indicators rather than as evidence of textual dependence, priority, or date.

The purpose of these controls is to help identify patterns of lexical and phrase-level correspondence across a small set of selected witnesses, including the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts, the Greek

text, selected Syriac and other Semitic comparanda, and plausible European intermediary traditions. In this article, AI-assisted comparisons are used only when they clarify questions already visible regarding post-biblical Hebrew register, Hebrew-Aramaic contact phenomena, translation direction, or possible layered transmission.

Because the extant Cambridge manuscripts belong to an early modern multilingual environment, the comparative procedure also includes limited testing against plausible European intermediary traditions, especially Luther's German Bible and the Dutch *Statenvertaling*, where prior scholarship has claimed such dependence. These comparisons are not treated as independent proof of source relationships. Rather, they serve as controlled aids for determining whether a European-source hypothesis remains plausible at the passage level or whether the Cochin wording preserves features more naturally explained within a Semitic lexical and rhetorical framework.

For reference, the comparison sample used in this article includes selected passages from Cambridge MS Oo.1.32, Cambridge MS Oo.1.16.2, Freiburg HS 314, and Sloane MS 273. Where numerical alignment values are reported below, they summarize a limited lexical and phrase-pattern comparison within a very small sample and should be read only as heuristic indicators. They are not quantitative measures of textual ancestry and do not carry independent evidentiary force.

Table 1. AI-assisted comparison sample and provisional alignment fields

Manuscript / Witness	**Alignment Score(s)**	**Divine Name Count / Representation**	**Test Passages / Notes**
Cambridge MS Oo.1.32[2]	92, 93	2/0	Matthew 1, 5
Freiburg HS-314[3]	28, 28	0/0	Matthew 1, 5
Cambridge MS Oo.1.16.2[4]	91, 89	4/5	Revelation 1, 7
Freiburg HS-314 (Revelation comparison)	33, 36	0/0	Revelation 1, 7

[2] Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1.

[3] University Library Freiburg, "Neues Testament in hebräischer Übersetzung ([S. l.], 1563), Hs. 314," Digital Collections Freiburg, accessed April 18, 2026, https://dl.ub.uni-freiburg.de/diglit/hs314?ui_lang=eng.

[4] National Library of Israel, "Cambridge University Library, MS Oo.1.16.2," Ktiv: International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts, accessed April 18, 2026, https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001401270205171/NLI#$FL221577210.

Sloane MS 273[5]	42, NA	0/NA	Revelation 1, 7

Source: Author's AI-assisted comparison sample, based on selected passages from Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.32, Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.16.2, Freiburg HS 314, and British Library Sloane MS 273, together with the comparative controls described in §1.2.1.

Note on table values. The alignment column reports paired scores for lexical and phrase-pattern similarity on a 0–100 scale. The divine-name column records either the number of occurrences in the sampled passage or, where relevant, the form of representation. "NA" indicates that no comparison value was available for that field in the sample used here.

1.2.1 AI Methodology and Controls

The AI-assisted component of this study serves only as a limited comparative aid, not as an independent authority on textual history or translation direction.[6] Its role is to flag potential correspondences in vocabulary, phrase structure, and register within selected passages already deemed relevant on philological grounds. All such outputs are treated as provisional and cited only when they align with features independently observed in the manuscripts through direct textual comparison.

The AI-assisted comparative component was also used, in a limited and controlled way, to test whether selected Cochin readings are more readily explained by dependence on Dutch or German Bible traditions, especially the *Statenvertaling* and Luther's translation, as has sometimes been claimed in modern discussion. In these cases, the AI was not used to generate conclusions independently but to flag lexical correspondences, omissions, retained qualifiers, and broader phrase-pattern alignments or misalignments between the Cochin text and the proposed European comparanda. The results were then assessed manually, drawing on direct consultation of the manuscript, philological judgment, and the wider multilingual setting of Cochin. This procedure helped determine whether a European-source hypothesis actually explains the Cochin data at the

[5] Nehemia Gordon, "A Hebrew Manuscript of the Book of Revelation, British Library, MS Sloane 273" (2017), https://audio.nehemiaswall.com/Downloads/A-Hebrew-Manuscript-of-the-Book-of-Revelation-British-Library-Sloane-273.pdf. Note that this manuscript contains only a portion of Revelation chapter 1.

[6] Because the AI-assisted controls in this article are used only as a structured comparative aid, their evidentiary weight is intentionally limited. The historical argument is grounded in philological analysis, direct manuscript examination, and comparative review of witness testimony rather than reliance on automated procedures. Accordingly, all AI-generated alignments referenced here are treated as preliminary heuristics that require validation through direct comparison with the manuscript witnesses and relevant control texts, including limited comparison with plausible European intermediary traditions, such as Luther's German Bible and the Dutch *Statenvertaling*.

passage level or whether the Hebrew text repeatedly preserves features that are more naturally understood within a Semitic lexical and rhetorical framework. No argument in this article depends on an AI-generated pattern alone.

2. Manuscripts and Codicological Overview[7]

Shelfmark	Contents (as discussed in this paper)	Material / production	Notes / why it matters here
MS Oo.1.32	Gospels, Acts, and Epistles (no Revelation)	Early modern paper codex; multiple hands noted in older descriptions	Primary witness for the Gospels/epistles; includes headings/marginalia and an end-of-John note framing use.
MS Oo.1.16.2	Revelation (Apocalypse)	Early modern codex (as transmitted at Cambridge)	Primary witness for Revelation; used for Greek/Syriac/Hebrew comparison tables in §6.2.
MS Oo.1.16.1	Acts and selected Pauline Epistles (e.g., Romans; 1–2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians)	Early modern manuscript unit (as cataloged at Cambridge)	Acts/Pauline witness that complements Oo.1.32; used to argue for cross-witness stability within the Cambridge Cochin corpus.

The Cambridge Cochin manuscripts collectively contain a complete Hebrew New Testament.[8] This study centers on the canonical Gospels, Acts, some Pauline letters, Hebrews, James, both Peter epistles, John's three letters, and Revelation. It does not include First–Second Timothy, Titus, Jude, or Philemon in the current linguistic analysis.[9]

[7] Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1; National Library of Israel, "Cambridge University Library, MS Oo.1.16.2," *Ktiv: International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001401270205171/NLI#$FL221577210; Stefan C. Reif, *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: A Description and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[8] Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1; National Library of Israel, "Cambridge University Library, MS Oo.1.16.1," *Ktiv: International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001401260205171/NLI?volumeItem=2#$FL221581087; National Library of Israel, "Cambridge University Library, MS Oo.1.16.2," *Ktiv: International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001401270205171/NLI#$FL221577210.

[9] First–Second Timothy and Titus are excluded from the present linguistic analysis because, in the Cambridge Cochin corpus, they do not exhibit the post-biblical Hebrew and Hebrew-Aramaic contact profile that this study

2.1. Cambridge, University Library, MS Oo.1.32

Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.32 is the principal witness in this study for the Gospels, Acts, and much of the Epistolary material, though it does not include Revelation. It is an early modern Hebrew New Testament codex associated with Cochin, Kerala, copied on watermarked European paper and later transferred to Cambridge through Claudius Buchanan. The manuscript was formerly owned by Ezekiel Rahabi II,[10] a prominent Jewish leader in Cochin, and its significance therefore extends beyond provenance alone. Even if the codex reflects wider Jewish scribal networks and the circulation of European paper, its ownership, preservation, and consultation within a Cochin Jewish setting remain historically important for understanding its transmission and reception.[11]

Oo.1.32 should be distinguished from the related Cambridge manuscript units Oo.1.16.1 and Oo.1.16.2, even though all are associated with Buchanan's 1806 acquisition from Cochin. In the present article, Oo.1.32 is treated as the primary witness for the Gospels and most of the Epistles, while Oo.1.16.1 and Oo.1.16.2 preserve additional material, including Acts, Pauline texts, and Revelation.[12] The codex presents a substantial continuous Hebrew text, accompanied by headings, marginal notes, and other paratextual features that indicate sustained use, navigation, and reuse rather than merely decorative copying.[13] Its European paper support places it within broader early modern material and scribal networks, even where ownership and preservation history remain firmly tied to Cochin.[14]

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considers most relevant to a possible late Second Temple or early Roman-period Semitic horizon. These letters are also commonly regarded as later writings. Jude and Philemon are likewise omitted from the present analysis because no significant markers of that type have yet been identified in them. Even so, the remaining books preserved in the Cochin Cambridge manuscripts require closer, book-by-book, verse-by-verse analysis. For general reference discussion of the Pastorals as stylistically distinct within the Pauline corpus, see *The SBL Study Bible: Including Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (New York: HarperOne, 2023), 2085; and *The Oxford Study Bible: Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1506.

[10] J. B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993).

[11] For Cochin Jewish communal history, mercantile networks, and the role of leading families such as the Rahabis in local Jewish life, see J. B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993).

[12] Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1; Stefan C. Reif, *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: A Description and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[13] Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1; Stefan C. Reif, *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: A Description and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[14] Stefan C. Reif, *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: A Description and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New

Older cataloging and later scholarship also indicate that Oo.1.32 is not the product of a single uniform hand. Schiller-Szinessy's unpublished catalog notes and later observations point to internal variation in handwriting, letterforms, and presentation conventions across the codex, suggesting the work of multiple scribes or stages of copying.[15] Weinstein further proposed that a substantial portion of the manuscript may be associated with the scribe David Cohen, an identification that, if correct, would place part of the codex within wider patterns of Jewish scribal mobility beyond India.[16] The manuscript is therefore best described as a hybrid artifact: preserved in a Cochin Jewish environment, yet materially and paleographically shaped by broader early modern Jewish scribal traditions.[17]

2.2. Cambridge, University Library, MS Oo.1.16.1 and MS Oo.1.16.2

In this article, MS Oo.1.16.1 contains Acts and selected Pauline letters, while MS Oo.1.16.2 specifically refers to the Revelation (Apocalypse) manuscript used in the comparison tables in §6.2. During its time in Cochin, the Revelation manuscript (Oo.1.16.2) was bound with other texts.[18] It is often distinguished from nearby Hebrew New Testament manuscripts (Oo.1.32) because it was sometimes kept as a separate volume or "scroll."[19]

Additionally, Cambridge MS Oo.1.16.1 contains writings from the Hebrew New Testament, including the Acts of the Apostles and specific Pauline letters such as Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2

Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1.

[15] Salomon Marcus Schiller-Szinessy, unpublished catalogue notes on Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.32, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge; Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1.

[16] Myron M. Weinstein, "A Hebrew Qur'ān Manuscript," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 10 (1971–72): 19–52.

[17] Salomon Marcus Schiller-Szinessy, unpublished catalogue notes on Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.32, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge; Myron M. Weinstein, "A Hebrew Qur'ān Manuscript," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 10 (1971–72): 19–52; Stefan C. Reif, *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: A Description and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1.

[18] National Library of Israel, "Cambridge University Library, MS Oo.1.16.2," *Ktiv: International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001401270205171/NLI#$FL221577210.

[19] National Library of Israel, "Cambridge University Library, MS Oo.1.16.2," *Ktiv: International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001401270205171/NLI#$FL221577210; Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1.

Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians.[20] It is written in a distinctive script that differs from both MS Oo.1.32 and Oo.1.16.2, indicating the work of a different scribe.

MS Oo.1.16.1 and MS Oo.1.32 should therefore be distinguished as separate manuscript witnesses within the broader Cambridge Cochin corpus, even though both are associated with Cochin and later entered Cambridge through the Buchanan collection. In contrast, Cambridge MS Oo. 1.16.2 includes the Hebrew version of Revelation.[21]

Taken together, MS Oo.1.16.1, MS Oo.1.16.2, and MS Oo.1.32 preserve a nearly complete Hebrew New Testament corpus within the Cambridge Cochin group, while later modern work has extended access to additional portions through transcription and translation. Oo.1.32 contains the Gospels, and most of the Epistles; Oo.1.16.1 supplies Acts and additional Pauline material; and Oo.1.16.2 preserves Revelation. In modern scholarship and transcription practice, Justin van Rensburg and Michael J. van Rensburg have also worked on the Cochin Cambridge Revelation, James, and Jude.[22] Their rendering of the Hebrew Revelation, however, should be distinguished sharply from the individual Cambridge manuscript witness used in this study. It is a modern compilation that takes Cambridge MS Oo.1.16.2 as its base but supplements it with Manchester Gaster 1616, a later related manuscript that is not an exact copy of the Cambridge witness. Because that compilation also adopts marginal notes and alterations from the Gaster manuscript—many of which appear to move the Hebrew toward closer agreement with Greek forms—it cannot serve as a direct substitute for the wording, sequence, or translation profile of Cambridge MS Oo.1.16.2 itself. For the purposes of this article, therefore, the evidentiary priority belongs to the individual Cambridge manuscript rather than to later eclectic reconstructions based on multiple witnesses.

[20] National Library of Israel, "Cambridge University Library, MS Oo.1.16.1," *Ktiv: International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001401260205171/NLI?volumeItem=2#$FL221581087; Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1.

[21] National Library of Israel, "Cambridge University Library, MS Oo.1.16.2," *Ktiv: International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH990001401270205171/NLI#$FL221577210.

[22] Justin van Rensburg and Michael J. van Rensburg, *Hebrew Revelation, James and Jude*, version 2.2 (PDF), accessed May 8, 2024. This modern edition/translation presents a compiled and annotated Hebrew text based primarily on Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.16.2, supplemented with readings and marginal corrections from Manchester Gaster Hebrew MS 1616, and includes added vocalization and interpretive notes.

2.3. Layout Density and Early Modern Codicological Caution

Differences in layout density between earlier and later Hebrew manuscripts do not, by themselves, determine the age of the textual layer being copied. Early modern codices on European paper often reflect different production priorities than earlier medieval manuscripts, including readability, durability, and accommodation of marginal annotation and other control features. For that reason, a less compact layout in the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts should be treated as a feature of the extant codices rather than as decisive evidence for the age or origin of the text they preserve.[232425]

3. Provenance, Acquisition, and the Buchanan Collection

According to the Cambridge Digital Library, MS Oo.1.32 was obtained by Claudius Buchanan from a synagogue of the Black Jews of Cochin in 1806 and donated to Cambridge in 1809. However, that nineteenth-century transfer history should not eclipse the earlier eighteenth-century context in which the manuscripts were produced and used. At the time, Cochin was part of a multilingual colonial environment shaped by Dutch political power, Jewish mercantile brokerage, missionary activity, and the circulation of European paper, books, and translators. Any account of provenance must therefore move beyond a simple chain of custody and ask how manuscript production, language choice, and textual mediation were conditioned by Dutch Cochin and its wider Indian Ocean networks.

Recent work by Mascha van Dort has helped clarify this broader context by linking the Cochin Hebrew New Testament to the Hebrew Qur'an produced in the same milieu and by raising questions about the commissioner, date, translators, and copyists. Ezekiel Rahabi's prominence in the Cochin Jewish community and his likely connection to the manuscripts make him historically significant for questions of patronage, ownership, preservation, and circulation. At the same time, Rahabi's association with the extant codices does not, by itself, determine the age, source

[23] Stefan C. Reif, *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: A Description and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1.

[24] Yosef Ofer, *The Masora on Scripture and Its Methods*, trans. Michael Glatzer (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

[25] Stefan C. Reif, *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: A Description and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1.

language, or textual ancestry of every preserved layer. Provenance and patronage are historically significant, but they are not identical to textual origin. On that reading, the manuscripts are best understood as part of a broader eighteenth-century Cochin translation environment rather than as isolated curiosities detached from the multilingual colonial world that helped shape them.

4. Language, Register, and Translation Technique

The Cambridge catalog description identifies MS Oo.1.32 as a Hebrew translation used in polemical settings. Internal paratext supports this reading: a note at the end of the Gospel of John states that the copy was made "not to believe" but to understand the text and respond to "heretics." In context, "heretics" is the manuscript user's designation for Christians and is reported here descriptively. At a minimum, the note indicates that at least one reader treated the Hebrew New Testament as a reference work for debate rather than as a devotional text. However, that use context does not by itself determine the age or character of the underlying source tradition reflected in the manuscript's Hebrew.

4.1. Rabbinic (Mishnaic) Hebrew and the Late Second Temple Linguistic Horizon

Claims about the Hebrew of the Cochin manuscripts are best evaluated against the broader history of Hebrew in late antiquity. The form commonly called Rabbinic or Mishnaic Hebrew appears prominently in early rabbinic compilations such as the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta* and is generally associated with the first centuries CE. Because the *Mishnah* is a third-century compilation preserving earlier material, and because late Second Temple Hebrew is independently attested, many scholars do not treat Mishnaic Hebrew as a wholly new post-70 development. Rather, it is often understood as part of a wider continuum of post-biblical Hebrew that was already taking shape in the late Second Temple period and continued into the Roman era.[26]

Two clarifications are important. First, Late Second Temple Hebrew was not a single, uniform register. The Dead Sea Scrolls preserve multiple forms of Hebrew, and the transition between Late Biblical Hebrew and Rabbinic Hebrew remains debated. Second, Hebrew in this period coexisted

[26] Catherine Hezser, "Jewish Literacy and Languages in First-Century Roman Palestine," *Orientalia* 89, no. 1 (2020): 58–77; Edoardo Nardi, "The Role of Hebrew in the Linguistic Repertoire of Jewish Milieux in the Hellenistic and Early Roman Period: New Insights from the New Testament," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 70, no. 1 (2025): 87–105; Willem F. Smelik, "The Languages of Roman Palestine," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Palestine*, ed. Catherine Hezser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 122–41; William M. Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew: Its Origins Through the Rabbinic Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

with Aramaic and, in some settings, with Greek. The linguistic environment of Judaea was therefore multilingual rather than monolingual, and different languages likely served distinct social and textual domains.

Documentary evidence from the Judaean Desert is especially important here. Letters, legal texts, and administrative materials, including Bar Kokhba-era documents, show that Hebrew could serve as a practical written medium in the first and second centuries CE. Because this documentary Hebrew shares notable features with early rabbinic Hebrew, many scholars argue for continuity between post-biblical everyday usage and later rabbinic literary standardization. Archaeological evidence supports the same general picture. The Copper Scroll, although unusual in genre, is often cited as reflecting a form of Hebrew closer to later post-biblical usage than to classical biblical prose. Inscriptions from Jerusalem and its environs likewise point to a setting in which Hebrew and Aramaic remained active together.

For the purposes of this study, that background matters because it makes a Hebrew register marked by post-biblical usage and sustained Aramaic contact historically plausible within a late Second Temple or early Roman-period Judaean setting. This does not prove that the Cochin corpus derives from such a setting. It does mean, however, that features often dismissed as "late" or "unclassical" are not thereby historically trivial. They may instead reflect a Semitic register more compatible with post-biblical Hebrew usage than with an artificial biblicalizing retroversion.[27]

The presence of post-biblical or Rabbinic Hebrew features should not be conflated with proof of an early Semitic Vorlage; in this article, such features are treated only as register evidence, distinct from the question of textual layer or transmission history.

This point also clarifies the role of Aramaisms in the present argument. An Aramaism is not simply "bad Hebrew" but a word, spelling, or grammatical pattern shaped by Aramaic influence. In a bilingual environment, such features are historically unsurprising. What matters in the Cochin corpus is not merely that such forms occur, but that they recur in recognizable patterns across multiple books and manuscript units. That recurrence does not by itself prove an early source, but

[27] Edward M. Cook, "The Aramaic Influence on Mishnaic Hebrew: Borrowing or Interference?" in *Hebrew Texts and Language of the Second Temple Period: Proceedings of an Eighth Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, ed. Steven E. Fassberg (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 25–36; Elitzur A. Bar-Asher Siegal, *Introduction to the Grammar of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 2nd ed. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2018); Ivri J. Bunis, "The Distinct Linguistic Reality of the Jews in Late Antique Palestine and Babylonia as Reflected in the Lexicosyntax of אפשר," *Journal of Jewish Languages* 12, no. 1 (2024): 61–103.

it is more consistent with a stable Semitic transmission environment than with a purely late, improvised retroversion from Greek.

Assessments of the Hebrew in Oo.1.32 have varied, but most acknowledge that it reflects post-biblical usage rather than classical biblical prose. Schechter's dismissive judgment is best understood as reflecting older expectations about what counted as "good" Hebrew. A more cautious description is that the Cochin manuscripts repeatedly preserve a post-biblical Hebrew register marked by sustained Aramaic contact. In this study, the main question is not whether the corpus belongs to a Syriac textual tradition, but whether its wording is better explained as post-biblical Semitic Hebrew rather than as a purely late Greek-to-Hebrew retroversion. Comparisons with Syriac are therefore used only as a secondary diagnostic control, not as the governing explanation of the corpus.

4.1.1. Documentary and Desert Evidence for Hebrew as a Vernacular (with Aramaic Contact)

Legal texts, letters, and administrative materials from the Judaean Desert—especially from the Bar Kokhba period—show that Hebrew could function as a practical written medium in the first and second centuries CE, while texts such as the Copper Scroll and other Qumran materials reinforce the broader picture of a multilingual environment in which Hebrew remained active alongside Aramaic.[2829] Because this documentary Hebrew shares important features with the Hebrew later codified in the *Mishnah*, many scholars argue for continuity between post-biblical everyday usage and early rabbinic literary standardization rather than a sharp divide between biblical Hebrew and a later artificial idiom.[30] Archaeological and inscriptional evidence reinforces the same picture: texts from Qumran and the wider Judaean Desert, together with inscriptions from Jerusalem and its environs, reflect a multilingual setting in which Hebrew remained active alongside Aramaic.[31]

[28] Józef T. Milik, "Le rouleau de cuivre provenant de la grotte 3Q (3Q15)," in *Les 'Petites Grottes' de Qumrân*, ed. Maurice Baillet, Józef T. Milik, and Roland de Vaux, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan* 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 201–303.

