

“A Clean Cloth”

What Greek Word Usage Tells Us about the Burial Wrappings of Jesus

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Throughout popular literature about the Shroud of Turin, σινδων (sindon) frequently is represented as the Greek word for “shroud.”¹ Σινδων is used by writers of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) in accounts of the burial of Jesus, and recent Bible translations render σινδων as “shroud.” (e.g., RSV) But the word actually denotes a very fine and relatively expensive cloth, not necessarily linen and not intrinsically connoting death or burial.²

Sindon (Latin, English)

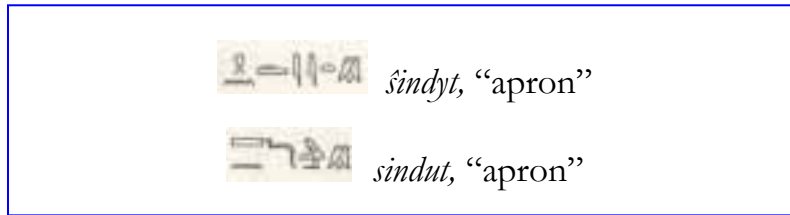
Σινδων (Greek)

Sindhu (Sanskrit?)

יָדוּ (Hebrew)

Its etymological history is obscure.³ The Greek word may be related to an ancient word from India, the Sanskrit *sindhu*. We searched our Middle

Egyptian lexicons for several words for “linen”, “garment,” “flax,” “bandage,” “mummy cloth,” etc., and found just one, *sindy*, (*sindut* in the older



pyramid texts) that may be related. This is often translated as “apron,” referring to a type of outer garment worn over the lower torso,⁴ but not necessarily, in ancient Egypt, covering other outer clothing. The Coptic New Testament translation is no help in this case, as σινδων is carried over as a loan word from Greek.

As early as the fifth-century B.C., we find σινδων used by the playwright Sophocles and the historians Herodotus and Thucydides with reference to a very fine and expensive cloth. It is also found in the first-century A.D. geographer, Strabo, and the second-century satirist, Lucian of Samosata.⁵

In the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew Bible made around 200 B.C., σινδων often translates סדין (*sadin*), as in this familiar passage from Proverbs, which speaks of the “good wife .. far more precious than jewels.” (Proverbs 31:10)

סדין עשתה ותמכר וחגור נתנה לכנעני

σινδονας εποιησεν και απεδото περιζωματα δε τοις χαναναιοις

She makes linen garments, and sells them; and delivers girdles to the merchant

(Proverbs 31:24)

יָדוּ in Mishnaic usage is discussed in some detail by Jastrow: as a “*sheet*, usually of fine linen (cmp. σινδων).”⁶ The good wife of Proverbs clearly is not weaving “shrouds” to be sold in the market. Earlier English translations of the Bible, such as KJV, offer “fine linen” for σινδων in this passage.

Elsewhere in the Septuagint, (Judges 14: 12-13, 15,) we find σινδων in the story of Samson’s riddle to the Philistines. The meaning of σινδων is not entirely clear in the passage, but it denotes some kind of cloth so expensive that the Philistines felt they would be impoverished if they had to provide Samson with thirty lengths of them.

ΣΙΝΔΩΝ

With this background in mind, let’s look at our synoptic passages:

<p>καὶ λαβὼν τὸ σῶμα ὁ Ἰωσήφ ἐνετύλιξεν αὐτὸ [ἐν] σινδόνι καθαρῶ, And taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.... (RSV—“a clean linen shroud”) (Matthew 27:59a)</p> <p>καὶ ἀγοράσας σινδόνα καὶ καθελὼν αὐτὸν ἐνείλησε τῇ σινδόνι, And he bought fine linen, and taking him down, wrapped him in the fine linen.... (RSV—“a linen shroud”) (Mark 15:46a)</p> <p>καὶ καθελὼν αὐτὸ ἐνετύλιξε σινδόνι And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen.... (RSV—“a linen shroud”) (Luke 23:53a)</p>

We may take the RSV translation of σινδων as “linen shroud” as a kind of gloss, not as an accurate representation of what the Greek word connotes—actually, “a fine and expensive cloth.” Indeed, the linguist Eugene Nida has observed, “Though a word for ‘linen’ may be borrowed, what is important in the New Testament contexts is primarily the quality of the cloth, not the material of which it was made. Accordingly, many translators have used an expression such as ‘fine cloth’ [for σινδων].”⁷

There is yet another instance of σινδων in the New Testament:: Mark’s story of the young man who ran away naked from the soldiers at Gethsemane.

