

Did the Man in the Shroud Consent? - A Medical Study

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The Shroud of Turin is a peculiar 'object' which, in fact, should not exist scientifically. A large, richly woven linen cloth, with the dimensions required to be a funerary sheet that could wrap a human body, it bears an imprint: marks on the linen fibres, due to a russetting that physico-chemists tell us is produced by oxidative dehydration of the linen fibrils.

While the imprint is unique, supported by a single linen, the images are multiple and infinitely reproducible. Most scientific studies focus on the images, but there are also in situ studies, i.e. studies carried out directly on the print itself.

In 1993, in Rome, an international symposium ¹ concluded, through an epistemological study, that this linen was indeed that of Christ. Since then, no scientific meeting has contradicted this work, and no serious publication has succeeded in proving that the cloth was not the Shroud of Christ. For example, it is still impossible to reproduce the imprint of the whole body of the tortured man. This mysterious imprint is that of a corpse, that of a dead man who was tortured, in particular by being scourged, who was crucified and died as a result.

Medicine has studied this imprint. The studies have revealed numerous details that confirm that it was indeed a man who had suffered these tortures who left this print and his blood; for the print is strewn with bloodstains that have, paradoxically, once again remained ruddy, whereas blood turns black as it ages, stains that have not followed the rules of capillary migration of a liquid in the weave. The main lesions observed are: flagellation lesions, probably caused by two Roman flagrums, multiple contusions, and lesions on the scalp, shoulders and back (carrying a heavy object, rubbing), the stigmata of a crucifixion, and a gaping wound on the side (reminiscent of that which a lance might have made during post-mortem penetration).

By studying these lesions in greater detail, we can establish a chronology of events: the Man in the Shroud was first scourged, then crucified, and then received a lance wound post mortem, as if to confirm or ensure his death. This chronology and these findings force us to envisage a certain context for this succession of injuries. There was a legal environment, a judicial decision, an execution of the sentence, and a place, or places, conducive to these executions. So there was a judicial act (or several) that followed a procedure. After this procedure, the sentence had to be carried out, which required two elements: executors and certainly two places, one for the scourging and one for the crucifixion, so there was a way to go. The spear could have been delivered on the cross, the probable place of death, which facilitated the exposure of the right hemithorax, which received the spear blow in the 5th intercostal space, in front of the 8th dorsal vertebra, opposite the right atrium, easily ruptured by this procedure. Blood and pericardial fluid may have flowed out of this wound, as traces of it can be seen on the print, like all the other blood marks.

¹: Organised by the Centre International d'Etudes du Linceul de Turin (CIELT).

1 - Flagellation and carrying the cross

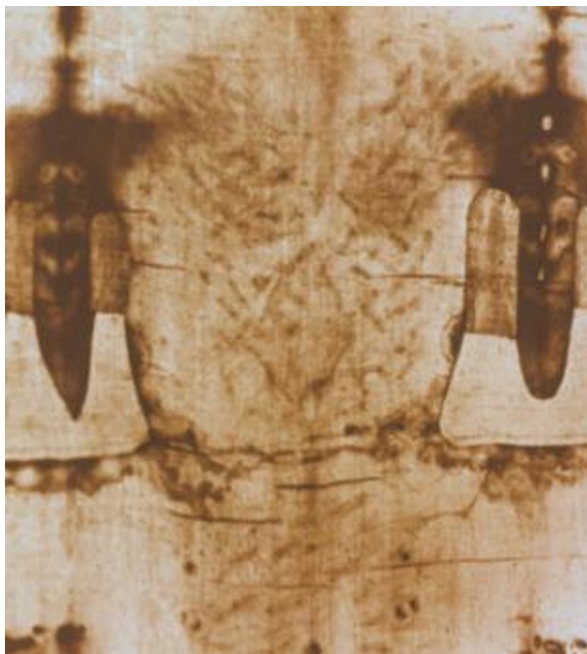


Fig. 1. Shroud dorsal image showing scourge wounds

The traces of flagellation (see Fig. 1 for the back) show us the stigmata of two identical flagrums. This Roman whip was used to execute those condemned (usually slaves) to death by flogging. Its name evokes the idea of striking, of knocking out, rather than that of scourging as do our traditional whips. It consisted of a handle, leather straps or metal chains, with heavy, rounded implements of various shapes attached to the ends (Fig. 2). The whole thing was used to strike, causing severe bruising, fractures and vascular damage, leading to death in a few blows.