[29] Jesper Høgenhaven, "What Is Real? The Copper Scroll as a Material Artefact," in *The Cave 3 Copper Scroll: A Symbolic Journey*, ed. Anders Klostergaard Petersen, George J. Brooke, and Jesper Høgenhaven (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

[30] Harris Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1954), 22; Michael Owen Wise, *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea: A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015); Moses H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001).

[31] Harris Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1954); Michael Owen Wise, *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea: A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015); J. A. Emerton, "The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century A.D. and the Language of Jesus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 24, no. 1 (1973): 1–23.

4.2. Rubric-like markers and polemical framing as paratext

Paratextual framing in the Cochin corpus helps us understand how the text was used and distinguishes the reader's approach from that of the original source. The manuscript includes headings, marginal notes, incipit- and explicit-like markers, and closing statements that guide navigation and interpretation. These features indicate that the manuscript was frequently consulted and reused, so it functions more as a working reference book than as a continuous reading copy. The clearest sign of reader engagement is the note at the end of John mentioned earlier. However, this focus on the reader should not be mistaken for the age or nature of the Hebrew source tradition. Within the Cochin corpus, the most prominent polemical signal is a note that guides interpretation rather than altering the New Testament's main narrative. As outlined in the opening paragraph of Section 4, a note at the end of the Gospel of John states that the copy was created "not to believe" but to understand the text and respond to "heretics." Here, "heretics" refers to Christians. Historically, such notes serve as reading instructions, indicating that the manuscript was intended for analysis and debate across religious boundaries.

The same "working-reference" profile appears elsewhere as well. MS Oo.1.32 includes headings and marginal notes (see §2.1), and Section 5 ("Script, Hands, and Scribal Practice") highlights additional paratextual features, including book headings, rubric-like markers, and marginal glosses. These features suggest a codex designed for navigation, review, and reuse over time.

A related, more subtle kind of "framing" appears in translation vocabulary. In the Revelation tables (§6.2), "Death" is rendered as מלאך המות ("Messenger/Angel of Death") and "Hades" as גיהנם ("Gehinnom") (Revelation 6:7–8). Likewise, the forehead "sealing" in Revelation 7:3–4 is rendered as תָּו ("a mark"), which makes the parallel with Ezekiel 9 especially easy to see.[32]

5. Script, Hands, and Scribal Practice

The script used in the Cambridge Cochin Hebrew New Testament manuscripts is best understood as part of a broader early modern Jewish scribal world rather than as evidence of a purely local,

[32] On the biblical background of the forehead mark in Ezekiel 9:4 and the interpretive significance of **תו/תָּו** in later Jewish and biblical reception, see the discussion of Ezekiel's marking scene in standard Hebrew Bible scholarship; compare also the lexical evidence in classical and post-biblical Hebrew summarized in Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, trans. John Elwolde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). The central argument is not one of direct literary dependence; rather, the Cochin rendering articulates Revelation's sealing scene within a distinctly Hebrew-biblical register. This appears to allude to the Ezekiel 9 passage as a cited reference.

uniform Cochin production setting. Earlier descriptions linked Oo.1.32 and related manuscripts to late Sephardi or "Spanish" cursive styles, while later observations noted significant variation in script, layout, and execution. These differences matter not only for identifying multiple hands but also for reopening the question of whether the extant witnesses reflect more than one translator, reviser, or intermediary source tradition.

This point is important for understanding how codicology relates to textual history. The surviving codices are clearly early modern: they are written on paper, exhibit irregular handwriting, and include headings, marginal notes, and navigation aids typical of working manuscripts. These features firmly place them within a later history of copying and use. However, they do not determine the age of the textual layer being copied. A late codex may preserve an earlier translation, just as an early codex may contain a comparatively recent version of a text.

The internal variation in Oo. 1.32 is especially significant. Older catalog descriptions and later observations indicate that multiple scribes were involved, with shifts in handwriting style, page layout, and presentation conventions throughout the manuscript. Even if multiple hands do not necessarily prove multiple translators, the evidence is better understood as pointing to a stratified process of copying and revision rather than to a single uniform act of Hebrew rendering. The same caution applies to the manuscript's additional features: book headings, rubric-like markers, and marginal notes show that it functioned as a practical working manuscript, but such paratext belongs to the history of use and reception rather than directly to the age of the underlying textual tradition.

If Weinstein's identification of a substantial portion of Oo.1.32 as David Cohen's is correct, the manuscript's scribal profile becomes even more significant. In that case, "Cochin" would most securely refer to ownership history, preservation, and community transmission rather than to the full geographical origin of every stage of copying. The manuscript would then be a hybrid artifact: preserved in a Cochin Jewish setting yet shaped by broader Jewish migration and early modern scribal exchange. For this study, the main point is limited but important: the script, multiple hands, and practical layout of the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts establish their early modern codicological setting, but they do not, by themselves, determine the age or character of the textual layers they transmit.

6. Textual Affiliations and Scholarly Debate

The interpretation of the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts remains contested because their early modern form, colonial setting, and likely transmission through Jewish, missionary, and multilingual networks permit multiple historical explanations. The central question of this section is whether their recurring post-biblical Hebrew forms, Hebrew-Aramaic contact features, and stable idiomatic patterns are better explained as evidence of a layered Semitic textual profile rather than as the result of a simple late Hebrew translation.

The argument is intentionally limited. It does not attempt to prove descent from a single early exemplar but asks whether the internal Hebrew profile—especially its post-biblical diction, contact morphology, and recurrent cross-witness patterns—is adequately explained by the simplest late-translation models. Greek and, where useful, Syriac are therefore used as secondary controls in selected passages rather than as exhaustive explanations of the sources.

The sample comparisons that follow are intended to test the internal Hebrew profile of the Cochin corpus, not merely to catalog external similarities. What matters most is whether the manuscripts consistently preserve post-biblical Hebrew diction, Mishnaic-style verbal and nominal patterns, Aramaic-influenced morphology, and culturally Jewish idioms across multiple witnesses and genres. Greek and, where useful, Syriac serve as secondary controls. The present argument concerns the canonical Gospels, Acts, Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, Hebrews, James, First Peter, Second Peter, First John, Second John, Third John, and Revelation, but does not include First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, or Jude.

6.1. Historical Plausibility of a Layered Semitic Transmission Environment

The present argument does not depend on positing a single continuous line of transmission from remote antiquity. Nor does it require the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts to preserve a direct witness to any one early Semitic textual stratum. The narrower claim is that the linguistic and idiomatic profile reflected in these manuscripts is historically compatible with a layered Semitic transmission environment, especially one shaped by post-biblical Hebrew and sustained Hebrew-Aramaic contact. For that reason, the most relevant comparative horizon for this study is late Second Temple and early Roman-period Judaea, rather than the full prehistory of Semitic writing systems.

6.2. Sample Transcriptions and Micro-Collation (Matthew and Revelation)

The passages that follow serve as limited tests of translation direction and textual profile. The question is not whether any single expression proves an earlier source layer, but whether recurrent idioms, lexical contrasts, and post-biblical Hebrew forms are more naturally explained by a stable Semitic transmission environment than by ad hoc Greek-to-Hebrew retroversion. Their evidentiary force is therefore cumulative rather than decisive.

Diagnostic test passages: idioms resistant to simple Greek-to-Hebrew retroversion

The passages identified here are useful because idioms and fixed lexical contrasts often preserve culture-specific patterns that are difficult to reconstruct consistently from Greek alone. Their value lies not in isolation but in the cumulative recurrence of Semitic phrasing across multiple passages and witnesses.

Sample A (Revelation 1:3): Opening beatitude formula and Semitic packaging

Greek (Revelation 1:3; key clause):

Μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα

Syriac (Peshitta; key clause):

ܫܦܝܪ ܗܘ ܕܩܪܐ ܘܫܡܥܝܢ ܢܒܘܬܐ ܗܕܐ ܘܢܛܪܝܢ ܠܡܟܬܒ ܒܗ ܀

Hebrew (Cochin Revelation 1:3):

קדוש הוא הקורא והשומעים זאת הנביאות ומקיימים מה שכתוב:

English (Hebrew gloss):

“Holy is the one who reads, and those who hear these prophecies and keep what is written.”

Note: Sample A shows the Cochin Revelation recasting a Greek beatitude in a distinctly post-biblical Hebrew form. The opening **קדוש הוא** does not simply reproduce *makarios,* and the participial forms **הקורא** and **השומעים**, together with **מה שכתוב**, give the verse a recognizably Hebrew shape. None of these features alone proves an early Vorlage, but together they make the passage more naturally intelligible within a stable Semitic textual profile than as a purely late, classicizing retroversion from Greek.

Sample B (Matthew 3:10): Axe at the root / post-biblical idiom

Greek (Matthew 3:10; key clause):

ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται

Syriac (Peshitta Matthew 3:10; key clause):

ܗܵܐ ܕܲܓܪܬܵܐ ܣܵܡܵܐ ܥܲܠ ܥܩܲܪ ܐܝܼܠܢܵܐ ܟܠ ܐܝܼܠܢܵܐ ܕܠܵܐ ܥܒܼܕ ܦܝܼܪ̈ܐ ܛܵܒ̈ܐ ܡܬܩܨܼܐ ܘܠܢܘܼܪܐ ܡܬܪܡܼܐ

Hebrew (Cochin Matthew 3:10):

זה הקורדום ששם על עיקר האילן כל האילן שאין עושה פירות טוב תקצית וליתן באש:

English (Hebrew gloss):

“This is the axe that is set at the root of the tree; every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and given into the fire.”

Note: Sample B tests whether the Cochin Matthew preserves a post-biblical Hebrew register marked by characteristic idiom, syntax, and Hebrew-Aramaic contact. This Matthean line is a compact example of the Cochin register. Lexically, ליתן (“to give”) is a characteristic post-biblical infinitive, and its use here in וליתן באש (“to give into the fire”) yields a natural post-biblical idiom for being handed over or cast into the fire. The syntactic packaging likewise departs from classical biblical prose in ways associated with later Hebrew and Hebrew-Aramaic contact, including the demonstrative opening זה, the relative construction ששם, and the generalized negative relative שאין עושה. None of these features, by itself, proves an early Vorlage. Taken together, however, they make the passage more naturally intelligible within a stable Semitic textual profile than as a purely late, improvised retroversion into biblicalizing Hebrew.

Sample C (Matthew 5:17): “Destroy” vs “establish” (mini-collation)

Greek (Matthew 5:17; key clause):

οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι

Syriac (Peshitta Matthew 5:17; key clause):

ܠܵܐ ܐܲܬܹܝܬ ܐܲܒܛܠܵܐ ܐܠܵܐ ܐܲܫܠܡܵܐ

Hebrew (Cochin Matthew 5:17; key clause):

לא באתי להפר כי אם לקיים

English (Hebrew gloss):

“I did not come to abolish, but to establish.”