Καὶ εἷς τις νεανίσκος ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ, περιβεβλημένος σινδόνα ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ· καὶ κρατοῦσιν αὐτόν οἱ νεανίσκοι. ὁ δὲ καταλιπὼν τὴν σινδόνα γυμνὸς ἔφυγεν ἀπ’ αὐτῶν.

And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body; and the young men seized him. And he left the linen cloth, and ran away from them naked.

(Mark 14:51, f.)

Whether σινδων in Mark’s account refers to clothing, *i.e.*, a kind of nightshirt, or to a length of cloth, depends on the interpretation here of περιβεβλημενος (perfect passive participle of περιβαλλω, “to throw around”). Possibly it represents an early example of later Christian practice, when σινδων refers to a fine cloth used to wrap the catechumen after baptism.⁸ In the *Acts of Thomas*, the word also refers to a linen altar cloth.⁹

ΛΙΝΟΝ

Another of the Greek words that have been used with specific reference to “linen” of various sorts is λίνον, which has been used from Homeric through Byzantine times not only for “linen,” but also for “flax”¹⁰ (*i.e.*, the plant itself, or its unspun fibers).

λίνον (linon) -- linen, flax

פשתא (peshtah) -- linen, flax

We find λίνον in the Septuagint with this meaning, “flax,” translating תפש or פשתא. “Flax” in this quotation from Exodus clearly refers to the plant growing in the field.

το δε λίνον και η κριθη επληγη η γαρ κριθη παρεστηκηθια
το δε λίνον σπερματιζον.

The flax and the barley were ruined, for the barley was in the ear
and the flax was in the bud. (Exodus 9:31)

κάλαμον συντετριμμένον οὐ κατεάξει καὶ λίνον τυφόμενον οὐ σβέσει, ἕως ἂν ἐκβάλῃ εἰς
νίκος τὴν κρῖσιν·

He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick...
(Matthew 12:20)

καλαμον τεθλασμενον ου σθνητριψει και λίνον καπνιζομενον
ου σβεσει αλλα εις αληθειαν εξοισει κρῖσιν.

A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick
he will not quench. (Isaiah 42:3)

In Matthew 12:20, λίνον τυφόμενον, “smoking flax” connotes “a twisted strip of flax” used for the wick of a lamp.¹¹ This passage is a reflex of Isaiah 42:3, where the same thought is expressed with λίνον καπνίζομενον. Possibly Matthew followed a different version of the OT text.¹² Λίνον also appears in non-biblical Greek texts with the meaning, “fishing-net.”¹³ Likewise, in Mark 1:18, τα λινά is a variant manuscript reading for τα δικτυά (“fishing-nets”).¹⁴ All in all, λίνον connotes a coarse grade of linen, or even the flax plant, distinguishing it from σινδών, which referred to a cloth of finer quality.

ΟΘΟΝΗ / ΟΘΟΝΙΟΝ

Now we turn to another pair of Greek words for ‘linen,’ ὀθόνη (othonē) and οθονιον (othonion). The former refers to very strong sheets of linen such as were used for sails, as in this account of Peter’s vision in the Book of Acts .

καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγμένον καὶ καταβαῖνον σκευὸς τι ὡς ὀθόνην μεγάλην
τέσσαρσιν ἀρχαῖς καθιέμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,

And [Peter] saw heaven opened, and something descending, like a **great sheet**, let down
by four corners upon the earth...

(Acts 10:11, *cf.* Acts 11:5)

Elsewhere in Greek literature, ὀθόνη refers to “tent cloth.” and to a “ship’s sail.”¹⁵ Οθονιον, theoretically a diminutive of ὀθόνη, nevertheless refers to

large pieces of linen cloth -- a sheet, a sail, or cloth for a tent – but also, interestingly, to a smaller piece of linen, such as a bandage for wounds. The plural, οθονια, seldom refers to such small pieces or strips of cloth, however. The noted New Testament philologist, Frederick W. Danker, has expressed doubt that οθονια in the New Testament refers to strips of cloth or bandages¹⁶ such as formerly used in Egypt as part of the mummification process. In the Septuagint, moreover, οθηονιον, like λινον, translates פשתא, (pishtah) or פשת (peshet) -- “flax,” as in Hosea 2:9:

και αφελουμαι τα ματα μου και τα οθονια μου...

