

RESEARCH ARTICLES (3)
THE STUTTGART PSALTER 'DISCOVERY'

An exaggerated claim

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Mainly for reasons of time management I have to confess that rarely if ever do I look at the various Shroud 'blogs' on the Internet, let alone get involved in any chat rooms. However a few weeks ago my fellow Australian Stephen Jones kindly drew my attention to an article by Max Patrick Hamon that had appeared on the Dan Porter 'Shroud Story' website. The article in question can be accessed at

<http://shroudstory.com/2013/10/20/an-intriguing-9th-century-image-suggestive-of-the-shroud-a-guest-posting-by-max-patrick-hamon/> .

Now I am not at all sure who Max Patrick Hamon is, except that he presented a paper on the claimed 'coins over the eyes' at the Acheiropoietos conference held in Torun, Poland, in 2011. Recently, however, Hamon has stirred up quite a lot of Internet fuss over an illumination in a ninth century Carolingian manuscript that Professor

Heinrich Pfeiffer first suggested several years ago might have a Shroud connection. The illumination in question (p. 25), on Folio 43 verso in the so-called Stuttgart Psalter preserved in the Württemberg State Library, Stuttgart, depicts the scourging of Jesus, as an illustration of the prophetic text of the Vulgate Bible's Psalm 34/35*, v.15 "*et adversum me laetati sunt et convenerunt congregata sunt super me flagella et ignoravi.*" Dateable to between 820 and 830, this illumination is so graphic in its depiction of Jesus' scourge marks, also so emphatically 'dorsal' in its depiction of the fully naked back of Jesus' body receiving this flagellation, that it is certainly not unreasonable to suggest that it could derive from some Carolingian artist/monk's third or fourth hand knowledge of the scourge marks on Shroud image.

In chapter 11 of my most recent (2010) book on the Shroud I discussed the likelihood that it was our Shroud, temporarily brought to Jerusalem after an earthquake had devastated Edessa's Hagia Sophia cathedral on Easter Sunday 679, which received the 'trial by fire' on a sudarium of Jesus ordered at around that time by the Muslim Caliph Mu'awiyah, as described by direct eyewitness French bishop Arculf to Abbot Adamnan of Iona. So given that our Shroud had been viewed at full length by at least one western observer at the end of the seventh century, for there to appear in a manuscript of the early ninth century an image distantly based on that experience, even though not exactly headline-grabbing, is not totally beyond the bounds of possibility.

But where, in my view, Max Patrick Hamon goes way 'over the top' - thereby doing disservice to the scrupulous evidential approach that the subject of the Shroud so badly needs from its proponents - is with regard to his claim that the exaggeratedly expressive hand of the man seen on the right wielding his scourge is a cryptic rendition of the shape of the 'epsilon-shaped blood rivulet over the eyebrow' as seen on the Shroud's frontal image. Obviously if this argument could be sustained it would represent strong evidence for the Shroud's existence back around 820-30. And if all the other hands depicted in the Stuttgart Psalter were of regular size and shape, the Fol. 43v illumination thereby being a single, striking

exception to the rest, then there might be some serious justification for Hamon's argument. But it is a very simple matter for anyone to consult the entirety of other folios from the Stuttgart Psalter via the link:

http://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/digitale-sammlungen/seitenansicht/?id=4870&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=1517&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=90

And as immediately becomes evident, exaggerated or caricature-like hands are effectively a very common motif for this particular monk illuminator. Even on the very next folio, illustrating the 21st verse of the same Psalm 34/35* (below), there appears a similar example, and there are plenty more to be found elsewhere.



So I am sorry, but much as I would like to be able to endorse Max Patrick Hamon's argument, it doesn't get any support from me...

* The numbering of the Biblical Psalms varies between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Bibles, and their translations into English can be similarly varied. In the Roman Catholic Jerusalem Bible the psalm illustrated in the Stuttgart illumination appears as Psalm 35.