Note: Sample C serves as a key test of translation direction, since the contrast between "abolish" and *lekayem* is more naturally expressed within a post-biblical Jewish idiomatic framework than by simple retroversion from Greek alone. The diagnostic force of this passage lies especially in the verb לקיים (lekayem, "to establish"), which is strongly at home in post-biblical and rabbinic Hebrew usage. In this context, the contrast between "destroy" and "establish" is not merely lexical but reflects a culturally Jewish way of speaking about the maintenance, interpretation, and proper enactment of Torah. That does not, by itself, prove an early Hebrew Vorlage. It does, however, make this clause a useful test case for determining translation direction, since the Cochin phrasing is more naturally explained within a stable Semitic textual profile than as an ad hoc Greek-to-Hebrew retroversion into a more classicizing register.

Sample D (Revelation 7:3–4): "Mark" (תָּו) and Ezekiel 9 resonance

Greek (Revelation 7:3–4; key clause):

...ἄχρι σφραγίσωμεν τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν. καὶ ἤκουσα τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐσφραγισμένων, ἑκατὸν τεσσεράκοντα τέσσαρες χιλιάδες...

Syriac (Peshitta Revelation 7:3–4; key clause):

ܥܕܡܐ ܢܣܝܡ ܡܫܘܚܐ ... ܕܐܠܗܢ ܥܒܕܐ ܒܓܒܝܗܘܢ ܕܐܠܗܢ ܥܕ ܢܣܝܡ ܡܫܘܚܐ

Hebrew (Cochin Revelation 7:3–4; key clause):

...ושמעתי המספר מאילו שנחתמו היה מאה וארבע וארבעים אלפים ...עד שאתן תָּו על מצחות עברי ה׳:

English (Hebrew gloss):

"Until I place a mark upon the foreheads of the servants of Yehovah ... then I heard the number of those who were marked: one hundred and forty-four thousand..."

Note: Sample D highlights a strongly Semitic rendering in which the use of תָּו gives the sealing scene a distinctly Hebrew-biblical profile and evokes Ezekiel 9. This does not by itself prove an early Hebrew Vorlage, but it makes the passage more naturally intelligible within a stable Semitic textual environment than as a merely mechanical late retroversion from Greek alone.

Sample E (Matthew 6:22–23): Eye imagery and interpretive adaptation

Greek (Matthew 6:22–23; key clause):

Ὁ λύχνος τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν ὁ ὀφθαλμός... ἐὰν δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου πονηρὸς ᾖ...

Syriac (Peshitta Matthew 6:22–23; key clause):

ܥܝܢܟ ... ܥܝܢܐ ܒܝܫܬܐ ܗܘ ܢܗܘܐ ܥܝܢܟ ...

Hebrew (Cochin Matthew 6:22–23; key clause):

נר של הגוף הוא עין ואם עינך יהיה בטוח... אם יהיה עניך רע ...

English (Hebrew gloss):

"The lamp of the body is the eye … and if your eye is confident … if your eye is evil …"

Note: Sample E is a secondary test case that presents eye-centered Semitic imagery alongside interpretive adaptation. The negative half remains close to the familiar "evil eye" pattern, but the positive counterpart is rendered with בטוח ("confident") rather than the more expected idiom of a "good eye." For that reason, the passage is less probative for the preservation of the full inherited idiom pair, though it still suggests a Semitic-contextual rendering rather than a purely literal Greek-to-Hebrew equivalence.

Lexical Indicators: Rabbinic/Mishnaic Hebrew and Second Temple Loanwords

Additional internal evidence comes from recurring lexemes and short formulaic expressions within the Cochin corpus. The items listed below are illustrative rather than exhaustive. Their relevance lies in the fact that several are characteristic of post-biblical Hebrew, including Mishnaic and rabbinic usage, while others correspond to late Second Temple or early Roman-period administrative and contact vocabulary.[33] No single lexeme is chronologically decisive. Recurrent clustering across multiple books, however, helps to identify the corpus's operative register and to test whether it is better explained as a stable Semitic textual environment than as a modern classicizing translation exercise.

- ***Bat Qol*** (בת קול), "heavenly voice" (often, a divine voice). **Where it appears:** Cochin Revelation 10:4; 10:8; 14:13. **Early rabbinic examples include:** *Mishnah* Yevamot 16:6.
- ***Beit Din*** (בית דין), "court / house of judgment." **Where it appears:** Cochin Matthew 5:21–22; 10:17; also Cochin James 2:2; 3:12. **Early rabbinic examples include:** *Mishnah* Peah 2:6.

[33] For these forms and expressions as characteristic of post-biblical or rabbinic Hebrew, see Moses H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001); Miguel Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*, trans. John Elwolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Moshe Bar-Asher, *The Language of the Mishnah* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2012); and Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Galilean Background of Mishnaic Hebrew," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 225–40. On **של** as a marker of post-biblical Hebrew and its broader historical development, see Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, trans. John Elwolde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 171–76, 203–8.

- ***Liten*** (ליתן), "to give" (a common post-biblical infinitive form). **Where it appears:** Cochin Revelation 2:17; 8:3; 11:18; 13:15; 15:4; 16:9; 16:19; 17:17; 19:7. **Early rabbinic examples include:** *Mishnah* Terumot 10:5.
- ***Likach*** (ליקח), "to take" (post-biblical infinitive form). **Where it appears:** Cochin Revelation 4:11; 5:9; 6:4; also Cochin 1 John 3:5. **Early rabbinic examples include:** *Mishnah Demai* 4:5.
- ***Leilek*** (לילך), "to go / to walk" (post-biblical infinitive form). **Where it appears:** Cochin Revelation 9:20; 12:14; 15:8; 22:14; also Cochin James 4:13 and Cochin John 7:35. **Early rabbinic examples include:** *Mishnah* Bava Qamma 1:1.
- ***Shel*** (של), meaning "of" or "belonging to," is a characteristic marker of post-biblical Hebrew possession. **Where it appears:** throughout the Cochin New Testament manuscripts (Cambridge MS Oo.1.32, Oo.1.16.1, Oo.1.16.2). **Early evidence:** although not used as a fully independent possessive marker in biblical prose, related forms and the same underlying sequence appear in late biblical and early post-biblical Hebrew, and the term is well attested in early rabbinic literature and the Bar Kokhba documents.

Analytical significance. These lexical patterns are not decisive on their own, but their recurrence across Oo.1.32 and Oo.1.16.2 strengthens the case that the Cochin corpus reflects a stable post-biblical Semitic register rather than a purely late biblicalizing translation exercise. Their evidentiary force lies in their cumulative distribution across witnesses and textual genres, not in any single form..

Additional lexical and Aramaic-contact findings. The following few examples broaden the lexical picture and show that Aramaic-contact forms and post-biblical Hebrew usage recur outside the main samples already discussed.[34] These examples are additional observations that should be checked directly against the manuscript readings in context.

- **Mark 1:13:** This verse contains both a Hebrew word with an Aramaic suffix and an Aramaic word. The Aramaic word מתנסא (*metnasse*/*metnasseyan*) is a word for "tested

[34] For Aramaic interference and contact phenomena in post-biblical Hebrew, including plural morphology and mixed lexicosyntactic features, see Edward M. Cook, "The Aramaic Influence on Mishnaic Hebrew: Borrowing or Interference?" in *Hebrew Texts and Language of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Steven E. Fassberg (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 25–36; Elitzur A. Bar-Asher Siegal, *Introduction to the Grammar of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 2nd ed. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2018); and Ivri J. Bunis, "The Distinct Linguistic Reality of the Jews in Late Antique Palestine and Babylonia as Reflected in the Lexicosyntax of אפשר," *Journal of Jewish Languages* 12, no. 1 (2024): 61–103.

one," and משמשין (*m'sham'shin*, "they served") is a Hebrew word that shows the Aramaic plural suffix ין-.

- **Mark 1:22:** The Hebrew word תמוהין (*t'muhin*, "they were astonished") uses the Aramaic masculine plural suffix -ין.
- **Luke 6:1:** The two Hebrew words with Aramaic-style endings appear in this verse: מולגין (mol'gin, "plucking") and אכלין (*ochlin*, "they ate").
- **John 7:15:** The Hebrew word מתמיהין (*mat-mihin*, "they were astonished") uses the Aramaic plural suffix ין-.
- **Acts 2:1:** The transliterated Greek term for Pentecost is preserved; this is notable because, amid many Semitic features, some passages still retain occasional Greek loan or transliterated vocabulary.
- **Acts 2:17:** Interestingly, the Hebrew phrase **יחלומון** חלם ("to dream a dream") shows a recognizable Semitic lexical pattern with a paragogic nun. This exact word, יחלומון, can be compared with Joel 2:28.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:1:** This verse contains the Aramaic word משבחין (*m'shab'chin*, "praising" or "glorifying").
- **1 Thessalonians 1:2–3:** The Hebrew word מזכירין (*maz'ki'rim*, "we mention"), and uses the Aramaic suffix -ין.
- **1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 2:9:** The Hebrew word האונגיליון (*ha'evangelion*, "the gospel / good news") shows a transliterated form of the Greek term within a Hebrew frame.
- **Revelation 14:6:** The Cochin Cambridge Revelation scribe appears to write this same term as two words, as און גיליון (*on gillion*), with the first word having a nun sofit to identify the ending of the first word and a separation of the two words.
- **Hebrews 6:6:** The word חוזרין (*chozrin*, "they return") is another example of a Hebrew verbal form that carries the Aramaic plural ending -ין.
- **1–3 John:** These Hebrew writings include rabbinic Hebrew words such as נתראה (*nit'reah*), which is a Nitpael verb form meaning "he/it presented himself." **Note:** During the first century, both Biblical Hebrew, used in religious texts, and Mishnaic or Rabbinic Hebrew, the spoken and scholarly dialect of the time, were actively evolving. Later in the language's development, the Nitpael verb stem expanded to express passive and reflexive functions,

but the Hitpael remained the main way to convey active, reflexive, and intensive self-directed actions.

Comparison with Joseph Gebhardt-Klein's description of Cochin Matthew (MS Oo.1.32)

A useful external point of comparison is Joseph Gebhardt-Klein, a recent editor and translator who has worked directly with portions of MS Oo.1.32. He characterizes the Travancore-Cochin Matthew (Oo.1.32, fols. 1r–21v) as written in "Mishnaic Hebrew," notes that it "frequently diverges into Aramaic," and observes that some readings show "seeming influence from the Peshitta, or some other Syriac text." That description broadly aligns with the internal profile argued for here: a post-biblical Hebrew register, sustained Hebrew-Aramaic contact features, and occasional passage-level Syriac alignment. At the same time, Gebhardt-Klein's description does not reduce the Cochin Matthew to a simple Syriac translation, and for that reason, it serves best here as corroborative evidence for a layered Semitic textual profile rather than as proof of a single-source explanation.

Additional examples he notes in Matthew 1:16 and 1:23 support the same conclusion. In Matthew 1:16, the form דמרים exhibits an Aramaic-style feature within the Hebrew text. In Matthew 1:23, the phrase דמתרגם עמן אלהן shows especially close agreement with Syriac witnesses. Such readings do not settle the question of origin on their own, but they do support the conclusion that the Cochin Matthew repeatedly exhibits a Hebrew-and-Aramaic linguistic environment that at times closely converges with Syriac forms.