And I will take away my wool and my flax...

Hosea 2:11, LXX (2:9, MT)

In the New Testament, we find οθονια with reference to burial cloths of Jesus in Luke 24:12 and in John 19:40 and 20:5-7.

ελαβον ουν το σωμα του Ιησου και εδησαν αυτο οθονιαις μετα των αρωματων, καθως εθος εστιν τοις Ιουδαιοις ενταφιαζειν.

[Then] they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

(John 19:40)

As already stated, it is doubtful that the body of Jesus would have been wrapped in strips of cloth, in the manner of Pharaonic mummies. A major consideration is the element of time on *erev Shabbat*, or Friday afternoon. In

present-day Jerusalem, everything closes down that afternoon a good three or four hours before sundown. Even non-observant Jews and non-Jews are well advised to be off the streets in certain neighborhoods. (In the early eighties, a woman was stoned in the “ultra-religious” quarter of Mea Shearim while on the street at 1:30 on a Friday afternoon.¹⁷) We have no evidence that observance was more lenient in the first century.

We are told that Jesus died at the “ninth hour,”¹⁸ *i.e.*, around 3 p.m. It would have taken time for authorities to ascertain that he was indeed dead, and time to obtain Pilate’s permission for release of the body. More time to take down the body from the cross and remove it to the sepulcher. We infer that those who laid to rest the body of Jesus would have been in immense danger – greater danger than they already were for associating with him – had they been found outside home as the hour of sunset approached. This has implications for the washing and anointing of the body as well, and on this one point, I am in agreement with Ian Wilson that the hundred-pounds’ weight of spices

brought by Nicodemus (John 19:39) actually constituted aromatic sand to be packed around the body as an antiputrefacient.¹⁹



Figure 1. Body wrapped “according to the custom of the Jews.”(Based on forensic analysis of the image on the Turin Shroud.)²⁰

The body of Jesus – as a Jew of a religious family – would have been wrapped in a long sheet and tied with strips of cloth at the neck, at the wrists and feet, and at the torso, and as here, at the knees. (Figure 1)

Here, as elsewhere, context is crucial to our understanding of οθονια. In this passage, it is informed by the meaning of the verb, εδησαν, from δεω , “tie,” “bind,” or “fasten,” but not “wind,” as given in some translations. This seemingly small point is important because skeptics have suggested that a shroud such as we have would not have been used in first century Judea, because Jesus, it is claimed, would have been wrapped in strips of cloth. But there is no evidence for this ancient Egyptian custom among Jews living in Roman Palestine. Quite the opposite: Long shrouds wrapped under and over



Figure 2. Corpse *in situ* wrapped in woolen shroud.
Excavated at Givat ha-Mivtar, Jerusalem.²¹

the body have in fact been excavated. (Figure 2) I think it likely that the plural form οθονια in John and Luke refers to both the σινδων and the κειριαι, the strips which tied the hands and feet, etc.. (See below.)

Moreover, mummies of the Hellenistic period in Egypt were not wrapped in strips of cloth as in more ancient times. Instead, extraordinary



Figure 3. Mummy wrapped in intricate “rhomboid” pattern with inserted panel portrait of the decedent as a youth.
Hawara, c. 80 – 100 A.D.

lengths of coarse linen were wrapped around a small coffin encasing the body in an intricate “rhomboid” pattern.²² (Figure 3)

ΚΕΙΡΙΑ

With regard to this notion of winding linen about a Jewish corpse, we also must consider the pericope of Lazarus raised from the dead in John 11:44, where *κειρια*, (*keiria*) not *οθονια*, refers, with *σοθδαριον*, (*soudarion*) to the burial cloths.

καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ τεθνηκὼς δεδεμένος τοὺς πόδας καὶ τὰς χεῖρας **κειρίαις** καὶ ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ **σουδαρίῳ** περιεδέδετο.

And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with **bandages:** and his face wrapped with a **cloth.**

John 11:44a

Very likely, Lazarus would have been wrapped in the same manner as shown in Figure 1 above, for the text recounts that he was “bound hand and

foot.” If the κειριαι cloths had been wrapped around Lazarus, mummy-style, the σουδαριον covering his face would not have been visible.

