

THE DISCOVERY OF THE **INSCRIPTION OF THE CROSS** **THE RELIC OF THE "TITULUS CRUCIS" AND THE HOLY SHROUD -** **TWO SILENT WITNESSES OF THE PASSION**

by Michael Hesemann

"Admiration and appreciation I express you in the name of Pope John Paul II. for your laborious research on the venerable relic of the 'titulus crucis'. Indeed this silent witness of the passion of our Saviour is a symbol for the Jubilee of the 2000 years of the birth of Jesus Christ."

-Archbishop Stanislaus Dziwisz
Secretary of His Holiness the Pope
11. Oktober 1999

ABSTRACT:

Probably the most remarkable of the relics preserved in the venerable Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, Rome, is the relic of the "titulus Christi", the Title of the Holy Cross of Our Saviour. According to the tradition, it was brought to Rome by the Emperess Helena in 325 AD, after it was discovered, together with the relics of the True Cross and three Holy Nails, during the construction of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Although it is easy to consider it a pious forgery in reference to the Helena-legend, a careful palaeographic evaluation found serious indications that the "titulus" is indeed from the time of Christ. Interestingly, the "Sessorian Relics" of S. Croce bear several correlations with the Holy Shroud.

1. THE HELENA LEGEND

In archaeology, the origin and pedigree of an object is of greatest importance. In many cases, the validity of a finding, the value of an historic object can only be determined if we know who found it where and under which circumstances. Since the Titulus was allegedly discovered nearly 1700 years ago, no proper scientific documentation exists. All information we have are later reports on the "inventio crucis" given to us by eminent Church historians (1). According to them, the finding took

place during the excavations under the West Forum of Jerusalem and the Hadrianic Temple of Aphrodite, which was, according to the tradition of the local Christian community, built just above the empty tomb of the risen Christ. The excavations took place under order of the first christian Emperor Constantine, to lay open the Holy Sepulchre and erect a memorial and a basilica above.

This tradition can be found in the works of noted and highly respected Church historians as Gelasius, Theodoret, Sozomenos, Rufinus, Socrates, in the letters of Paulinus of Nola and the Obitu Theodosii of St. Ambrosius of Milan, all originating in the late 4th and 5th century AD. We have to stress that all these descriptions given by the Church historians vary tremendously from the "Legenda Aurea"-version, which is mostly fictitious and not trustworthy at all (2). This legend does not even associate the Inventio Crucis with the excavations of the Holy Sepulchre, although all original sources stress this connection.

To our surprise the finding of the cross is not mentioned directly at all in the earliest report on Helenas visit in Jerusalem, which we find in Eusebius' Vita Constantini (3), written between 338 and 340, although it mentions the order of the Emperor to uncover the Holy Sepulchre, to destroy the temple of Aphrodite and to erect a basilica at the site, all elements we also find in the later reports .

Is his silence deliberate? As Drijvers stresses, Eusebius describes in the Holy Sepulchre as the *"testimony of his redeeming resurrection"* (VC III 28: της σωτηριου αναστασεως μαρτυριον) . Shortly after he quotes a letter of Constantine to Macarius (probably from the year 325) in which the Emperor refers to the discovery of the *"token of his most holy suffering"* (VC III, 30: γνωρισμα του αγιωτατου εκεινου παθουζ) which was *"beyond all expectations"*. Furthermore Eusebius reported: *"By decorating these sites with great splendour, he also eternalized the memory of his mother who provided this great benevolence for all mankind."* Indeed the Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre consisted of two major buildings, the "Anastasis" dome over the empty tomb and the "Martyrion Basilica", memorizing the passion of the Lord. Between them, under the open sky in an inner yard, was the rock of Golgatha. The Breviarium de Hierosolyma (ca. 530) describes *"a large vault in which the three crosses were found. Above it was the splendid silver and golden altar"* (4). Drijvers concluded: *"It seems that the reason for building the church in Jerusalem was in fact the discovery of the Cross and not the finding of the tomb, as Eusebius wants us to believe."* (5)

But why the silence? Rubin (6) assumes that Eusebius as bishop of Caesarea was competing with Jerusalem and did not want to give it more credit, Walker (7) believes in theological reasons: In the theology of Eusebius the empty tomb was more important than the cross, was furthermore the cult of relics a danger for a spiritual christianity. Indeed he nearly completely avoids to use the word "Cross" (σταυρος) in his writings. His audience was rather not a purely Christian one, and maybe he just did not want to alienate the pagan majority in the Empire by the fact that we Christians indeed venerate a Roman gallows as the symbol of our salvation through His precious blood. Also

Ambrosius, 69 years later, knew of the dangers of a misunderstanding of the veneration of the Holy Cross and stressed in his "Obitu Theodosii": *"She (Helena) also found the inscription and prayed to the king but not to the wood; since this would be pagan delusion and godless superstition. Instead she worshipped Him who was hanging on the cross, whose name was written on the title."* (8)

