



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

THE SHROUD INDICATES THE CROSS HAD A SEDILE

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There is one reason why I believe the Shroud almost certainly was not painted. This reason has not been publicised. The Shroud is, as far as I know, the only ancient artifact caused by, or representing, a crucified body, in which the victim must have sat on a *sedile*, a saddle on the upright of the cross, which bore his weight.

Look up "Crucifixion" in the *New Bible Dictionary*, and you will read that death rarely occurred in less than thirty-six hours, on occasions not coming for nine days. However when scientists have tried strapping up volunteers on plain crosses to determine the causes of death, they have found that the position caused such agony and alteration in their bodies, had they not been let down within twelve to twenty minutes they would probably have died.

There must have been some additional support under the crutch or feet. The *New Bible Dictionary*, under "Cross", tells us that the victim usually sat on a *sedile*, a peg or horn projecting from the upright. The alternative support, a horizontal or oblique bracket under the feet, the *suppedaneum*, was not mentioned in historical records until Gregory of Tours in the VIth century.

To test this in the case of the victim seen on the Shroud, a volunteer at Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham had the bloodmarks shown on the cloth painted onto his arms and wrist. You will note that on the left wrist there are V-shaped marks, while further up the left forearm the marks are approximately parallel to one branch of the V. On the right arm the marks run parallel to the forearm, the wrist being hidden.

A cross was constructed with scaffolding in the Drama Studio. The volunteer, John Makin, was not able to pull himself up on the crossbar to a position that would have given those stains. Attaching a short piece for him to sit on, a position was quickly found at which he could sit symmetrically, the left forearm marks and one branch of the V being vertical. (Fig 1) When John relaxed as if losing consciousness and toppled to the right, the other branch of the V on his left wrist, as well as the stains along his right forearm were vertical. (Fig 2) The illustrations show the two positions. John was sitting facing the cross so that the directions of the bloodmarks could be clearly seen.

On the basis of this experiment, the crucified victim of the Shroud must have sat on a *sedile*. If he was Jesus, this explains why Pilate and the spectators were amazed that he had apparently died so soon, having hung there only about three hours. The *sedile* was provided to make the degrading, agonising process last much longer than that.

It also provides another very strong argument for the Shroud's being genuine. There are plenty of paintings of the Crucifixion showing support given under the feet, but this author does not know of one with a *sedile*. Does any reader know of any? The only representation of a *sedile* known at present is on the rood at Willen Priory, Milton Keynes, but that was carved in this century.

This means that all the research into how the victim in the Shroud died, assuming he was fixed to a plain *crux immissa* as on Christian altars with no *sedile* to support him is invalid in the main. The length of the second stain on the left wrist, and the trickle right down the right forearm, shows that his heart was still beating while he hung for a considerable time slumped to the right. Orthostatic collapse and asphyxiation do not apply in that case.

FURTHER READING ON THIS SUBJECT

Whether or not the cross of Jesus was provided with a *sedile* (a projecting piece of wood which the crucified straddled) or a *suppedaneum* (a crossbar on which the feet were nailed, giving better support to body weight) has been discussed by almost every writer in sindonology. Mr. Hoare, having studied all the arguments, has approached the question from a new perspective, i.e., the angles of the bloodflows.

For the benefit of those readers who may not be familiar with the previous literature on the subject of a support, we offer the following opinions of a few other researchers, by way of a background to Mr. Hoare's article:

Several other researchers have made experiments, primarily to determine physiological changes which could bring on death. One of these was Dr. Hermann Modder, whose report, "La Causa di Morte nella Crocifissione in alcuni Esperimenti", was published in the Acts of the Congress of 1950, ed. by Pietro Scotti, S.D.B. Dr. Modder's report concerns experiments he had conducted at St. Francis Hospital of Cologne. His volunteers, tied at the wrists, suffered circulatory irregularities and fainted after 6-12 minutes.

Dr. Madder writes: "It is supposed that those who lived up to three days on the cross were supported by a *sedile* ... We know (v. Holzmeister: *Crux Domini atque crucifixio*) that there were many methods of crucifixion. Breaking the legs would not be a method to accelerate death if a *sedile* were attached to the stipes. We know from the Gospels that the legs of Christ were not broken because he was already dead, which proves that the cross did not have a *sedile*."

Pierre Barbet: *A Doctor at Calvary*, Doubleday Image paperback, pg 80: "Finally, when they wished to prolong the torture they made use of the *sedile* (I do not refer to the *suppedaneum*, which is mentioned by no ancient author, and is a pure invention of the artists)." Dr. Barbet experimented by hanging corpses on a cross to ascertain if a nail through the palm would hold the weight, and to find the angle of the arms. In Appendix I, he describes the torture by hanging at Dachau according to former prisoners of that camp whose testimony was taken down by Antoine Legrand. Dr. Barbet also includes the report of Dr. Rudolph Hynek, of Prague, on the *Aufbinden* in Dachau. Dr. Hynek, who was an eye-witness to these tortures, wrote *Le Martyre du Christ* (1937), translated into English (1951) as *The True Likeness*. The Dachau victims, without *sedile* or *suppedaneum*, died of asphyxia.