It might appear from our English translations that κειρια was also used for linen in general. An example would appear to be Proverbs 7:16, where the Septuagint uses κειρια to translate לָטוֹן (linen) said to be from Egypt – an exotic touch. But probably it does not connote “yardage” or sheets of cloth. In Targumic literature, לָטוֹן denotes “flax-rope,” suggestive of strips.²³

κειριας τετακα την κλινην μου
αμφιταποις δε εστρωκα τοις απ’ Αιγυπτου

מרבדים רבדתי ערשי חטכות אסטון מצרים

I have decked my couch with coverings,
colored spreads of Egyptian **linens**. (Proverbs 7:16)

(Hebrew singular, Greek plural.)

ΒΥΣΣΟΣ / ΒΥΣΣΙΝΟΣ

Another pair of words denoting a special type of linen are βυσσοσ and its diminutive, βυσσινοσ. These refer to extraordinarily fine linen, worn in our literature by the very richest people on earth and by heavenly beings.

Βυσσοσ is described as “a species of Egyptian flax... or linen made from it – very costly, delicate, soft, either white or pale yellow.”²⁴ It is the clothing, for example, of the rich man in Luke’s pericope of the suffering Lazarus. The

story was written to pointedly contrast extremes of suffering and poverty on the one hand, and self-indulgence and wealth on the other.

Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος, καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον
εὐφραινόμενος καθ' ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς.

A certain man was rich, and he put on purple and fine linen,
living sumptuously every day.
(Luke 16:19, author's translation)

In the Book of Revelation, βύσσινος appears in many passages in which the raiment of extraordinary, often heavenly, beings is described. When recounting earthly wealth, it is mentioned along with “purple,” “gold,” “precious stones and pearls,” etc. (*Cf.* Revelation 18:12, 18:16, 19:8, 19:14.)

καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα [τὰ] ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ ἐφ' ἵπποις λευκοῖς,
ἐνδεδυμένοι βύσσινον λευκὸν καθαρόν.

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure,
followed him on white horses.
(Revelation 19:14)

The garment Pharaoh bestowed on Joseph in Genesis 41:42 was also of this extraordinary cloth. He was arrayed “in garments of fine linen”

-- στολην βυσσινην.²⁵ King David also was royally clothed thus -- στολην βυσσινην, “in garments of fine linen,” as described in 1 Chronicles 15:27.

Why do the gospels not use the word, βυσσος, rarer and richer than σινδων, for the cloth purchased by Joseph of Arimathea for the burial of his Master? One consideration may be the proscription pertaining to extravagant burials by Gamaliel. Perhaps even more telling, however, is the note of fantasy and imagination that attaches to these stories. They tell of Joseph, legendary Chancellor of Egypt; of the renowned David, the ideal king; of a certain rich man’s sumptuous life; and of beings of the heavenly realm. Such a cloth, then, may not only have been too rich and costly, but too idealized for the burial of a God-fearing Jew in Roman Palestine.

ΛΕΝΤΙΟΝ

Yet another word associated with “linen” – λεντιον (lention) -- occurs in the New Testament. This is the cloth Jesus wrapped around himself when he washed his disciples’ feet at the Last Supper (John 13:4, f.) and which he also

ἐγείρεται ἐκ τοῦ δείπνου καὶ τίθησιν τὰ ἱμάτια, καὶ λαβὼν **λέντιον** διέζωσεν ἑαυτόν. εἶτα βάλλει ὕδωρ εἰς τὸν νιπτῆρα καὶ ἤρξατο νίπτειν τοὺς πόδας τῶν μαθητῶν καὶ ἐκμάσσειν τῷ **λεντίῳ** ᾧ ἦν διεζωσμένος.

[Jesus] rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a **towel**. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the **towel** with which he was wrapped.... (John 13:4,5)

used to dry their feet.

This common cloth could be made of cotton or linen. In other texts of the Hellenistic period, λεντιον refers to the cloth covering a person about to undergo crucifixion. It also refers to an “apron” worn by servants.²⁶ Λεντιον, like λινον, would have been a rough, coarse cloth, not at all like σινδων.

ΣΟΥΔΑΡΙΟΝ

Finally, we should mention the σουδαριον (soudarion) which covered the face of the risen Lazarus (John 11:44, quoted above) and which the author of the fourth gospel elsewhere describes as “the napkin, which had been on his head, not with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself.” (John 20:7)

καὶ τὸ σουδάριον, ὃ ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, οὐ μετὰ τῶν ὀθονίων κείμενον ἀλλὰ χωρὶς ἐντετυλιγμένον εἰς ἓνα τόπον.