Indeed the relic of the Cross was first mentioned by Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem in his "Catechesis", written in 348 (9), in which he mentions *"the holy wood of the Cross"*, which *"is still, until this day, visible at our place and filled nearly all world with its pieces"* (10). In 351 he wrote to Constantine's son, Emperor Constantius II., that *"under your God-loved father Constantine, blessed be his memory, the salubrious wood of the cross was found in Jerusalem"* (11), which, of course, indicates that the Emperor already knew about it. Helena herself is mentioned the first time in the Church History of Bishop Gelasius of Caesarea, a nephew of Cyril, whom he promised to write it on his death bed (12). It was written between Cyril's death (387) and the death of Gelasius (395) and became the major source for Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomenos and Theodoret. About the same time, during his obituary on Emperor Theodosius on February 25th, 395, Bishop Ambrosius of Milano mentioned the finding of the cross, the nails and the title through Helena. His version of the events agrees with the report of Gelasius -which was carefully reconstructed by Borgehammar (13)- and the other Church Historians with the little difference, confirmed by Johannes Chrysostomos (14) in his homily, that the True Cross was not identified by a miracle but merely by the finding of the titulus (15). The titulus was furthermore mentioned by the pilgrimess Egeria/Aetheria, a French nun who stayed in Palestine between 381 and 384 AD, who witnessed its veneration in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Good Friday 383 AD (16). We can assume that she only saw the left half of the title, which remained in Jerusalem and bore the inscription "(RE)X IUDAEORUM". In a similar way, Sokrates Scholasticus referred to it only as *"a board on which Pilate had inscribed in various characters that the Christ who was crucified was king of the Jews"* (17), obviously ignoring (or not knowing about) the other half with the words "I. NAZARINUS RE".

2. THE SESSORIAN RELICS

Therefore we have to conclude that not only the relics of the cross, but also the titulus, was divided by Helena, one part left in Jerusalem, the other one brought to Rome, *"to the palace"*, as Theodoret (18) explicitly states. The roman "Palace" in which Helena resided, was, as the epigraphic evidence indicates, the "Sessorium" over which the Basilica di S. Croce in Gerusalemme was built, incorporating an aula of the palace. The archaeological and epigraphic evidence allows no doubt that indeed Helena's palace in Rome was the Sessorian palace out of which the Basilica Santa Croce in Gerusalemme was built. Therefore, the line of tradition is well documented, from the 4th Century (19) until today. We do not have any "dark years", like in the case of so many other relics, although the titulus was only rediscovered in 1492, hidden in the wall of the "Helena Chapel" in a lead box, bearing the seal of Cardinal Gerardus, who later became Pope Lucius II. (1144-45), who must have

found it during a major rebuilding of the basilica under his supervision (20). Today it is exhibited together with other relics of the same origin, the Helena-find, in the relic chapel of S. Croce, namely three fragments of the True Cross and the "Holy Nail". Unfortunately, as Borgehammar remarks astonished (21), it was never put under scientific scrutiny. Although it is impossible to determine the authenticity of the "Fragments of the Cross" and the "Holy Nail" with any scientific certainty, the "titulus" is a challenge, since it bears a clearly readable inscription.

3. THE "TITULUS CRUCIS"

The titulus is 25x14 cm in size, 2,6 cm thick and has a weight of 687 g. It is inscribed on one side with three lines, of which the first one is mostly destroyed. The second line is written in greek letters and reversed script, the third in latin letters, also with reversed script. We can read the words

z'nh

ΒΣΥΝΕΡΑΖΑ(Η)Ν.ΣΙ

RSUNIRAZAN .I

Written from right to left, obviously in imitation of the jewish way of writing, we can read: I. NAZARINUS R., obviously a part of the inscription of the cross, as quoted in the Latin translation of the Gospel according to St. John (19,19) as "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum". Interestingly enough, the Greek line is a mere Greek transcription of the Latin line rather than a translation, in contrast to the original Greek quote of the Gospel according to St. John as

"Ἰησοῦς Ναζωραῖος Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων". The variations from the version of St. John are:

1. The order of the lines (St. John: Hebrew, Latin, Greek; titulus: Hebrew, Greek, Latin)
2. The reverse writing, not mentioned by St. John
3. The Initials "JS" and "I." instead of the full name "Iesus/Iesus".
4. The use of the latin "Nazarinus/Nazarenous" instead of the greek "Nazoraioi", even in the greek line.

Two experts, Prof. Thiede (22) and Prof. Roll (23), consider this a major indication of the authenticity of the titulus. First of all, a variation of Joh. 19,19 is a freedom no forger would ever risk. But it makes sense, since Pontius Pilatus, who, according to the gospels, dictated the inscription, was a Roman magistrate and used, especially for official documents, the official language Latin. It was up to the writer to create a version in the other two languages, and therefore it was rather unlikely that he transferred the term "Nazarinus" in the correct greek form. The abbreviation of the name "Iesus/Iesus" as "I." is typical for Roman latin inscriptions. Since "Yeshu/Yehoshua" was a common name during the 1st century -Flavius Josephus mentions 16 persons with this name-, the unique "Nazarinus" rather pointed to the Saviour from a small village in Galilee, at least for a Roman magistrate, although such an abbreviation in contrast to John 19,19

would be unthinkable for a Christian forger.

It is furthermore significant that the writer used the Latin NazarInus instead of the later Christian NazarEnus. Indeed, NazarInus is closer to the Hebrew NozerY/NazarY and seems to be the original form. Both indicates an early, even contemporary origin.