6.3. Side-by-side Comparisons (Greek, Syriac, Cochin Hebrew Revelation)

The tables below present selected excerpts from Revelation 6, 7, and 14 in Greek, Syriac (Peshitta), and Cochin Hebrew (MS Oo.1.16.2). They are intended as focused test cases rather than full critical editions. The aim is limited: to determine whether the Cochin Hebrew broadly follows the same sequence as the Greek and Syriac, whether it favors more distinctly Semitic or post-biblical Hebrew phrasing, and which features merit evidentiary weight for the larger argument.

Methodological note on modern transcription and translation use. This study is concerned with the individual manuscript witness of Cambridge MS Oo.1.16.2 and therefore does not treat modern compiled translations as equivalent primary evidence. In particular, the Van Rensburg rendering of Revelation is not used here as a base text for analysis because it is a composite

combining Cambridge Oo.1.16.2 with readings from Manchester Gaster MS 1616.[35] This later manuscript is related to the Cambridge tradition but is not an exact copy of Oo.1.16.2. For that reason, a compilation that blends the two witnesses risks obscuring precisely the features this article aims to evaluate: the individual wording, sequence, roughness, and unharmonized translation profile of the Cambridge manuscript itself. Where modern transcriptions are used as access tools, they must therefore remain subordinate to direct consultation of the Cambridge witness and cannot be treated as independent or fully diplomatic evidence for the text of Oo.1.16.2.

More specifically, the standardized nature of the Van Rensburg composite is evident at several levels. In places where the Hebrew syntax of Oo.1.16.2 does not mirror the more familiar grammatical structure found in the Byzantine and Alexandrian Greek manuscript traditions, the compiled translation smooths the Hebrew by adopting corrections that bring the text more closely into line with conventional Greek phrasing. In Revelation 4, for example, verbal forms in the Cambridge manuscript that carry their own Hebrew nuance—including reflexive, reciprocal, or intensive binyan patterns—are normalized in ways that affect how the actions of the heavenly beings are represented. In chapter 13, distinctive lexical choices in the description of the beast and related evil powers are likewise standardized through marginal suggestions preserved in Manchester Gaster MS 1616, producing wording that more closely tracks later Greek textual phrasing than the Cambridge witness alone does.

The editors also add modern nikkudot to their printed Hebrew transcript, a decision that is not neutral because vowel pointing imposes an interpretive reading on an otherwise consonantal text. Methodologically, therefore, the Van Rensburg project is not a straightforward transcription of Cambridge Oo.1.16.2 but a modern editorial synthesis that selects and combines readings from Cambridge Oo.1.16.2, Manchester Gaster MS 1616, and other materials to produce a newly standardized Revelation text. Whatever one makes of their larger interpretive claims, such a composite cannot replace direct consultation of the Cambridge witness itself.

This methodological issue is also evident in a recent interview discussing the Cochin Revelation. In Hebrew Voices #215, “Bias in India’s Hebrew New Testament?: Part 1,”[36] Nehemia Gordon,

[35] John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, *Gaster Hebrew MS 1616*, digitized manuscript images, *The University of Manchester Digital Collections*, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/MS-GASTER-HEBREW-01616/1.

[36] Nehemia Gordon, PhD, interview with Miles Jones, PhD, “*Hebrew Voices* #215 – Bias in India’s Hebrew New Testament?: Part 1,” Nehemia’s Wall, posted April 30, 2025, https://www.nehemiaswall.com/bias-in-indias-hebrew-

PhD, and Miles Jones, PhD, analyze passages in Revelation where Yeshua identifies himself and, more broadly, criticize earlier assumptions—especially those of Delitzsch—that Jewish transmitters of Hebrew New Testament texts were prone to inserting polemical or insulting readings. Gordon explicitly questions whether hostile wording should automatically be attributed to the original translator rather than to a later copyist and argues that scholars often approach such manuscripts with a prior expectation of Jewish textual hostility. In the same discussion, Jones treats the "Aleph and Tav" formula—such as the wording found in Freiburg HS 314—as preferable or more original, even while maintaining that the Cochin Hebrew New Testament is a translation from Greek. Yet the Cochin Hebrew Revelation instead reads "the First and the Last," a wording that resonates directly with Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12, and also parallels Isaiah 41:4, rather than simply reproducing the Greek alphabetic formula.[37] That tension is methodologically significant: if the Cochin wording preserves a distinctly Hebraic Isaianic self-designation, whereas Freiburg HS 314 reads "Aleph and the Tav"[38] in these same Revelation passages, then the Cochin form is not adequately explained, without further argument, as a straightforward retroversion from Greek. At a minimum, the interview illustrates the need to distinguish between modern interpretive proposals for a preferred Hebrew formulation and the actual wording of the Cambridge Cochin manuscript. Additional internal evidence may be found in the linguistic relationship between Matthew 5:3 and Revelation 3:17–18. In the Cochin Matthew, the beatitude is rendered as "the poor" using the root ע־נ־י, whereas the expected Greek phrase "in spirit" is not rendered as in standard Greek and most familiar European versions, which explicitly read "poor in spirit." The omission does not by itself prove an early Hebrew Vorlage, but it does raise a methodological difficulty for any simple dependence on Luther or the *Statenvertaling*, since those traditions normally preserve the spiritual qualifier. More importantly, the Cochin wording allows "the poor" to function in a more concrete Hebraic register, comparable to the social-religious valence of עניים / עניים in Jewish usage.

new-testament-part-1. The episode description identifies the interview as part of a discussion of the Cochin Hebrew New Testament and lists Revelation 1:8, 21:6, and 22:13 among the passages under discussion.

[37] Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.16.2 (Cochin Hebrew Revelation) reads "the First and the Last" in Revelation 1:8, 1:11, 21:6, and 22:13, a formulation that resonates with the divine self-designation in Isa 41:4; 44:6; and 48:12. In the Hebrew-biblical context, this phrasing is more than a mechanical equivalent of the Greek alphabetic formula "Alpha and Omega," since it preserves an Isaianic mode of self-identification that is deeply rooted in biblical Hebrew idiom.

[38] University Library Freiburg, *Neues Testament in hebräischer Übersetzung* (Hs. 314, 1563), *Digital Collections Freiburg*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://dl.ub.uni-freiburg.de/diglit/hs314?ui_lang=eng. In the Revelation passages under discussion, Freiburg HS 314 reads "Aleph and the Tav" rather than "the First and the Last."

That lexical choice becomes more significant in Revelation 3:17, where the Laodiceans are told that they do not know that they are “poor and destitute,” again using the same root ע־נ־י together with אביון. The result is a deliberate lexical thread between the blessed “poor” of Matthew 5:3 and the spiritually impoverished Laodiceans of Revelation 3:17, a connection often blurred in European renderings that shift the emphasis toward “wretched” or “miserable.” In the Cochin form, the contrast is sharper: those who truly possess the kingdom are “poor,” while those who claim wealth are exposed as the truly poor.

Revelation 3:18 deepens the same paradox, using language that can be read within a wisdom and prophetic frame. The speaker offers “counsel” and commands the self-proclaimed rich to “buy gold,” language that resonates with Proverbs 23:23 (“Buy truth, and do not sell it”) and with wider sapiential exhortation. Likewise, the instruction to anoint the eyes “so that you may see” recalls prophetic rebuke formulas for those who have eyes but do not see and ears but do not hear. These features do not, by themselves, establish a first-century Hebrew original. They do, however, strengthen the case that the Cochin renderings preserve a coherent Hebraic lexical and rhetorical pattern that is not easily reduced to a straightforward eighteenth-century translation of familiar European versions.

Another potentially significant internal feature appears in Revelation 2:23, where the Cochin text uses the formula “the one who tests the kidneys and the heart” (הבוחן כליות ולב). This wording strongly recalls Jeremiah 17:10, where YHWH declares that he searches the heart and tests the kidneys. The relevance of this parallel is not that it proves a Hebrew Vorlage by itself, but that it shows the Cochin wording expressing the passage through a recognizably Hebrew prophetic formula rather than through a more abstract paraphrase. Read together with the manuscript’s other post-biblical and Hebraically packaged renderings, this kind of formulaic resonance strengthens the case that at least some Cochin readings preserve a distinctly Semitic rhetorical profile not easily reduced to a simple eighteenth-century translation exercise.

These internal features also bear directly on the broader scholarly tendency to treat the Cochin Hebrew New Testament as textually secondary or merely derivative. The Cochin Revelation does not simply mirror the most familiar Greek or European formulations at these points. In the passages where Freiburg HS 314 reads “Aleph and the Tav,” the Cambridge Cochin witness instead preserves “the First and the Last,” a wording that resonates with Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, and 48:12 and therefore expresses the claim through a recognizably Isaianic Hebraic self-designation rather than

through a mere alphabetic equivalent. Likewise, the lexical thread between Matthew 5:3 and Revelation 3:17–18, through the root עני, together with the wisdom-prophetic framing of Revelation 3:18 through "counsel," "buy," and "restored sight," points to a coherent Hebrew rhetorical pattern not well explained by simple dependence on Luther or the *Statenvertaling*. Taken cumulatively, such features do not prove a single ancient exemplar, but they do weigh against the tendency—visible in different ways from Delitzsch and Schechter to Justin and Michael van Rensburg—to treat the Cochin wording as expendable, inferior, or merely derivative before its internal evidence has been fully assessed.

Additionally, Yeates's manuscript is methodologically problematic because it appears to include visual copying errors, marginal corrections that move the Hebrew into closer conformity with Greek grammar, and explicit editorial omissions. Most revealing is a note on folio 427, in which Yeates explains that he deliberately omitted large sections of the New Testament—specifically Acts and several Pauline Epistles already represented in the Buchanan manuscripts—writing: "NB The Book of the Acts of the Apostles, Epistle to the Romans, I. Epistle to the Corinthians, II. Epistle to the Corinthians, Epistle to the Galatians, Epistle to the Ephesians, having been transcribed by some Indian Jew, of which the copy is in the Buchanan Collection marked Oo.I.16, is here omitted."[39] This statement shows that Yeates was not attempting a neutral diplomatic reproduction of the broader Cochin corpus but rather an edited, selective copy shaped by his own judgments. Because Justin and Michael van Rensburg later relied primarily on this Yeates-mediated Manchester witness for their modern translation project, their rendering inherits a layer of nineteenth-century editorial intervention that must be distinguished from the direct evidence of the individual Cambridge manuscript.

Accordingly, the comparison tables below are based on direct consultation of Cambridge MS Oo.1.16.2 and are intended to reflect the wording of that witness rather than later harmonized or reconstructed forms.

Table 2. The Four Horsemen (Revelation 6:1–8)

Ref.	Greek (excerpt)	Syriac (Peshitta) (excerpt)	Cochin Hebrew (excerpt)

[39] Thomas Yeates, editorial note on fol. 427 of *Gaster Hebrew MS 1616* (copy dated 1810), John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, digitized manuscript images, *The University of Manchester Digital Collections*, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/MS-GASTER-HEBREW-01616/1.