And the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself.
(John 20:7)

The origin of this word is the Latin *sudarium*, which in turn derives from the Latin word for “sweat,” *sudor*. Thus it originally referred to a cloth for wiping perspiration. As may be inferred from Luke 19:20 and Acts 19:12, this cloth was in common use, more or less as a handkerchief. Wilson gives consideration to the possibility that John’s σουδαριον, rolled up in the tomb,

could be the shroud of Christ.²⁷ Rather, it reflects the long-standing Jewish custom, described in the *Mishnah*, of covering the face of a corpse..²⁸ Far from referring to a cloth that covered the entire body, it was a smaller cloth which covered the face and in some instances, was wrapped around the head. These texts, considered carefully, do in fact support the validity of the cloth known as the Sudarium of Oviedo.

ΚΑΘΑΡΟΣ, ΚΑΘΑΡΙΖΩ

Taking another look at Matthew’s account of the cloth bought by Joseph of Arimathea, we wonder: Why should it not be “clean,” since it was newly purchased? Καθαρος, in fact, has several connotations in Biblical literature.

καὶ λαβὼν τὸ σῶμα ὁ Ἰωσήφ ἐνετύλιξεν αὐτὸ [ἐν] σινδόνι καθαρᾷ
And taking the body, Joseph wrapped it in a clean linen cloth....
(Matthew 27:59a)

Not often, however, does it have the meaning, “clean,” as opposed to “dirty,” as in Jesus’s admonition to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:26:

καθάρισον πρῶτον τὸ ἐντὸς τοῦ ποτηρίου,
ἵνα γένηται καὶ τὸ ἐκτὸς αὐτοῦ καθαρόν.

First clean the inside of the cup,
so that the outside may also be clean!
Matthew 23:26)

But even here the use is metaphorical, and the significance is internal purity – the meaning most often found in the New Testament, as in this familiar promise from the Beatitudes, and in Paul’s teaching to Titus.

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
(Matthew 5:8)

πάντα καθαρὰ τοῖς καθαροῖς:
τοῖς δὲ μεμιαμμένοις καὶ ἀπίστοις οὐδὲν καθαρὸν,

To the pure, all things are pure,
but to the corrupt and unbelieving, nothing is pure.
(Titus 1:15a)

Frequently, καθαρος and its verbal form, καθαρίζω, are used in the New Testament with clearly Levitical sense: Here, the author of Hebrews uses the verb to refer directly to Jewish law:

καὶ σχεδὸν ἐν αἵματι πάντα καθαρίζεται κατὰ τὸν νόμον,
καὶ χωρὶς αἵματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις.

Under the Law, almost everything is purified with blood,
and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

(Hebrews 9:22)

The author of Acts reflects the division over Levitical purity in his story of Peter’s quandary over breaking the כַּשְׂרוּת (kashrut, “keeping kosher”) which he had honored his whole life.

ὁ δὲ Πέτρος εἶπεν, Μηδαμῶς, κύριε, ὅτι οὐδέποτε ἔφαγον
πάν κοινὸν καὶ ἀκάθαρτον.

But Peter said, “No, Lord, for I have never eaten
anything that is common or **unclean**.”
(Acts 10:14, cf., 11:8)

The Coptic text may shed additional light here, for the cloth in Matthew 27:59 is described as **ou sindwn esrax** – “a linen cloth (being) clean.” The Egyptian word **rax**, “be clean” (from **rwxe**) is used in some Sahidic texts for **ouaab**, “holy.” The most frequent occurrence of **ouaab** in the New Testament is in the phrase, **tpneuma etouaab**, “the Holy Spirit.” Thus **rax**, in Christian contexts, developed a connotation of spiritual cleanliness analogous to Levitical purity or cleanliness.

Although these words, καθαρός and καθαρίζω, occur in the Greek Bible with connotations of varying nuances, I think it is indisputable that καθαρός in Matthew 27:59 is a reference to Levitical purity.