The remains of the first line can be identified as Jewish script. Readable are only the letters Heh, Nun and Tzadi, which very well might have been parts of the hebrew text of the inscription

(YSU') HN'Z(RY MLK HYHUDIM) (Yeshu H'Nozery Melek H'Yehudim)

The edges of the titulus show a strong withering. The right edge is severely decayed, a part of the upper edge is broken off, on the lower edge the letters I and ARIN are difficult to see. Only the left edge is undamaged. Obviously here the wood was cut at a later date and from this moment on preserved safely. This condition of the title seems to confirm the tradition according to which the title was hidden for 295 years in an old cistern close to the Calvary, bevor it was discovered and obviously cut into two pieces by St. Helena who brought one half to Rome. The division is indicated by the clean cut on the left side and the missing part of the inscription. If its text indeed was, as John (19,19) and the Church historians (with the exemption of Sokrates Scholasticus who obviously got his information from Jerusalem, referring to the relic preserved there), state, IESUS NAZARENUS REX IUDAEORUM, we can reconstruct the inscription of the other half, remaining in Jerusalem, as

miduhyh kl(m)

NOIAΔYI NOT ΣOEΛIΣA(B)

MUROEADVI XE(R)

Especially in the middle of the titulus, chalky-greyish remains of colour are still visible, furthermore traces of black colour in some of the letters. This is characteristical for the Roman way to write the "titulus damnationis", as the archaeologists and historians Maria Siliato (24) and Werner Eck (25) stressed: First of all the wood was painted with white chalk, than the exactor painted the reason for the punishment on it with black or red letters. That the letters were also carved was rather an exemption. Although Eck states that there indeed were wood tablets with carved inscriptions, painted over with chalk, the letters painted out, these were rather common for public buildings or as *tituli sepulcrales* (26).

A *titulus damnationis*, he thinks, would rather be reused (27). On the other hand it is rather questionable if *tituli* were in common use for provincial executions at all. Furthermore we have to ask if Pilate, who arrived with his cohort in Jerusalem to guarantee a quiet Pesach, indeed took a whole staff of provincial officials wih him. The *titulus* rather was a form of "special treatment", of mocking of the "King of the Jews", ordered by Pilate and probably written by an officer who was

able to write, maybe a Centurio. The relic rather allows the conclusion that it was written by an untrained writer, maybe a Levantine, unexperienced in other languages, writing by dictate (28). A reuse can be excluded since there were no regular trials in Jerusalem - they took place in the provincial capital of Caesarea Maritima. Only for the major temple holidays the *praefectus iudaeae* came to Jerusalem to guarantee the public order. Only during this time he sat in judgement over imminent cases. Since everything which came in contact with the deceased was considered "unclean" by the Jewish law (4 Mos 19,13-16), victims of executions had to be buried on the very same day (5 Mos 21, 22-23) and actually Jews removed the traces of the execution (29), it can be excluded that the *titulus Crucis* or any other remain of a public execution was ever brought back in the city to be reused.

Interestingly we find the above mentioned detail -the chalk painting- mentioned in the Church History of Sozomenos, who, born in Gaza about 370-80 (30), still met eye witnesses of the finding of the cross in his youth and added further details to the description given by his forerunner Sokrates Scholasticus. He described the *titulus* as a "*separate piece of wood, on which were inscribed, on white, in Hebrew, Greek and Latin letters, the following words: 'Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews'.*" (31) The fact that Sozomenos, in variation from St. John, gave the order of the lines exactly as it is on our relic, indicates that his report indeed represents the earliest description of it. The Church History of Sozomenos was written about 444, not even 120 years after the *inventio crucis* (32).

But the most interesting testimony is that of the pilgrim Antoninus of Piacenza who visited the Holy land in 570 AD. He described "*the title which was placed above the head of Our Lord*" quite carefully since he was able to examine it closely. He stressed that he "*saw, hold in my hands and kissed*" (*vidi et in manu mea tenui et osculatus sum*) the relic and stated: "*This wood of the cross was of a nut tree*" (*Quod lignum crucis de nuce est - 33*). This is remarkable, since according to an expertise by the botanist Prof. Dr. Elio Corona, the relic of the *titulus Crucis* in S.Croce is of wood of a nut tree of the species "*Juglans regia*" which is common in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East (34). When the Roman fragment bears the partial inscription "I. NAZARINUS R..", Antoninus confirms that on the one in Jerusalem "*was written: this is the king of the Jews*" (*in quo scriptum erat: hic est rex iudaeorum*) (35). Since he did not know of the division, he obviously concluded that not John but the synoptics (he quoted Lk 23,38) quoted the inscription correctly. If indeed the left half of the tablet can be proved to be in Jerusalem for 570 (Antoninus) and already in 383 (Egeria), it must have appeared in the 4th century. The fact that the other half of the relic is in Rome, of all places in the former Palace chapel of Helena, makes it more than probable that she was the one who found and divided it.

The Jerusalem Relic of the *titulus* is lost since the 7th century, the looting of the city by King Chosroes of Persia, although there is a possibility that Emperor Heraclius brought it to

Constantinople after he re-conquered the True Cross and other relics from the Persians. We do not find it on the official relic catalogues of the imperial city, but it was mentioned in a letter by Emperor Constantine VII. Porphyrogenetos to his army in Tarsus from the year 958. With this letter he sent his soldiers holy water which was benedicted by his most sacred relics including "*the precious wood, the immaculate lance, the precious inscription... the linnen that bore God and other symbols of His immaculate passion.*"(36) It is furthermore possible that it was among the relics bought by the French king Louis IX., the Saint, from Balduin II., the "latin Emperor" of Constantinople in 1241. At least P. Guillaume Durand, an author of the 15th century, lists "*the tablet on which Pilate wrote: Jesus Nazarenus rex Judaeorum, which I saw in Paris in the Chapel of the illustrious king of the French, together with the crown of thorns*" (37) as one of the treasures of the Sainte Chapelle. Unfortunately this is the only evidence we have that the relic ever was in France, and if indeed it was, it got lost during the French Revolution.

As we have shown above, we can trace the history of the relic of the *titulus Crucis* back to the 4th century. Is there any possibility that it indeed is from the time of Jesus?

Considering the *titulus* and the other relics of S. Croce consistent with all we know about the history of capital punishments in Roman times, I looked for a way to determine its age. As a working hypothesis, I developed three possible scenarios of its origin:

1. It is indeed the title of the True Cross of Our Saviour, and therefore dated 30 AD.
2. It is a 4th century forgery, created to deceive the Emperess Helena
3. It is a mediaeval forgery, created in memory of the tradition of the "Helena legend" and the *Inventio Crucis*.