Revelation 6:7–8	Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγῖδα τὴν τετάρτην, ἤκουσα φωνὴν τοῦ τετάρτου ζῴου λέγοντος, Ἔρχου. καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἵππος χλωρός, καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ ὄνομα αὐτῷ [ὁ] Θάνατος, καὶ ὁ ᾅδης ἠκολούθει μετ' αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐξουσία ἐπὶ τὸ τέταρτον τῆς γῆς, ἀποκτεῖναι ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ καὶ ἐν λιμῷ καὶ ἐν θανάτῳ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν θηρίων τῆς γῆς.	ܘܟܕ ܦܬܚ ܡܚܬܐ ܪܒܝܥܝܐ ܫܡܥܬ ܐܢܐ ܩܠ ܚܝܘܬܐ ܪܒܝܥܝܐ ܕܡܐܡܪ ܐܬܐ ܘܚܙܝܬ ܘܗܐ ܣܘܣܝܐ ܐܟܣܪ ⁘ ܘܗܘ ܕܝܬܒ ܥܠܘܗܝ ܫܡܗ ܡܘܬܐ ܘܫܐܠ ܓܝܗܢܐ ܐܙܠ ܒܬܪܗ ܘܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܝܗܒ ܠܗܘܢ ܥܠ ܪܒܥ ܐܬܪܐ ܕܩܛܠܘ ܒܚܪܒܐ ܘܒܟܦܢܐ ܘܒܡܘܬܐ ܘܒܚܝܘܬ ܒܪ ⁘ ܐܬܪܐ	וכיון שפתח חתימת הרביעי שמעתי החיה הרביעי אומר בא וראה: וראיתי סוס אחד ברד ואמץ וזה שישב עליו היה שמו מלאך המות והגיהנם הלך אחריו ולו נותן רשות להמית חלק רביעי על הארץ בחרב וברעב ובמות ועל חיות הארץ:

Source: Greek text from *BibleHub*; Syriac Peshitta from *Peshitta.eu*; Cochin Hebrew from Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.16.2, consulted directly by the author.

Brief note: Cochin Revelation 6:7–8 and Zechariah 6:1–8. The Cochin Hebrew phrasing in Revelation 6:7–8 invites comparison with Zechariah 6, where differently marked horses appear in a judgment vision and are sent across the earth, including the "strong and mottled horse." Without implying direct quotation, the overlap is best treated as a Hebrew-biblical resonance: it shows that the Cochin rendering comfortably packages Revelation's imagery in terms familiar from prophetic-vision language.

Table 3. The 144,000 (Revelation 7:1–8; 14:1–5)

Ref.	**Greek (excerpt)**	**Syriac (Peshitta) (excerpt)**	**Cochin Hebrew (excerpt)**
Revelation 7:3–4	λέγων· Μὴ ἀδικήσητε τὴν γῆν μήτε τὴν θάλασσαν μήτε τὰ δένδρα, ἄχρι σφραγίσωμεν τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν	3 ܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܠܐ ܬܥܒܕܘܢ ܠܐܪܥܐ ܘܠܝܡܐ ܘܠܐ ܠܐܝܠܢܐ ܥܕ ܕܢܚܬܡ ܥܒܕܝ ܐܠܗܢ ܒܓܒܝܗܝ 4⁘ ܘܫܡܥܬ ܐܢܐ ܡܢܝܢܐ ܕܚܬܝܡ ܡܐܐ ܘܐܪܒܥܝܢ ܐܠܦ ܚܬܝܡ ܡܢ ܟܠ ܫܒܛܐ ܕܒܢܝ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ ⁘	ואמר אל תזיקו להארץ ולהים או לעץ עד שאתן חָו על מצחות עברי ה׳: ושמעתי המספר מאילו שנחתמו היה מאה וארבע וארבעים אלפים שנחתמו ממשפחות בני ישראל:

	μετώπων αὐτῶν. Καὶ ἤκουσα τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐσφραγισμένων, ἑκατὸν τεσσεράκοντα τέσσαρες χιλιάδες, ἐσφραγισμένοι ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ·	ܥܡ ܡܐܬܐ ܐܪܒܥܝܢ ܘܐܪܒܥܐ ܐܠܦܝ ܚܬܝܡܝ ܟܠ ܫܒܛ ܒܢܝ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ ❖	
Revelation 14:1	καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ ἀρνίον ἑστὸς ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος σιών, καὶ μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἑκατὸν τεσσεράκοντα τέσσαρες χιλιάδες ἔχουσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένον ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν.	ܘܚܙܝܬ ܗܐ ܓܝܪܐ ܩܐܡ ܥܠ ܛܘܪ ܨܝܘܢ ܘܥܡܗ ܡܐܬܐ ܐܪܒܥܝܢ ܘܐܪܒܥܐ ܐܠܦܝ ܕܟܬܝܒ ܫܡܗ ܘܫܡ ܐܒܘܗ ܥܠ ܓܒܝܗܘܢ ❖	וראיתי שה אחד עמד על הר ציון ועמו מאה וארבע וארבעים אלפים ועל מצחותיהם נכתב שמו ושם אביו
Revelation 14:4	οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ μετὰ γυναικῶν οὐκ ἐμολύνθησαν· παρθένοι γάρ εἰσιν· οὗτοι οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ.	4 ܗܠܝܢ ܐܝܢܘܢ ܕܠܐ ܐܬܛܢܦܘ ܥܡ ܢܫܐ ܐܠܐ ܒܬܘܠܬܐ ܗܢ ܐܝܢܘܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܡܬܒܥܝܢ ܠܓܝܪܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܙܠ ❖	ואלו המה שלא חטאו בנשים והם כבתולות והולכים אחר השה והמה נקנים לבכורת ה׳ והשה
Revelation 14:5	καὶ ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν οὐχ εὑρέθη ψεῦδος· ἄμωμοι γάρ εἰσιν.	5 ܘܒܦܘܡܗܘܢ ܠܐ ܐܫܬܟܚ ܟܕܒܐ ܐܠܐ ܗܢ ܢܩܝܝܢ ❖	ואין ברוחם רמיה והם נקיים לפני הכסא ה׳:

Source: Greek text from *BibleHub*; Syriac Peshitta from *Peshitta.eu*; Cochin Hebrew from Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.16.2, consulted directly by the author.

Alignment observations (Revelation 14:1–5)

In Revelation 14:1–5, the main point is that the Cochin Hebrew preserves the same broad sequence as the Greek and Syriac, repeatedly packaging it in Semitic and post-biblical Hebrew terms. In

Revelation 7:3–4, the use of תָּו for the mark on the forehead gives the sealing scene a distinctly Hebrew-biblical coloring. In Revelation 14:1, the formula "His name and the Father's name" appears in a semiticized form, and in Revelation 14:4–5 the moral description is rendered in post-biblical Hebrew diction. Some expressions remain close to Syriac at the passage level, but such agreement does not, by itself, determine the direction or origin of the reading. The significance of the table, therefore, is cumulative rather than demonstrative: the Cochin text follows the inherited sequence while repeatedly expressing it in Semitic and post-biblical Hebrew terms.

Brief note: sealing in Revelation 7 and marking in Ezekiel 9. The Cochin Hebrew of Revelation 7:3–4 strengthens the resonance with Ezekiel 9 by using תָּו for the forehead mark (תָּו עַל־מִצְחָוֹת – "mark upon the forehead"). The point is not to prove direct dependence but to note that the Hebrew rendering expresses the sealing motif in a recognizably Hebrew-biblical way that fits the manuscript's broader Semitic profile.

7. Counterarguments and Alternative Explanations

The article's argument is cumulative and must be tested against several serious alternative explanations. No single feature of the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts proves descent from an early Semitic source layer. The question is not whether every alternative model can be ruled out, but whether the corpus is better explained by a layered multilingual history—including European vernacular mediation, multiple hands, and possible multiple translators—than by a simplified single-source account.

A first objection is that these manuscripts might simply be late Hebrew translations prepared for Jewish-Christian polemic. That possibility must be taken seriously, especially because the extant codices are early modern and some added notes clearly reflect polemical use. Even so, the recurring patterns of stable idiom, Hebrew-Aramaic contact, and cross-witness consistency are not easily explained as the result of a merely ad hoc translation exercise.

Additionally, the use of "*Yeshu*" should not automatically be treated as inherently derogatory. In some early Jewish and Aramaic contexts, it may instead reflect dialectal pronunciation of "*Yeshua*," especially in Galilean speech, rather than deliberate hostility.[40]

[40] On "*Yeshu*" as a possible dialectal or regional pronunciation rather than an inherently polemical form, see David Flusser, *Jesus*, trans. J. R. Porter (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 15; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 5; and Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity, Part I: Palestine 330 BCE–200 CE* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002),

Furthermore, the manuscript's polemical character is an important clue to how the extant copy was used. Earlier researchers noted hostile marginal remarks and anti-Christian annotations surrounding the text.[41] These comments indicate that the manuscript was treated as a tool for study, rebuttal, and argument rather than for belief or devotion. That matters for the broader question of source history: if the scribe already possessed an older Hebrew New Testament witness, a new Hebrew copy would not have been necessary merely for polemical consultation. The very act of recopying into Hebrew, therefore, suggests that something more than simple anti-Christian utility may be involved.

A second objection is that the linguistic profile may reflect the typical habits of early modern Jewish Hebraists rather than an older source layer. In principle, a skilled translator could reproduce post-biblical diction, rabbinic-style forms, and even some Semitic idioms. The argument, therefore, rests not on isolated forms but on the density, recurrence, and distribution of these features across multiple witnesses.

This point highlights the difference between a rough Semitic source profile and the more polished Hebrew one would expect from a later learned rabbinic redactor. Acts 4:13 describes Peter and John as untrained in formal scholarly culture, and that distinction matters here: the unevenness of the Cochin Revelation is more consistent with inherited transmission than with a newly composed scholarly Hebraizing text.[42][43][44]

126–28. The point here is not to deny that the term could acquire hostile force in later usage, but to caution against assuming that every occurrence must be read that way in its earliest context.

[41] Claims about hostile marginal remarks, anti-Christian framing, and polemical endnotes in MS Oo.1.32 should be tied directly to the manuscript images and, where applicable, to Schiller-Szinessy's unpublished catalogue notes and the Cambridge Digital Library record. See Cambridge University Library, "Hebrew Translation of the New Testament (MS Oo.1.32)," *Cambridge Digital Library*, accessed April 18, 2026, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OO-00001-00032/1; Salomon Marcus Schiller-Szinessy, unpublished catalogue notes on Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.32, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge; and Stefan C. Reif, *Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: A Description and Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[42] On the distinction between ordinary or less formal Semitic register and later learned rabbinic Hebrew, compare Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, trans. John Elwolde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 202–8; William M. Schniedewind, *A Social History of Hebrew: Its Origins Through the Rabbinic Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); and Moshe Bar-Asher, *The Language of the Mishnah* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2012). The argument here is not that roughness proves antiquity, but that it is not what one would most expect from a polished early modern scholarly Hebraizing exercise.

[43] Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, trans. John Elwolde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 202–205.

[44] Colette Sirat, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. Nicholas de Lange (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 115.