CONCLUSION:

Science, that is to say, forensic analysis, has in some instances verified the New Testament text. For example, the statement, “at once there came out blood and water,”²⁹ once scoffed at, has been vindicated by forensic analysis. I would not go so far as to claim that a text can in any way verify the Shroud. But the words of the New Testament, considered carefully in context, fully

support the physical characteristics of the cloth: Σινδων, unlike some other words that might have been used -- λινον, λεντιον, κειρια -- to describe the cloth that wrapped the body of Jesus, suggests material such as that of the Shroud of Turin – very high quality linen that is “soft to the touch.”³⁰ Its description as καθαρος implies its Levitical purity required by “the burial custom of the Jews,”³¹ and directly connects the burial cloth of Jesus to ritual requirements of early Judaism.

ΤΕΤΡΑΔΙΠΛΟΣ / ΤΕΤΡΑΔΙΠΛΟΥΣ

As a final consideration, I would like to share some of my thoughts about the seemingly inscrutable τετραδίπλον (“tetradiplon”). Its use in the *Apocryphal Acts of Thaddaeus*³² (Figure 4) has been thought to be the only

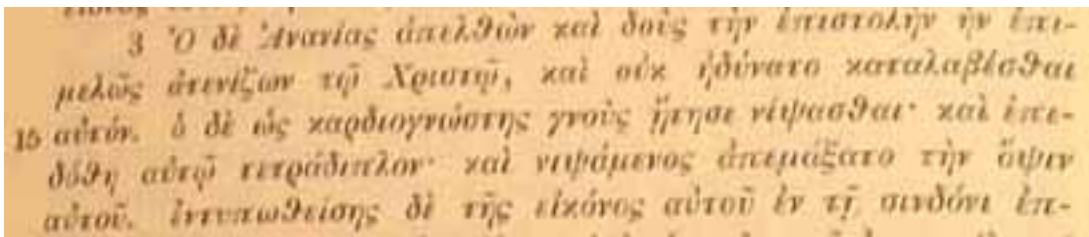


Figure 4. Passage from *Acts of Thaddaeus*, describing a fourfold [cloth] (τετραδίπλον).... his [Christ’s] image (εἰκων) having been impressed on the linen (σινδων)....

occurrence “in all literature.”³³ Τετραδίπλον also occurs in the *Byzantine Historical Writings* compiled by Georgius Cedrenus,³⁴ in a later and somewhat embellished version of the same story—Abgar and the Image of Edessa.

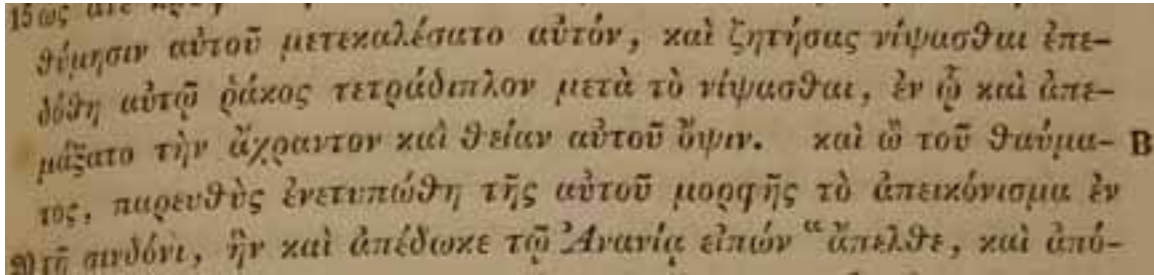


Figure 5. Passage from Cedrenus, *Scriptores Byzantinae Historiae*, in which a miraculous cloth portraying the image (μορφη) of the Lord is referred to both as ρακος τετραδιπλον and σινδων.³⁵

In this passage, (Figure 5) the Lord, seeking to wash [himself], was given a shred of cloth or rag (ρακος) [folded] as “four doubled” (τετραδιπλον,) which might be taken to mean a cloth customarily folded several times for personal transport (as we today might fold something to be put in a pocket) yielding eight layers.³⁶ Left impressed on the linen cloth was a miracle – the copy of his form (μορφη). The cloth is referred to as σινδων in both texts.

While Lampe³⁷ has suggested “fourfold,” and Sophocles,³⁸ whom translators have often followed, has offered “a kind of towel,” I question whether this was the fundamental, underlying meaning of τετραδιπλον. (No lexicon can be the last word; the text is always the last word, as the lexicon is based on the text.) Τετράδιπλον is a composite of two Greek words – the prefix τετρα- from τεσσαρες, “four,” and διπλους, “double.” Its primary meaning, then, denotes simply “four doubled,” or “eight,” although it appears to have gained common usage as a small, handy cloth. The underlying meaning of “eight” supports the idea of the Turin Shroud having been folded in a way

consistent with Wilson’s reconstruction.³⁹ (Figure 6.)