Werner Bulst, S.J.: "L'esistenza di un suppedaneo sulla croce e la posizione di Cristo crocifisso: osservazioni", published in *La Sindone e la Scienza*, Paoline, Turin, 1979, pg 521 ff: "The hypothesis of the presence of a *sedile* is not confirmed on the Shroud ... The fact that death was brought on by breaking the legs of the [thieves] demonstrates that the crosses of Golgotha were not equipped with *sedili*, otherwise the desired effect of a rapid death would not have been obtained."

Giovanni Judica-Cordiglia: In 1959, the author assumes, from the flexion of the legs, that Jesus' cross had a *sedile*; in 1974 (*L'Uomo della Sindone è it Gesù dei Vangeli?*, Pelizza, Chiari, pg 74), he doubts the use of a *sedile* because the nails through the carpus would have been sufficient to hold the body, leaving the victim partial movements, with the nail in the feet as a fulcrum.

Joseph Blinzler: *Le Procès de Jésus*, French ed. (trans. from German) Maison Mame, Paris, 1962, pg 417 note 14: concerning the *sedile*, Blinzler refers to Justin, Irene, Tertullien, H. Fulda, U. Holzmeister, R. Schmittlein. From P. W. Schmidt, Blinzler concludes that one cannot prove the existence of a *suppedaneum* before the third century.

Ferdinand Prat, S.J.: *Jesus Christ: his life, his teaching and his work*, Bruce, Milwaukee, 1950, pg 506: "The *suppedaneum* ... is attested by no ancient document. The first to speak of it is St Gregory of Tours in the sixth century." (Gregory of Tours, *De gloria martyrum*)

The graffito on the wall of the imperial school, on the Palatine, Rome, called the Blasphemous Crucifix, is dated third century. It shows a *suppedaneum*.

A *sedile* is clearly seen on the first century graffito, on the wall of a taverna, near the amphitheater of Pozzuoli (Naples). Notice the position of the legs.

Josephus: *Wars of the Jews*, V,11, relates that during the siege of Jerusalem, 500 or more Jews were crucified every day "in every possible position".

Giulio Ricci: *L'Uomo della Sindone è Gesù*, Ed. Studium, Rome, 1969, pg 39: "To prolong the torture, the victim was tied rather than nailed to the patibulum and a support was thus needed at the perineum." Pg 66, "The thieves executed with Jesus were tied and had the support at the perineum. About five hours after the crucifixion, the two thieves were still very much alive. Their death was hastened by crurifragium."

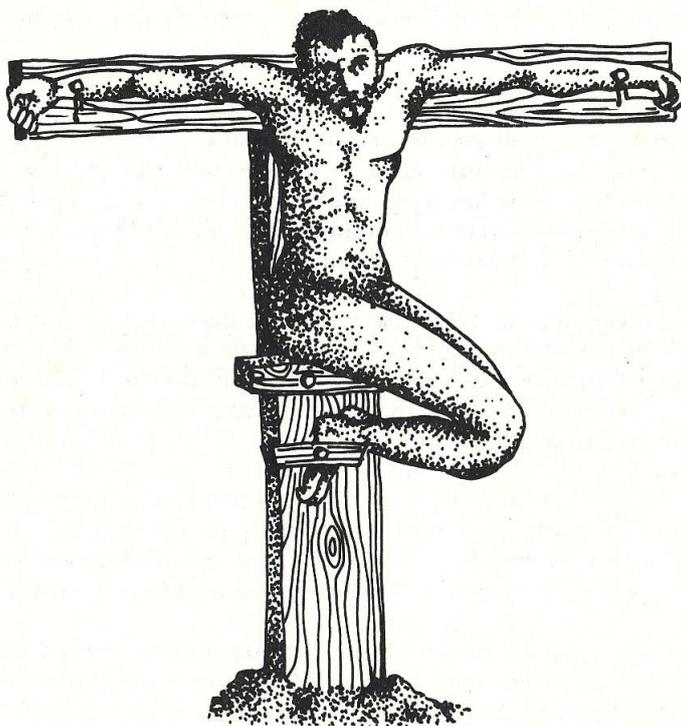
As the breaking of the lower legs prevented the hanging man from raising himself to breathe, one might suppose that the thieves had had the advantage of a *suppedaneum*, rather than a *sedile*, as Mons. Ricci suggests.

In pgs 68-74, Mons. Ricci examines the Shroud image and from the angles of the bloodstreams, the flexion of the knees, the fact that the legs were not broken and the evident signs of asphyxia, he concludes that there was no *sedile* on the cross of Jesus.

It is interesting to compare Mons. Ricci's interpretations of the passages from Justin and Tertullian (pg 309 ff) with Blinzler's readings of the same texts.

Les Dossiers de l'Archéologie, #10, 1975, pg 111, "Le crucifié de Giv'at Ha Mivtar", from the report of Dr. Nicu Haas, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The skeleton of Johanahan, who had been crucified, permitted the reconstruction of the cross, on which there was a *sedile*. Dr. V. Tzaferis, Israeli Dept. of Antiquities (*Le Monde de la Bible*, Jan. 1978, pg 43) dates this execution to the tax revolt of 7 AD.

Joshua 8:23. They took the king of Ai alive, suspended him on the patibulum until evening and sunset. Then Joshua ordered that his corpse be taken down from the cross.



Reconstruction of the cross of Johanahan. Courtesy of Centro Intern. di Sindonologia.



Blasphemous Crucifix of the Palatine. Courtesy of Paul de Gail, S.J.



The graffito of Pozzuoli. Courtesy of Centro Intern. di Sindonologia.