From the possible methods to date the relic, dendrochronology (tree ring dating) could be ruled out, since the wooden fragment is too small and since Israel does not have sufficient dendrochronological data for the time in question (38). For a Radiocarbon-analysis a sample would be needed, and of course there is the danger that -as in the case of the Holy Shroud- a contamination could alter the results. Therefore I decided for the most precise and least problematic method of dating, the palaeographic method (comparative palaeography). The kind permission for this study was granted by the Sostituto per gli Affari Generali of the Segreteria di Stato of the Holy See, His Excellency Archbishop Giovanni Battista Re, via the Rev. Father Abbot of S. Croce, Don Luigi Rottini, whom I owe my deepest gratitude for it.

In April 1998 I received detailed photos from Mr. Paladini, the official photographer of the Basilica di Santa Croce, thanks to the help of the Rev. Father Abbot Don Luigi Rottini. In the following week I asked my co-worker and colleague Barry Chamish from Israel to look for the most competent experts of his country in palaeography and dendrochronology of the time periods in question. Israel is maybe today the country with the strongest interest in archaeology and the most active archaeological research, with 120 smaller and 30 bigger excavations on different sites in just

the last summer. Because of the huge amount of data uncovered by Israeli archaeologists, I considered them as quite competent in determining the age of an object allegedly created and found in the country they investigate so carefully. Furthermore I could expect a certain degree of objectivity and "advocatus diaboli"-attitude, given that they, as Jews, have no religious veneration for what the titulus stands for. This was to protect the title from any future criticism and polemics from the sceptical scientific community, which would refuse any expertise from a Roman Catholic scholar, including myself, as "biased".

From August 12-20, 1998 I flew to the Holy Land to present my collection of high quality photos of the titulus to the experts. Further experts were consulted in the following months. In four cases I asked them to make a verbal statement, which I recorded on video, in four cases I received written statements.

4. THE RELIC OF THE *Titulus Crucis* - A PALAEOGRAPHIC EXAMINATION

The specialists I consulted were:

- Dr. Gabriel Barkay, archaeologist of the Israeli Antiquity Authority and expert for Jewish epigraphy (39)
- Prof. Dr. Hanan Eshel, Hebrew University Jerusalem and Harvard University, Cambridge/Mass., expert for Jewish palaeography (40)
- Prof. Dr. Ester Eshel, Hebrew University Jerusalem and Harvard University, Cambridge/Mass., expert for Jewish palaeography (41)
- Dr. Leah Di Segni, Hebrew University Jerusalem, expert for Greek inscription in Palestine (42)
- Prof. Dr. Israel Roll, University of Tel Aviv, archaeologist, expert for Roman inscriptions in Palestine (43)
- Prof. Dr. Ben Isaac, University of Tel Aviv, archaeologist, expert for Roman inscriptions in Palestine (44)
- Prof. Dr. Werner Eck, University of Cologne/Germany, expert for Roman wooden inscriptions (45)
- Prof. Carsten Peter Thiede, Paderborn, University of Beer Sheva, Israel, expert for early Christian epigraphy, palaeography and papyrology. (46)

FIRST LINE: HEBREW/JEWISH

Unfortunately this line is in such a bad and withered condition that one expert could not draw any definite conclusion on the palaeographic findings at all (47). Still, with different arguments, two of the three consulted experts for Jewish palaeography found obvious characteristics typical for the timeframe between the 1st and early 4th century AD. Both experts remarked the cursive style of writing and the long "tails" of the letters. Dr. Barkay (48) identifies them als "palaeo-Hebrew" (49), Dr. Eshel for "Jewish cursive writing" (50), both typical for the end of the "2nd temple period", the

1st century AD, but also used in the following two centuries.

Dr. Gabriel Barkay was sure that the writer was unexperienced and most probably not a Jew.

SECOND LINE: GREEK

The clearly readable Greek line shows several palaeographically identifiable characteristics:

The monogram Omikron-Ypsilon was used both in the Byzantine period since the 6th century. It was not used between the 2nd and 5th century, but we find it on several inscriptions of the early roman period, the 1st century AD (51).

The style of the Alphas is typical for the 1st century and was used until the 3rd century, but not in the byzantine period.

Dr. Di Segni explained: "(The titulus-inscription) does not look like a byzantine inscription from our part of the world, and it does not look like a 4th century inscription from our part of the world. If any it might look like an early Roman inscription" (52), an inscription of the 1st century AD.

Prof. Roll agreed "all along" with her comment (53), which he called "the most relevant one". Also Prof. Thiede stated: "The style of handwriting on the piece of wood belongs, with decreasing likelihood, to the period between the 1st and early 4th century." (54)

THIRD LINE: LATIN

Prof. Roll and Prof. Isaac (55) referred to parallels to Roman inscriptions of the 1st century from (the provincial capital) Caesarea Maritima and plea, as well as Prof. Thiede (56), for a 1st century date.

Indeed the epigraphic relationship with the best-known contemporary inscription of Caesarea, the dedication of the "Tiberieum" of Pontius Pilatus (26-36 AD), is obvious. Since this inscription was only discovered during excavations in 1961, any duplication of its characteristics by a forger can definitely be ruled out. (57) Indeed the Latin line is written in the "Zierstil" (decorative style) of early Roman imperial inscriptions of the first century. Therefore, all three lines belong to the same time frame.