The fact that flagrums were condemned to death is borne out by the physiological study of lesions, as demonstrated by the work presented in 2002 by Dr François Giraud.² All his calculations, which can be verified, show the intensity and force of the blows administered during flogging. The energy received by the Shrouded Man was equivalent to that released by four bullets fired from a 357 magnum revolver.

However, despite the enormous energy expended and the trauma experienced, the Shroud Man did not die, which is surprising at first sight. Given his condition when he had to be untied - we know he was untied because he was crucified afterwards - he must have collapsed. If he was conscious, he had the choice of letting himself die from his wounds or reacting. Everything leads us to believe, given the trauma he suffered, that the Man in the Shroud, even with a good constitution, would have had to die. His behaviour can be studied through his lesions. He did not die as a result of being put to death, and what's more, once the punishment was over, he could have chosen to let himself die. All he had to do was let himself go, and he would have died shortly afterwards.

². At the CIELT Symposium in April 2002 (cf. MNTV no. 26). See also 'Le Saint Suaire - étude médicale et scientifique', an article available on Dr. Giraud's website.

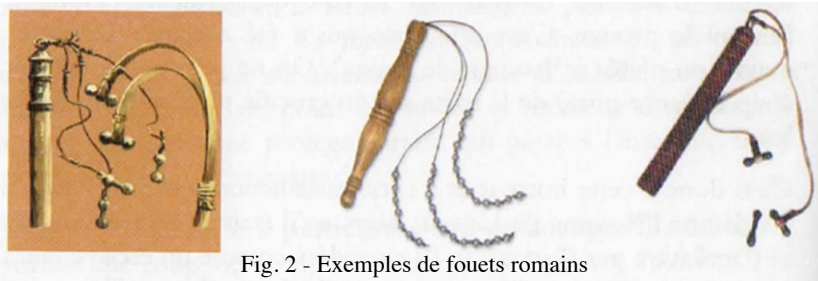


Fig. 2 - Exemples de fouets romains

But what amazes us is that the Man in the Shroud, who is dying, who is very close to death, instead of letting himself go to a liberating death, to shorten his suffering, preferred to get up and fight against the inevitable process of his death by scourging, in order to be judged again, and once again condemned to death.

Despite the trauma he had received, this man chose, rather than let himself die, to get back up and create further difficulties, pain and suffering for himself, to be tried again and crucified. He was, in fact, retried; yet it is inconceivable that a legal structure that condemns to such a scourging, which was intended to kill the condemned man, would have simultaneously condemned him to crucifixion. The fact that he was scourged with flagrum shows that he was considered a slave, a servant, because only slaves, at least in the vast majority of cases, were scourged in this way.

The person condemned to be crucified, after being whipped (with a classic, scourging whip), to debase and tire him, was led to the place of execution, naked, with his patibulum on his back or on one shoulder. A titulus (title), a sign bearing the reason for his condemnation, was placed around his neck. In this way, he crossed the city, the sacred precinct, as if to complete the expiation that the human sacrifice of crucifixion would constitute. Passers-by could insult him, beat him and spit on him. All this abuse was, of course, atonement.

2- Crucifixion

The act of crucifixion was therefore redemptive, redeeming an imbalance caused by a fault or a politico-religious act. In ancient times, slaves had the privilege of 'benefiting' from the worst tortures and sentences, and crucifixion was the jewel in the crown. The worst punishment was hanging from the barren tree, the arbor infelix, the servile supplicium or slave torture:

- arbor infelix: 'sinister tree, whose fruit was consecrated to the infernal gods, or sterile and condemned by religion, where the condemned were hanged'³. Desertion, treason, crimes of lèse-majesté, incitement to revolt, magic... were punished by crucifixion, which the Romans considered repugnant and unhealthy... You had to forget about it and not fix your mind on this ignominy. Hence the paucity of documents on this subject.