Image not available

Figure 6. Diagram of Shroud folded in half, in half again, and in half again — three times, yielding eight layers, = “four doubled.”

The cloth folded in this manner – three times – yields eight layers, as we can see from Wilson’s diagram and from simple mathematics. (Folded in half once yields two layers; folded in half a second time doubles this to four layers; folded in half a third time doubles this to eight layers.)

From ancient historical evidence, the Shroud also might have been folded in an accordion-like pattern, as Aldo

Guerreschi proposes.⁴⁰ (Figure 7)

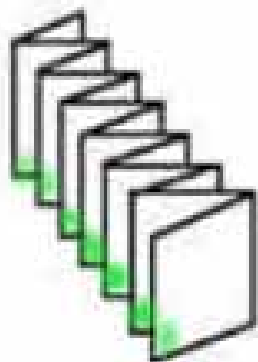


Figure 7. Diagram of manner in which the Turin Shroud might have been folded, first lengthwise, then in accordion-like pleats.

That would be similar to the folded cloth depicted on this Etruscan sarcophagus from the fourth century, A.D. (Figure 8)




Figure 8. Etruscan sarcophagus,
fourth century, A.D.⁴¹

I believe Guerreschi's suggestion to be very plausible, and it in no way contradicts the hypothesis of the Shroud as η Εικων Αχειροποιτη Εδεσσας ,
“the Image of Edessa Not Made by Hand.”

ENDNOTES:

1. Eg., Adams, Frank O., *SINDON, A Layman's Guide to the Shroud of Turin* (Tempe, Arizona, 1982) p. 1.
2. Giuseppe Ghiberti discusses the “semantic range of the Greek σινδων,” referring to “a broad range of possible meanings, types of fabric and cloth widths because the documentation of the use of the term is multiple and imprecise.” See “The Gospels and the Shroud,” in Silvano Scannerini and Piero Savarino, editors, *The Turin Shroud: Past, Present and Future*, Proceedings of the International Scientific Symposium, Torino, 2 – 5 March, 2000 (Turin: *Effata Editrice* and *Centro Internazionale di Sindonologia*, 2000) p. 276 and *passim*.

3. Thayer, Joseph Henry, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti, translated, revised and enlarged*, fourth edition (Edinburgh, 1901) p. 576.
4. But distinct from  *daiu*, “loin-cloth.”
Gardiner, Sir Alan. *Egyptian Grammar*, third edition (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1979) p. 507.
5. **Herodotus, 1.200.1:** εσβαλλουσι ες ολμον και λεηναντες υπεροισι σωσι δια σινδονος.... **Herodotus, 1.295.3:** οι δε κωνωπες, ην μεν εν ιματιω ενειλιξαμενος ευδη η σινδονι.... Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.6.3. See further, Thayer, p. 576a.
6. Jastrow, Marcus. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Philadelphia, 1903, reprinted in Israel) p. 957. סובב from סבב, “to go around,” occurs more often in the Midrashic literature.
7. Louw, Johannes P., Eugene A. Nida, Editors. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988).
8. *Acts of Thomas*, A121, cited in Lampe, George William Hugo, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) p. 1233.
9. *Acts of Thomas*, A19, cited in Lampe, *op. cit.*
10. λινον as flax – Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 378.
11. In the Book of Revelation (15:6) there is one example of λινον used for “linen,” with respect to seven angels whose garments are described as “linen, clean and white.” (λινον καθαρον λαμπρον) But this is an atypical usage in the Apocalypse, where βυσσος or its variant most often describes the raiment of the heavenly host and other such beings.
12. From Qumran, especially, we know of several different recensions of the LXX. “The translations of the books of the OT differ in style, accuracy, and substance, indicating that there was no single original translation into Greek. Manuscripts found at Qumran... and other early manuscripts and quotations from the Septuagint in ancient writings all indicate that revisions were constantly being made to the Septuagint. In addition, Hebrew manuscripts found at Qumran differ from the standard Hebrew (Masoretic) text, but agree with some of the Greek renderings in the Septuagint. Thus the Septuagint often witnesses to a Hebrew manuscript tradition different from and earlier than the Masoretic Text and so is valuable in solving textual difficulties.” See Paul J. Achtemier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985)
13. Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 803.
14. Aland, Kurt, *et al*, editors. *Novum Testamentum Graece, post Eberhard Nestle et*

Erwin Nestle (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 26 neu bearbeitete Auflage, 1979)
p. 89 n.

15. Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 936. Cf. Danker, Frederick W., editor and reviser. ***A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature***, orig. edited by Arndt, William, F.W. Gingrich and Frederick.W. Danker. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, third edition, 2000) p. 693, re οθονη πλοιου, “ship’s sail.”
16. “The application of ‘bandage’ to our [New Testament] literature is questionable.” Danker, *ibid.*
17. Ironically, she was there to buy a religious book for her husband. She was only slightly injured in the stoning.
18. Mark 15:34-37; Matthew 27:45-50; Luke 23:44-46.
19. Wilson, Ian. ***The Shroud of Turin: the Burial Cloth of Jesus Christ?*** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1978) p. 41.
20. Ricci, Giulio. ***Via Crucis Secondo la Sindone*** (Rome: Centro Romano di Sindonologia, 1972) p. 78.
21. Photo credit Biblical Archaeological Society.
22. See my paper, “Hellenistic Portraiture, Christological Iconography and the Shroud of Turin,” in ***Proceedings of Sindone 2000***, conference convened by ***Collegamento Pro Sindone*** in Orvieto, Italy, August, 2000, for examples of such mummies, wrapped in many yards of coarse linen in a “rhomboid” pattern.
23. See Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p 42. The **Ⲑ** in **ⲓⲛⲏⲛ** may be a scribal error centuries old. Elsewhere in MT, the word is spelled. **ⲓⲛⲏ**, I have found no other instance of the spelling **ⲓⲛⲏⲛ** in MT.
24. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
25. φαραω... ενεδυσεν αυτον **στολην βυσσινην**.... Then Pharaoh... arrayed him in **garments of fine linen**.... (Genesis 41:42)
Herodotus, 2.86, wrote of the Egyptians, κατειλισσουσι παν το σωμα **σινδονος βυσσινης**. (They wrapped the whole body in the very finest linen.)
26. Gospel of Nicodemus, (formerly called Acts of Pilate) chapter 10; in Thilo, ***Codex Apocryphorum Nove Testamenti, I*** (Leipzig, 1832) pp. 582 f.. For translation, refer to M.R. James, ***The Apocryphal New Testament*** (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924).
27. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Ghiberti, *op. cit.*, disagrees: “Some have suggested that the *soudarion* is the *sindon*, but I do not think the context allows this” (p. 280). He suggests

the *soudarion* may have been a chin band (p. 277).

28. **Moed Katan**, 27a.
29. John 19:34.
30. Personal comment to me from Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, 2005, confirming a similar statement to me by Vernon Miller in Santa Barbara, 1981.
31. John 19:40.
32. Lipsius, R.A. and Maxmillian Bonnet, editors. ***Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha post Constantinum Tischendorf*** (Leipzig: 1891), Vol. III, p. 274. Photo by the author.
33. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 260, n.16.
34. Cedrenus, Georgius and John Scylitzes. ***Corpus Scriptorum Byzantinae Historiae*** Vols. I, II (34, 35), Immanuel Bekker, editor, (Bonn: E. Weber Publishers, 1838-9) p. 309.
35. Cedrenus, *op. cit.* Photo by the author.
36. Cedrenus translates “plannum quadruplicem.”
37. Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 1390.
38. Sophocles, E.A. ***Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods: from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100*** (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1870, Memorial Edition, 1914) p. 1077. See Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ***The Ante-Nicene Fathers, 8*** (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951) pp. 558-559.
39. Wilson, Ian and Vernon Miller. ***The Mysterious Shroud*** (Garden City, New York: 1986) facing p. 112.
40. Guerreschi, Aldo and Michele Salcito. “Photographic and Computer Studies Concerning the Burn and Water Stains Visible on the Shroud and their Historical Consequences.” Paper presented at the ***Symposium Scientifique International***, sponsored by ***Centre International d’études sur le Linceul de Turin***, Paris, 2002.
41. Flury-Lemberg, Mechthild. ***Sindone 2000: L’intervento conservativo; Preservation; Konservierung***, (Torino: Editrice Opera Diocesana Preservazione Fede, 2003) p. 47.