As Prof. Thiede stated: "The peculiar character of the 'title' in Rome is striking. Whoever wrote this text was not a copier or forger..." (58)

Only one expert, Prof. Eck of Cologne, refused any palaeographic dating because of the lack of comparative examples on the same medium, contemporary wood inscriptions. (59)

CONCLUSION: None of the consulted experts for Hebrew, Greek and Latin Palaeography found any indication of a mediaeval or late antique forgery. Instead, they all dated it in the timeframe between the 1st and the 3./4th century AD, with a majority of experts preferring and none of them excluding the 1st century. Therefore it is very well possible that the "Titulus Crucis" is indeed the title of the cross of Our Lord.

5. CORRELATIONS: THE RELICS OF SANTA CROCE AND THE HOLY SHROUD

Interestingly the "titulus" and the other "sessorian relics", the relics of the Helena-find, which are preserved in the Basilica di S. Croce, show many parallels to the Turin Shroud. This is remarkable, since their discovery in the 4th century is well documented, although they took a completely different way than the Sindone.

- The "Part of the Cross of the Good Thief" leads us far away from the romantic world of Christian iconography into the real world of Roman crucifications. The Roman method is described by several ancient authors, including Dionysios of Halicarnassos, Artemidor, Plautus, Quintilian, Cicero, Tacitus, Sueton, Firmicus Maternus, Xenophontos of Ephesus, Flavius Josephus and others (60). According to all of them the condemned person was first tied on a patibulum (crossbeam), then led around the city, whipped along the way to the place of execution. "*Patibulum ferat per urbem, deinde affigatur cruci*" (Plautus - 61). There he was lifted up on the stipes, the vertical pole, already standing at the place of the execution, and fixed. Artemidor compared the process of lifting up the cross with the lifting of a sail up to the mast of a ship. Such a Patibulum, as mentioned in our sources, is the "crosspiece of the good thief" in S. Croce. **More than that, from the imprints on the Turin Shroud we can deduce that the patibulum of the cross of Our Lord was more or less 13 centimeters wide (62), the very size of the crosspiece of S. Croce (63).**

- The "Nail" is of the same type and size as the one found in 1968 at Giv'at ha-Mivtar in Jerusalem in the footbones of a crucified man. (64) **Furthermore, its diameter of 0,8 cm (65) corresponds to the nail wound on the Holy Shroud, which has a diameter of 0,9 cm (66).**

- Another remarkable cross-reference is the discovery of a strange Latin and Greek inscription on the Turin Shroud by scientists of the French Optical Institute under Andre Marion, a Nuclear Physicist of the CNRS (French National Space Authority), including the words IN NECE(M) (death penalty), (O)PSKIA (Shadow of a face), (I)HSOY (Jesus) and NAZARENUS - **the same word, written in the same way as on the titulus. (67)**

6. IMPLICATIONS

1. The authenticity of the titulus indicates, that indeed the Fourth Gospel was written by an eyewitness, confirming the tradition of the Holy Church. John alone quotes the title **literal**, not just its content, as the other three evangelists. Since in our age the authenticity of the Gospel according to John was often enough doubted because of its "advanced Christology", this discovery might cause a paradigm change in modern theology: John stood indeed beneath the cross, developed his high theology based on his intimacy with Our Lord Jesus Christ. This also has consequences for the

Shroud research, since many details of the "Sindone" correlate with the passion narration of the Fourth Gospel. Since both relics have their own, independent history, unrelated in the last 1900 years, they both point towards the same event as their common origin: The Passion of Jesus of Nazareth 1970 years ago.

2. The titulus is the only remaining juridical document -a "titulus damnationis"- of the lawsuit of Our Lord and therefore a unique document of both, history and "Heilsgeschichte". Its way from Jerusalem to Rome symbolizes the way of the early church. In Jerusalem the sign of salvation, after the years of persecution, was retrieved, from Rome it went around the world. Therefore the Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, the Roman Jerusalem, is an important symbol for the Holy Year 2000, which, according to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II., is celebrated "in Rome and Jerusalem".

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2. Jacobus de Voragine, Legenda Aurea, Zürich 1994, p.173-186
3. Eusebius von Caesarea, Vit. Const..
4. cit. Gerhard Kroll, Auf den Spuren Jesu, Leipzig 1988, S.383
5. Jan Willem Drijvers, Helena Augusta, Leiden 1992, S.85
6. Ze'ev Rubin: "The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Conflict between the Sees of Caesarea and Jerusalem" in: L.I.Levine (Hrsg.): The Jerusalem Cathedral, II, Jerusalem-Detroit 1982, S.79-105
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8. Ambrosius, De Obitu Theodosii
9. Cyril von Jerusalem, Cat. IV 10; X 19
10. ibd., XIII. 4
11. dito., Ep. ad Constantium, 3
12. Stephan Borgehammar: How the Holy Cross was found, Stockholm 1991
13. dito., p. 130
14. The date of the sermon is unknown, but it was certainly held in the 90ies of the 4th century (Drijvers, S.95)
15. Joh. Chrys., In Iohannem, Hom. 85
16. Itinerarium Egeriae, P.Geyer & O. Cunz, CC ser.lat. 175, 1965
17. Sokrates Scholasticus, Hist. Ecc., I, 17
18. Theodoret von Cyrus, Hist. Ecc. I, 17
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- Richard Krautheimer, Rom - Schicksal einer Stadt 312-1308, München 1987