³. Arbre sinistre, dont les fruits étaient consacrés aux dieux infernaux, ou stériles et condamnés par la religion, où l'on pendait les condamnés cf. Dictionnaire latin-français - Gaffiot, édition Hachette 2001

The final blow with the *crurifragium* (a sledgehammer to break the legs, with arterial rupture) often completed the crucifixion, accelerating death and the effusion of blood penetrating the ground.

This torture was a curse and terrified the Romans. Those crucified died prematurely and violently; they became wandering ghosts, bringing the curse, and their death, next to decomposing corpses, maintained this infernal context. The crucifixion sites were cursed, just as the gallows were in our more modern history. The fact that these unfortunate people had no burial and no funeral rites, in full view of everyone, was unimaginable for the people of Antiquity, and added to the curse of the crucified, who became, in effect, demons.

The Man in the Shroud wanted to take part in this death and this becoming. He was condemned to be crucified, but his behaviour shows that he did everything he could to consent and even volunteer for this crucifixion, to carry out what seems to us an absolutely inconceivable project. Why did he not let himself die, because he knew that he was dying from his scourging? Why did he want to get up and voluntarily take part in that horrible death of crucifixion, and become a damned man, a demon for the people who witnessed his misfortune?

The condemned man was taken outside the city, to a place outside the holy walls, usually elevated and close to an access road to the city. There, the stipes, smooth, small stakes that were fixed once and for all in the ground, awaited him. The condemned man arrived at the place of torture, having carried his plank, the *patibulum*.

The nailing was easily done and produced this bloody flow throughout the torture. The executioner would lay the condemned man down, then place his wrist and hand on the *patibulum* and nail the wrist to the beam. Once the first nail had been driven, everything was very easy, because the future crucified man was completely at the mercy of his executioners. All he had to do was hit the nailed arm and he would participate in whatever they wanted him to do. The second limb was stretched out on the *patibulum* and the second nail was driven in.

Dr Barbet demonstrated that the nailing had been made in the carpal bones, in a space known as 'Destot's space'. Much has been written about crucifixion in the palm of the hand or the wrist. Anatomically, the only two places where a nail is strong enough to suspend a man are: the carpus (Destot's space) and the distal radiocubital space (fig. 3). These two bony locations are supported by the arterial vascularisation of the upper limb: only these two places are free of arteries, whereas the palm of the hand is difficult to consider for crucifixion, as the superficial and deep palmar arch

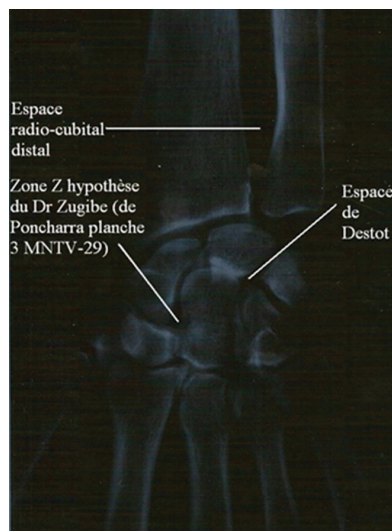


Fig. 3. Position of nail in carpal bones.

exposes the arterial zones to being skewered, with the condemned man then bleeding out too quickly. I therefore defined a possible nailing space (Fig. 4), combining bone and arterial stress, with two possible passage zones, at wrist level and in the distal radiocubital space.