A further issue concerns the manuscript's traces of European vernacular. Some proper names and lexical items suggest mediation through languages such as Portuguese, while earlier scholarship and more recent work also identify traces of Dutch and German. These are historically intelligible in an eighteenth-century Cochin setting shaped by Dutch political rule, missionary networks, and the circulation of European paper and books. Such features, therefore, require systematic treatment as part of the manuscript's mixed translational environment rather than as isolated curiosities in names and loanwords.[45]

The personal names in the Cochin Cambridge New Testament suggest a mixed translational environment shaped primarily by Hebrew and Latin Vulgate influences, with a smaller but noticeable Portuguese element; this pattern may reflect the work of different scribes or stages of copying. For example, in Matthew 4:18, Peter appears as *Kepha*, yet elsewhere in Matthew he is rendered as *Pedro*, aligning with the Portuguese Bible tradition rather than the Latin *Petrus*. By contrast, John in the Cochin Matthew is consistently rendered as the Hebrew *Yochanan*, which aligns with neither the Portuguese *João* nor the Latin *Ioannes*, although Revelation preserves forms such as *Yohannes* and *Ye'hannos*, which are closer to Latinized patterns. Likewise, *Joseph* in Matthew 1–2 consistently appears as the Hebrew name *Yoseph*, which does not follow the Portuguese *José* but corresponds more closely to the Latin *Joseph*, while *Mary* appears as *Mariam* rather than the shared Latin and Portuguese *Maria*. These naming patterns suggest that the collection was not dependent on a single European source alone, but reflects a layered process of standardization in which Hebrew forms, Latin Vulgate influence, and occasional Portuguese forms were selectively adopted, possibly under the influence of different scribes working within a multilingual environment shaped by interaction with Portuguese Catholic communities on the west coast of India, where the Latin Vulgate functioned as the principal biblical text.[46]

A third issue is that Syriac influence might explain many of the Semitic characteristics without requiring an earlier Hebrew source. Some readings in Matthew and Revelation closely match Syriac forms. Therefore, comparing Syriac is relevant to this study. However, agreement at the

[45] Franz Delitzsch, trans., *Hebrew New Testament* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1998). The reference here is to Delitzsch's Hebrew New Testament version as a later comparative witness, not to his 1870 monograph *Paulus des Apostels Brief an die Römer*, which is a separate work.

[46] Stephen Neill, A History of Christianity in India: The Beginnings to AD 1707 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 114–116.

passage level does not fully account for the broader Hebrew profile, especially when the wording is strongly rooted in post-biblical Hebrew.

A fourth concern is that the corpus may consist of layered materials rather than a single uniform textual entity. This possibility should not be treated as a weakness in the argument but as part of the manuscripts' historical reality. In different ways, Delitzsch, Weinstein, and more recent work by Mascha van Dort all point to multiple phases of copying, distinct scribal competencies, and the possibility of more than one translational stratum. The Cambridge Cochin manuscripts are therefore best approached as related but non-identical witnesses, whose internal differences require explanation rather than minimization.

The historical and material context reinforces this point. European paper, Dutch governance, and the presence of a Hebrew Qur'an from the same milieu all argue against treating the New Testament manuscripts in isolation. These factors do not determine translation direction, but they do require a historically grounded method that integrates codicology, provenance, colonial history, and multilingual comparison. Within that broader frame, the Cambridge manuscripts are best understood as products of an intelligible eighteenth-century Cochin translation culture.

A fifth concern is selection bias. Because this article uses representative passages and selective comparison tables rather than a complete diplomatic edition, some examples may appear stronger than others. The argument should therefore be read as cumulative and provisional, pending fuller transcription and broader collation.

Taken together, these objections help define the proper scope of the argument. This study does not claim to provide direct proof of descent from a single early Roman-period exemplar. It argues more narrowly that the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts preserve a constellation of linguistic, idiomatic, and comparative features that the simplest late-translation model cannot fully explain. Whether that constellation is best understood as inherited Hebrew Vorlage, Syriac-mediated Semitic transmission, or a layered mixture of both remains a question for further research.

7.1 Comparative Visualization: Matthew 1-4, Matthew 5-21, and Jude within the Cochin Manuscript Complex

Set within the broader Cochin manuscript complex, the Matthew evidence is most persuasive when considered in terms of distribution rather than value judgment. The strongest concentration of *Meshicha* and *MarYah* / *di-MarYah* occurs in the opening section of Matthew, although *MarYah* also appears later, including in chapter 21. This pattern shows that Syriac-adjacent influence is

bounded and cannot account for the whole Gospel.[47] At the same time, the pronoun data complicates any broader claim of consistent Syriacization: while the opening section preserves a mixed profile, the manuscript's ordinary grammar is overwhelmingly Hebrew in Matthew 5–21. That distinction helps explain why Justin and Michael van Rensburg differentiate Revelation, James, and Jude[48] from the rest of the collection,[49] and why the Gospel evidence itself must still be evaluated section by section.

The use of Luther or the Dutch *Statenvertaling* as a source aids in an eighteenth-century Cochin setting, but it does not, by itself, establish that the surviving Hebrew text is simply a direct derivative of those versions. Source consultation must be distinguished methodologically from grammatical profile, idiomatic distribution, and the internal evidence of layered transmission. Even if European Bibles were available and consulted in the production or revision of some portions of the corpus, that fact alone does not explain why the Cambridge witnesses repeatedly preserve post-biblical Hebrew diction, Hebrew-Aramaic contact phenomena, and bounded internal differentiation across books and sections rather than a more uniform Europeanizing translation profile.

Mascha van Dort's historical work argues that the manuscripts were produced for Ezekiel Rahabi and that Luther and the *Statenvertaling* served as sources in the eighteenth-century translation process.[50] In this respect, evidence of source use remains historically important, but it cannot substitute for direct analysis of the Hebrew wording itself.

Read within the paper's broader historical reconstruction, the Matthew distribution is consistent with a layered production history rather than a single uniform act of translation. The opening

[47] Traditions of avoiding direct writing or pronunciation of the divine name are reflected in both rabbinic and earlier Jewish sources. See *Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah* 17b–18a, and the Scholion on Megillat Taʿanit regarding the decrees associated with Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Maccabean period. These sources are not cited here to claim a direct line of transmission from antiquity to the Cochin manuscripts, but to show that the use of substitute forms for the divine name has a long, historically attested background in Jewish textual culture.

[48] Justin J. van Rensburg and Michael van Rensburg, "Authentic Hebrew Revelation, James and Jude—as Contained in C.U.L. Oo.1.16 and Oo.1.32," *HebrewGospels.com*, accessed May 29, 2026, https://www.hebrewgospels.com/introduction-other-nt.

[49] Justin J. van Rensburg and Michael van Rensburg, "Hebrew New Testament from Cochin, India," *HebrewGospels.com*, accessed May 29, 2026, https://www.hebrewgospels.com/nt-cochin.

[50] Mascha van Dort, *Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort, a Learned Jewish-Christian Man from Dordrecht* (self-published biography, ResearchGate PDF), sections on Van Dort's work in Cochin and the Hebrew New Testament translation, accessed May 29, 2026, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mascha-Van-Dort/publication/366177343_Index_book_Leopold_Immanuel_Jacob_van_Dort_a_learned_Jewish-Christian_man_from_Dordrecht/links/6394cd7c11e9f00cda357e9c/Index-book-Leopold-Immanuel-Jacob-van-Dort-a-learned-Jewish-Christian-man-from-Dordrecht.pdf.

chapters preserve the strongest concentration of Syriac-adjacent theological titles and a mixed pronoun profile, while Matthew 5–21 overwhelmingly reverts to ordinary Hebrew morphology. Gebhardt-Klein's comparison of Jude in Oo.1.32 with Walton's Polyglot *Peshitta*[51] points in the same direction: at key points, Jude cannot be reduced to the Syriac tradition alone. Taken together, these data support the article's central methodological claim that the Cambridge Cochin New Testament is best understood as a stratified manuscript complex whose internal differences require section-by-section evaluation rather than a single-source explanation.

Table 4. Comparative distribution of Syriac-adjacent features in Matthew and Jude

Comparative Focus	**Matthew 1–4 / Primary Zone of Early Features**	**Matthew 5–21 or Jude / Later or Distinct Layer**	**Primary Witness**	**Interpretive Significance**
Syriac/Aramaic theological titles	*Meshicha* appears at Matthew 1:1, 1:16, 1:18, and 2:4; *MarYah*/*di-MarYah* occurs in six opening-section instances.	The strongest concentration is in Matthew 1–4, though *MarYah* also appears later, including Matthew 21.	Oo.1.32 (Matthew)	Shows a sharply bounded opening theological register rather than a uniform profile across the Gospel.
Pronoun morphology: *Lehon* vs. *Lahem*	The opening section preserves a mixed profile, including exceptional *Lehon* forms.	*Lahem* dominates in Matthew 5–21; *Lehon* becomes exceptional.	Oo.1.32 (Matthew)	Makes the grammatical shift from the opening chapters to the later Gospel visually explicit.
Jude in relation to the *Peshitta*	Gebhardt-Klein compares Jude in Oo.1.32 with Walton's Polyglot *Peshitta*.	Jude 13, 16, 22, and 23 resist reduction to the *Peshitta* alone.	Oo.1.32 (Jude)	Shows that at least one part of the corpus cannot be collapsed into a simple Syriac-source explanation.

Source: Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.32 and Joseph Gebhardt-Klein's comparison of Jude with Walton's Polyglot *Peshitta*, synthesized by the author.

The comparison suggests a clear overall pattern. The evidence does not support describing the Cambridge Cochin New Testament as either uniformly Syriac or uniformly non-Syriac; rather, it

[51] Joseph Gebhardt-Klein, "The Epistle of Jude from the Travancore-Cochin, India Manuscript of the Rabbinical-Hebrew New Testament: Compared to the Peshitta of Walton's Polyglot," revised 2024, Academia.edu, based on Cambridge University Library MS Oo.1.32, ff. 160a–b.

points to a patterned internal differentiation. In Matthew, Syriac-adjacent titles are most systematically concentrated in the opening theological register, though *MarYah* also appears sporadically later, including in chapter 21, while the later chapters overwhelmingly follow standard Hebrew morphology. The pronoun data is especially important because it shows that everyday grammar is not consistently Syriacized: *Lahem* is the dominant form overall, and *Lehon* becomes exceptional outside the opening section. This distinction may help explain why Justin and Michael van Rensburg differentiate Revelation, James, and Jude from the rest of the collection, and why no single judgment should be extended automatically across the corpus.

Mascha van Dort's reconstruction of Rahabi's patronage and of Van Dort's participation remains historically important, but provenance alone does not determine textual ancestry. The Matthew distribution and the Jude comparison instead suggest a more complex picture: some sections may reflect later finishing or regularization, while others preserve a more clearly bounded Semitic profile. In this respect, the present paper departs from both Delitzsch's older *Peshitta*-reduction model and newer tendencies to collapse the corpus into a single European-source explanation. The evidence does not justify treating the Cambridge Cochin New Testament as a monolithic witness, and Delitzsch's judgments must be read within the material limits of nineteenth-century manuscript access rather than as final authority on the Cambridge corpus.