20. D. Balduino Bedini, O. Cist., *Le Reliquie della Passione del Signore*, Rom 1997
21. Borgehammar 1991, p. 87: "The alleged fragment of the titulus seems never to have been subjected to careful scrutiny".
22. Carsten Peter Thiede, "The search for the True Cross", in: *The Church of England Newspaper*, London, 19. März 1999, p.18
23. letter of 12.2.1999
24. Maria Grazia Siliato, *Und das Grabtuch ist doch echt*, Augsburg 1998, p.339
25. Werner Eck: "Inschriften auf Holz, Ein unterschätztes Phänomen der epigraphischen Kultur Roms", in: Kneissl/Lehmann (Hrsg.), *Imperium Romanum - Studien zu Geschichte und Rezeption*, Stuttgart 1998, p.203-216
26. dito., p.206 f..
27. Prof. Werner Eck, letter of 9.9.1998
28. As Flavius Josephus, *Ant*, XIX, 9,1 states, the Roman garrison troops in Judaea consisted mainly of Syrians and Palestinians
29. Flavius Josephus, *Bell. Iud.* V, 11, 1; that this was also the case with the burial of Jesus is confirmed by the authors of the gospels, namely Mt. 27,57-60, Mk.15, 42-46, Lk. 23, 50-53. Joh. 19,38-42
30. Sozomenos stressed: "Our most zealous adversaries cannot deny the truth of this fact... The above incidents we have related precisely as they were delivered to us by men of great accuracy, by whom the information was derived by succession from father to son; and others have recorded the same events in writing for the benefit of posterity." (*Hist. Ecc.* II, 1)
31. Sozomenos, *Hist. Ecc.*, II, 1
32. Philip Schaff/Henry Wace (Hrsg.): *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, Edingburgh 1997, S.201: "Taking all these points together, it would seem that the work was begun about the latter part of 443."
33. Antonini Placentini, *Itinerarium*, Cap. 20
34. Elio Corona: "Il Titolo: Relazione Tecnologica": Presentation on the International Congress "Dalla Passione alla Resurrezione: 2000 anni di silenziosa testimonianza", Roma, Università Pontificia Lateranense, 6.-8. May 1999
35. Antonini Placentini, *Itinerarium*, Kap. 20
36. cit. Ian Wilson, *Holy Faces, Holy Places*, London 1991, p.153
37. P. Guillaume Durand, *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, liv. VI, ch. LXXX, p. 354
38. As the leading experts on dendrochronology in Israel, Nelly Liphshitz and Sincha Levy Adun of the university of Tel Aviv, informed me, their tree ring data only reach back to the Crusader's Age. Furthermore, more than 50 visible tree rings are necessary for dating, and that is not the case with the wood of the titulus.
39. Dr. Gabriel Barkay, archaeologist of the Israel Antiquity Authority, worked on tombs and burial caves of the 2nd temple period in the Jerusalem area as well as tombs and churches from the byzantine era. He published on bulls and inscriptions including:
 - (mit M. Broshi): "Excavations in the Chapel of St. Vartan in the Holy Sepulchre", in *IEJ* 35 (1985), p.108-128
 - "Excavations at Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem", in: H.Geva, *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, Jerusalem (IES) 1994, p. 85-106
 - "A Second 'Governor of the City Bulla'", in: Geva 1994, p.141-144
40. Dr. Hanan Eshel teaches at the Hebrew University Jerusalem and at Harvard. Publications include:
 - (with E.Eshel); "4Q471 Fragment 1 and Ma'amadot in the War Scroll", in: *Proc. of the International Congress of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site*, New York 1994, p.179-196
 - (with E.Eshel and A.Yardeni): "A Qumran Composition Containing Parts of Ps. 154 and a Prayer

for the Welfare of King Jonathan and His Kingdom", in IEJ 42 (1992), p.199-229

41. Dr. Ester Eshel teaches at the Hebrew University Jerusalem and at Harvard. Publications include: -"4Q477: The Rebukes by the Overseer", in: JJS 45 (1994), p.111-122

-(mit M.Kister): "A Polemical Qumran Fragment", in: JJS 43 (1992), p. 277-281

42. Dr. Leah Di Segni teaches at the Hebrew University Jerusalem.

Publication: Dated Greek Inscriptions from Palestine from the Roman and Byzantine Periods (dissertation), Jerusalem 1997

43. Prof. Dr. Israel Roll teaches at the Institute for Classical Archaeology at the University of Tel Aviv. He worked on latin inscriptions of Roman milestones of the 1st century Palestine.

Excavations in Apollonia (with W. Ayalon), Beth Guvrin, En Boqeq, Kedesh etc.; Contributions for the "Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land", Jerusalem (IES) 1993

44. Prof. Dr. Ben Isaac teaches at the Institute for Classical Archaeology at the University of Tel Aviv. He worked with Prof. Roll on the inscriptions of milestones of the Roman period in Palestine..

45. Prof. Dr. Werner Eck teaches at the Institute for Archaeology of the University of Cologne and worked on Roman wooden inscriptions. About this subject he published: "Inschriften auf Holz, Ein unterschätztes Phänomen der epigraphischen Kultur Roms", in: Kneissl/Lehmann (Hrsg.), Imperium Romanum - Studien zu Geschichte und Rezeption, Stuttgart 1998, p. 203-216

46. Prof. Carsten Peter Thiede is member of the International Association of Papyrologists. He identified and dated several early gospel manuscripts, including the Qumran fragment 7Q5 and the Magdalen-papyrus. He is the editor of the papyrus Bodmer L. in the Biblioteca Bodmeriana, Cologny/Genf. He was the scientific coordinator of the exhibition "Dalla Terra alle Genti - Le

diffusione del cristianesimo nei primi secoli" in Rimini. Today he is head of the "Institut für wissenschaftstheoretische Grundlagenforschung" in Paderborn and is member of the Department of History of the Ben Gurion-University in Beer Sheva, Israel. Publications:

"7Q - Eine Rückkehr zu den neutestamentlichen Papyrusfragmenten in der siebten Höhle von Qumran", in: Biblia 65 (1984), p.538-59 and 66 (1985), p.261

"Greek Qumran Fragment 7Q5: Possibilities and Impossibilities", in: Biblica 75 (1994), p.394-398

"Papyrus Magdalen Greek 17 (Gregory Aland P64). A Reappraisal", in: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 105 (1995), p.13-20

"7Q5 - Facts of Fiction?", in: The Westminster Theological Journal 57 (1995), p.471-474

-Die älteste Evangelienhandschrift, Wuppertal 1986

- (mit d'Ancona): Der Jesus-Papyrus, München 1996

47. Videotaped statement of 17.8.1998: "I would even say that somebody might have just imitated Jewish script. There is definitely not enough to see on this fragment to draw any conclusion."

48. Videotaped statement of 16.8.1998: "This inscription has a direction which is from right to left which is very unusual for Greek and Latin. It has very odd shapes of letters, and the same letter is written differently on two occurrences. So the whole thing is, no doubt, the work of a non-expert, an unexperienced hand. On the top line or on what seems to be a third line are some tails of what could very well be semitic. The tails which go from right to left are typical for Palaeo-Hebrew, but I doubt if it could be Palaeo-Hebrew. My first impression is that it is not of Palestinian origin. We do not have any stone inscriptions which were written in such a script. But it could be bilingual and written by somebody who used the right to left direction as an imitation of another script. I am just not able to date it. It is true that it looks like early shapes, earlier than early medieval. But from Palestinian stone inscriptions I do not recall anything of this kind."

49. "Palaeo-Hebrew" is a term for the use of letters of the old Hebrew writing during the 2nd Temple Period, originally coined by Harvard orientalist Frank Morecross, who noted that the Jews used ancient Hebrew writing until the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135) when they were still used for coins.

50. Videotaped statement of 17.8.1998: "I would date it 2nd-3rd century by the letters. There are 3 or 4 letters, it looks like the first is a Hed, maybe it is Heh ... Nun, but I cannot say. I really do not see enough to know the date of it... Jewish cursive style is something which develops by the end of

the Second Temple period and was used until the Bar Kochba period. It is Jewish script, it is not Hebrew at all. It can even be 4th century. We cannot be so exact, because we only have a few dated inscriptions. It is not palaeo-Hebrew at all, it's Jewish script, probably 1st to 4th cent. CE, that's all I can tell you."

51. Namely an inscription dated 69-96 AD, IG (Inscriptiones Graecae) XII (1), 4 iii., reproduced by in: Avi Yonah, Abbreviations in Greek Inscriptions, Jerusalem/London 1940, Suppl. of the Quarterly of the Dept. of Antiquities of Palestine, Vol. 9, p.119

As an example for greek epigraphs of the 1st century with several parallels to the inscription of the titulus Crucis -especially the Eta is similar- she referred to a marble tablet from 70-90 AD, found on the roman cemetery of Bir el-Malik. IAA No. 3919: "Titus Mucius Clemens, son of Markus, prefect of Herodes Agrippa", published by Avi Yonah in IEJ (Israel Exploration Journal) 16, 1966, p. 28.

52. Videotaped statement of 16.8.1998: "About the Monogramm Omikron-Ypsilon, it is very common in the byzantine period from the 6th century or, the earliest, the late 5th century on. It is not used in the middle period, 2nd to early 5th century, at least not that I am aware of, but it does appear in the Roman period. So if you chose between several scenarios, either chose the "True cross" scenario with the 1st century title or you chose a byzantine imitation. About the curled letter I have not seen anything like that but we don't have a lot of experience with this medium (wood), so I cannot say ...About the Alpha, this Alpha is much more 1st century or 1-3rd century but not of the byzantine period... This shape of Alpha is not common in a later period. You find an Alpha with the broken or sloping middle stroke in all periods, but this Alpha appears only in the early to late Roman period, it doesn't appear any later... This (*the inscription of the titulus*) has not got the characteristics of what we call late byzantine, what means late 6th/7th century in our part of the world... It does not look like a byzantine inscription from our part of the world, and it does not look like a 4th century inscription from our part of the world. If any it might look like an early Roman inscription...It is very well possible that in order to write down something in so-called Greek somebody might have used Greek characters with a Latin expression, especially for something like NAZARENOUS which was not a common greek word, of course, but an ethnic for a small place in Galilee, so it is not impossible to have something like this in a true cross scenario. But of course it is also possible that someone tried to imitate it to give it an idea of Antiquity to something which is not... They stopped writing in Latin, they started to write official inscriptions in greek with the Era of the Tetrarchs, so it was Greek in use in the time of Constantine...

I have to admit that I do not believe in the legend of the true Cross, it is difficult for me to admit that it does not look like a fake of the 4th century, so I am embarrassed....I would think it is worthwhile to do further research on it."

53. letter of 12.2.1999

54. Carsten Peter Thiede, "The search for the True Cross", in: The Church of England Newspaper, London, 19. March 1999, p.18: "The style of handwriting on the piece of wood belongs, with decreasing likelihood, to the period between the 1st and early 4th centuries."

55. Schreiben vom 12.2.1999

56. Schreiben vom 6.9.1998

57. Antonio Frova, "L'Inscrizione di Ponzio Pilato a Cesarea", in: Rendiconti 95 (1961), S.419-34

58. Thiede 1999: ""...the peculiar character of the 'title' in Rome is striking. Whoever wrote this text was not a copier or forger..."