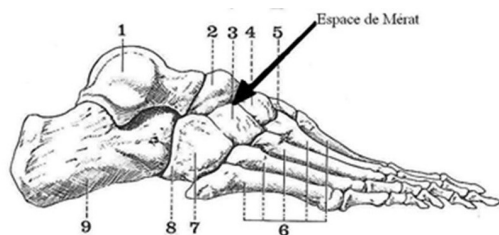
Fig. 4. Possible nailing space for crucifixion

Once nailed in this way to his patibulum, it was easy to raise the condemned man; he even helped his executioners to avoid too much pain. To form a tau cross, the patibulum certainly had a mortise that could be adapted to a tenon of the stipes, or a hook that could also be attached to the stipes. The weight of the condemned man hanging by his two upper limbs was enough to hold the two wooden structures together. My research showed that, to hang a man from his patibulum, you simply had to bend the lower limbs on either side of the stipes, bringing the heels closer to the thighs, and fixing them at the Achilles tendon, an area strong enough to support a heavy weight and free of arteries; moreover, the external malleolus protects the artery that runs through it, so there is no risk of arterial embrochage.

The Shroud Man helped to nail him. He was nailed at kick level, with both feet on top of each other. This position is very difficult to achieve. There is another space on the instep, respecting the laws of easy bone passage between the metatarsals, and respecting the arteries. It was Dr Mérat who found this space, which corresponds to the passage of the nail in the feet of

the Shroud Man (Fig. 5). While lateral nailing was very easy and required no participation from the condemned man, nailing on the foot, passing through the 'Mérat space', presupposes a more fragile and passive condemned man. However, by pressing the sole of the foot against the stipes and nailing quickly, it did not require a great deal of effort on the part of the executioners, as the feet could be placed side by side. The Man in the Shroud, on the other hand, had both feet nailed together; his rigor mortis was beginning to show, as can be seen from the print on the Shroud. It was therefore necessary to nail, or rather pierce, the first foot without nailing it to the wood of the stipes, then position the point of the nail exactly on the second foot at the same point, with the sole of this second foot pressed against the wood of the stipes; in this way, the two feet were pierced and nailed to the wood of the stipes by the same nail. This nailing process was difficult and required the condemned man to remain still; it might even be thought that he should help his executioners by holding the foot that had already been pierced opposite the second to be pierced. Only three nails were used for his crucifixion, which is a specific feature, a mark, a signature of the Man in the Shroud; in this way, his crucifixion is special,

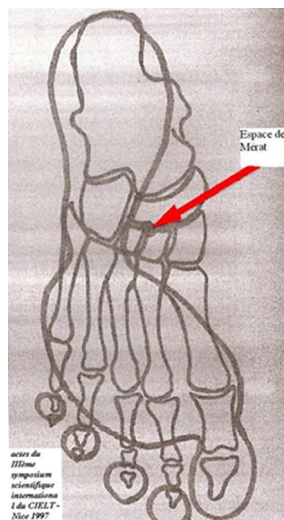
‘personalised’. This is why we find the three nails as a specific sign, particularly on the Pray Codex, which shows the crucifixion and the participation of the victim.



Vue externe des os du pied droit.

1. Astragale.
2. Scaphoïde.
3. 3^e cunéiforme.
4. 2^e cunéiforme.
5. 1^{re} cunéiforme.
6. Métatarsiens.
7. Cuboïde.
8. Tubercule du cuboïde.
9. Calcaneum.

③



He was not crurifragium (his legs were not broken).

A post-mortem blow from a spear made his death official. The crosses were at man's height. The wound on the side of the Man in the Shroud proves this. It is a wound that was inflicted 'within arm's reach', or rather 'at hand's height'. It is inconceivable that a spear could be struck in this way on a crucified body two metres above the ground.

So it was to this horror and this terrifying curse that the Man in the Shroud was condemned, as he was dying from flagellation by flagrum. He was considered a slave at fault, which was terrible for the time, and as he lay dying he was forced to wear his patibulum to nail him to the cross. He chose to delay his death and prolong his suffering. When he could have let himself die, he chose to be insulted, to carry his titulus through the alleys, where he was mocked for his 'shredded' appearance. He wore his patibulum, where he was nailed and then nailed to the stipes, cursing him. **Overcoming his agony, everything tells us that he made the effort to face and participate in this degradation⁴ and curse.**

Another mystery of the Shroud calls out to us: why and how was this crucified man decrucified and buried in this rich linen?

⁴. cf. The prophecy of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah, 50, 5-9).