That conclusion has an important methodological consequence: judgments about one book or one section cannot automatically be extended to the whole corpus. Even if some parts of the Cambridge Cochin New Testament ultimately prove to be later translations or revisions, that would not by itself determine the ancestry of every other part. The internal evidence instead points toward mixed transmission and requires book-by-book and, at times, section-by-section evaluation.

This cumulative internal evidence also requires a reassessment of the scholars and interpreters who have treated the Cochin Hebrew New Testament tradition as textually secondary, derivative, or otherwise lacking independent value. Franz Delitzsch and Solomon Schechter each approached the corpus with assumptions that tended to minimize its linguistic and textual significance, whether by treating difficult readings as signs of inferiority, as evidence of polemical corruption, or as evidence of secondary dependence. More recently, Justin and Michael van Rensburg have rightly drawn attention to the Cochin Revelation, James, and Jude, yet their reliance on a modern composite text for Revelation and their broader differentiation of the corpus can still risk obscuring the evidentiary value of the individual Cambridge witnesses. Against such judgments, the present

study has argued from concrete internal data: the sharply bounded Syriac-adjacent title register in Matthew 1–4 followed by the overwhelming return to ordinary Hebrew morphology in Matthew 5–21; Jude's resistance at key points to reduction to the *Peshitta* alone; the Cochin Revelation's preservation of "the First and the Last" rather than Freiburg HS 314's "Aleph and the Tav"; and the lexical-rhetorical thread linking Matthew 5:3 with Revelation 3:17–18 through עִנִּי and wisdom-prophetic language. These are not the marks of a corpus that can simply be dismissed as a rough late translation. They are better explained as evidence of layered transmission in which the extant manuscripts preserve Semitic textual material of genuine independent value.

The strongest evidence in this study comes from the convergence of several internal patterns: bounded Syriac-adjacent forms in Matthew 1–4 followed by ordinary Hebrew morphology in Matthew 5–21; Jude's resistance at key points to reduction to the *Peshitta*; the Cochin Revelation's preservation of "the First and the Last" rather than Freiburg HS 314's "Aleph and the Tav"; and recurring post-biblical Hebrew diction together with Hebrew-Aramaic contact phenomena across the manuscript complex. Taken together, these features do not prove a single ancient exemplar, but they do weigh against treating the Cambridge Cochin corpus as merely derivative or wholly reducible to Syriac or European source traditions.

8. Significance for Hebrew Manuscript Studies and Global Christianity

The significance of the Cambridge Cochin Hebrew New Testament manuscripts extends beyond the narrower question of whether they preserve a late Hebrew translation or a more deeply rooted Semitic textual profile. They matter first for Hebrew manuscript studies because they show that Christian scripture could circulate in Hebrew within Jewish settings not only as an object of polemical engagement but also as a text copied, preserved, annotated, and reused within manuscript cultures shaped by post-biblical Hebrew learning. In that respect, the Cambridge witnesses complicate any simple division between "Jewish" and "Christian" textual worlds.

Although the Cochin Hebrew New Testament has not been entirely neglected, the corpus still requires more sustained scholarly review. Important contributions by Walter J. Fischel, Meir Bar-Ilan, and Mascha van Dort have clarified aspects of Cochin Jewish history, manuscript culture, and transmission, yet the Cambridge manuscripts themselves remain underexamined in terms of linguistic profile, codicological layering, internal differentiation, and comparative textual affiliation. The present study should therefore be understood not as the conclusion of the

discussion, but as a call for more detailed manuscript-based scholarship on a corpus whose historical and textual significance has not yet been fully assessed.

The Cochin setting remains important. Scholarship on the Jews of Cochin, especially J. B. Segal's work on communal history and families such as the Rahabis, shows that these manuscripts should not be treated merely as items in a colonial archive. Even if the surviving codices reflect broader early modern Jewish scribal and material networks, their transmission through Cochin Jewish ownership and preservation remains a significant part of their textual afterlife.

More specifically, the present analysis engages a substantial portion of the Cochin Cambridge New Testament corpus and finds that the strongest evidence is unevenly distributed across the books examined. Some books not treated in the main analysis do not presently show the kinds of post-biblical Hebrew and Hebrew-Aramaic contact markers most relevant to the argument advanced here. Even so, the broader corpus preserved in the Cochin Cambridge manuscripts still warrants closer book-by-book study, since the evidence already surveyed suggests that no single judgment should be extended automatically across the whole collection.

9. Conclusion

This article does not claim to resolve the full origin of the Cambridge Cochin corpus. It does, however, aim to render the continued dismissal of these manuscripts methodologically untenable. If that narrower point holds, the principal goal of the study has been achieved: to establish that the corpus merits direct collation, closer philological scrutiny, and renewed scholarly attention as a layered Semitic textual witness of genuine independent value.

The Cambridge Cochin Hebrew New Testament manuscripts—MS Oo.1.32, MS Oo.1.16.1, and MS Oo.1.16.2—should no longer be treated simply as late polemical Hebrew copies of Christian scripture. Although the extant codices are early modern and reflect later copying, use, and annotation, their recurring internal profile—post-biblical Hebrew diction, Hebrew-Aramaic contact, stable idiomatic patterns, and selected comparative alignments with Greek and Syriac—cannot be explained adequately by a simple model of ad hoc late retroversion alone. The argument advanced here is limited: it does not claim descent from a single ancient exemplar, but it does contend that these witnesses preserve a stable Semitic textual profile that merits substantially closer scholarly attention.

More broadly, this study argues for a methodological correction. Early modern codices should not be dismissed as textually secondary merely because their extant form is late, nor should polemical framing, paratextual reuse, or multilingual transmission be allowed to settle in advance the question of textual profile. In the case of the Cambridge Cochin manuscripts, codicology, linguistic register, and comparative evidence together point to a more complex history than the standard late-translation model can comfortably accommodate. These manuscripts, therefore, matter not only for the history of Hebrew New Testament transmission but also for broader questions about Jewish-Christian textual encounter, manuscript reuse, and the persistence of Semitic textuality in unexpected archival settings.

For that reason, the Cambridge Cochin Hebrew New Testament should no longer be described in broad terms that reduce it to merely secondary, derivative, or textually expendable status, whether in earlier assessments by Franz Delitzsch and Solomon Schechter or in more recent discussion by Justin and Michael van Rensburg.

Future research should extend direct manuscript comparison through selected passage-by-passage collation, especially where the present argument makes its strongest claims about translation direction, inherited Semitic idiom, and cross-witness stability. This work should also include a targeted side-by-side comparison of the New Testament books addressed in this study—that is, the canonical corpus, excluding First and Second Timothy, Titus, Jude, and Philemon. Those excluded books are not omitted arbitrarily: in the present state of analysis, they do not exhibit the Hebrew markers most relevant to the argument advanced here. First–Second Timothy and Titus are also not texts in which such markers would necessarily be expected, since many scholars regard them as later writings, dating to roughly a century after Paul. The comparison should therefore focus on the books in which the relevant post-biblical Hebrew and Hebrew-Aramaic contact features recur, while still leaving open the possibility of more extensive testing of the excluded books for other kinds of evidence. The principal external witnesses most often invoked in discussions of the Cochin manuscripts remain the Greek text, the Syriac *Peshitta*, Luther's German Bible, the Dutch *Statenvertaling*, and the *Delitzsch Hebrew New Testament*. The purpose of such a comparison would not be merely to identify similarities but to determine whether specific Cochin readings can be reduced to those traditions or whether they preserve features that resist explanation as direct translations from them. Such testing would strengthen the article's broader methodological claim that the corpus must be evaluated book by book rather than assigned a single-source explanation

in advance. Such work should compare the relevant Cochin witnesses line by line and, where useful, place them alongside comparison texts in Greek and Syriac. The aim is not merely to accumulate additional examples but to test whether the patterns identified here hold across a broader body of evidence.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Methodological Clarifications

This appendix clarifies several methodological points raised in the article. It does not present new evidence. Its purpose is to explain how the study distinguishes among linguistic register, codicological setting, provenance, and textual profile.

1. Distinguishing inherited Semitic idiom from early modern Hebraizing

The argument of this article does not rest on isolated post-biblical words or on the mere presence of rabbinic-style Hebrew. A skilled early modern Hebraist could reproduce some of these features. The stronger evidence lies in the patterned recurrence of post-biblical vocabulary, Hebrew-Aramaic contact forms, culture-specific idioms, and bounded agreement across multiple manuscript units. The question, therefore, is not simply whether such forms could have been imitated, but whether their density and distribution are better explained by inherited Semitic textuality than by ad hoc late Hebraizing.

A smaller subset of the evidence is orthographic. This includes variable spellings, longer and shorter written forms, and the treatment of Greek loanwords in Hebrew script. These features are

not chronologically decisive on their own, but they qualify as orthographic data in the strict sense and may contribute to the corpus's broader Semitic profile when considered alongside morphological, lexical, and idiomatic evidence.

2. The Cambridge Cochin corpus is not assumed to be uniform

This study does not assume uniformity across the Cambridge Cochin corpus. The manuscripts are distinct codicological units, copied by different hands, and may preserve distinct stages of revision, reuse, and transmission. For that reason, the argument is intentionally limited. It claims only that recurring internal features visible in more than one witness are more consistent with a sustained Semitic textual profile than with a wholly improvised late-translation model.

This point also affects the method. The Cambridge Cochin New Testament should not be treated as a monolithic witness whose entire history can be inferred from a single book, a single translator, or a single phase of copying. Because the corpus is already codicologically divided and internally uneven, book-by-book and, at times, section-by-section evaluation is required.

3. Provenance, manuscript date, and textual origin must be distinguished

A central methodological distinction in this article is the difference among provenance, manuscript date, and textual origin. The fact that the surviving Cambridge Cochin codices are early modern manuscripts does not, by itself, determine the age or origin of the textual layers they preserve. In manuscript studies more broadly, the date of a physical copy is not identical to the date of the text it transmits, and later copying does not prove that the text was composed recently.

For that reason, arguments that move directly from eighteenth-century patronage, copying, or ownership to the conclusion that every textual layer in the Cochin corpus must be an eighteenth-century translation risk conflating distinct questions. This article, therefore, treats provenance and codicology as historically important but not self-sufficient. Questions of textual ancestry must instead be tested by examining the internal linguistic profile, the distribution of features, comparative witnesses, and the possibility that different books or sections preserve different stages of transmission.

A useful methodological parallel appears in other Hebrew works preserved in the Cochin manuscript environment. In such cases, the late date of the surviving copy does not, by itself, determine the age of the underlying composition. The relevance of that comparison here is methodological rather than identical: a late Cochin copy need not be equated with a late textual layer.

4. Scope of the argument

The article does not claim to provide direct proof of descent from a single ancient exemplar, nor does it argue that every part of the Cambridge Cochin corpus preserves the same depth of Semitic evidence. Its narrower claim is that recurring linguistic, idiomatic, and comparative features in the principal witnesses are not adequately explained by the simplest late-translation model.

The burden of argument, therefore, falls not on broad assumptions about what a late manuscript must be, but on positive evidence that best explains particular readings, sections, and books. For that reason, the study argues for closer manuscript-based evaluation rather than a single-source conclusion in advance.

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