59. letter of 9.9.1998

60. see for more details: Michael Hesemann, Die Jesus-Tafel, Freiburg 1999, p. 100-108

61. Plautus, Mostellaria 55

62. Giulio Ricci, Kreuzweg nach dem Leichentuch von Turin, Rom 1980, p.13-15; Ricci, The Holy Shroud, Rom 1981, S.93-96

63. Balduino Bedini, Le Reliquie della Passione del Signore, Rom 1997, p. 37

64. Gerhard Kroll, Auf den Spuren Jesu, Leipzig 1988, p.360; Ricci 1981, p.177-182

65. Bedini 1997, p. 59

66. Maria Grazia Siliato, Und das Grabtuch ist doch echt, Augsburg 1998, p. 291-97

67. Emanuela Marinelli, Shadow Letters on the Shroud, in: Inside the Vatican (Dec. 1997), p. 56-58; Giovanni Rocchi: Il dato della grafia "picena" nelle scritte originarie della Santa Casa, della Sindone e del "Titolo" della Croce -autentico - di Cristo, in: Note di Paleografia, paleoepigrafia e Linguistica, Mousampietro Morico/I. 1998, p.149-163



Figure 1

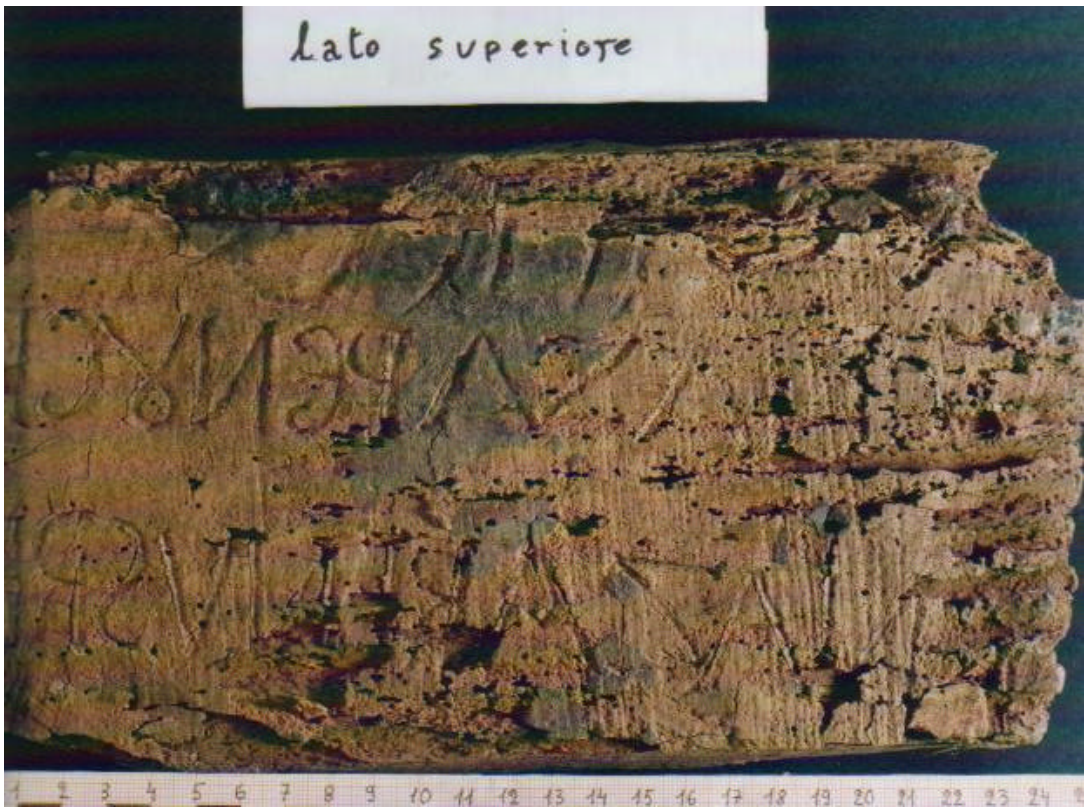


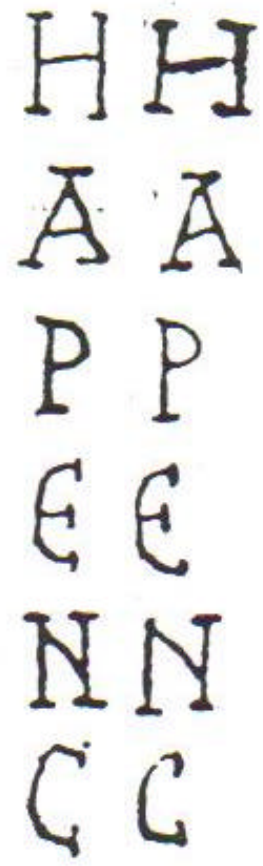
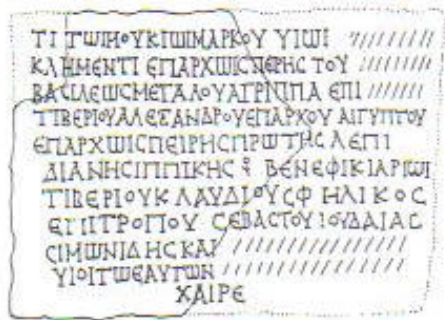
Figure 2

**TITULUS
CRUCIS**
Jerusalem
30 n.Chr. (?)



Le titre de la Croix

**Epitaph des
T. MUCIUS
CLEMENS**
Bir el Malik
70-90 n.Chr.



nach M. Avi-Yonah, The Epitaph of T. Mucius Clemens, in: IEJ 16, 1966, pl. 27

Figure 3

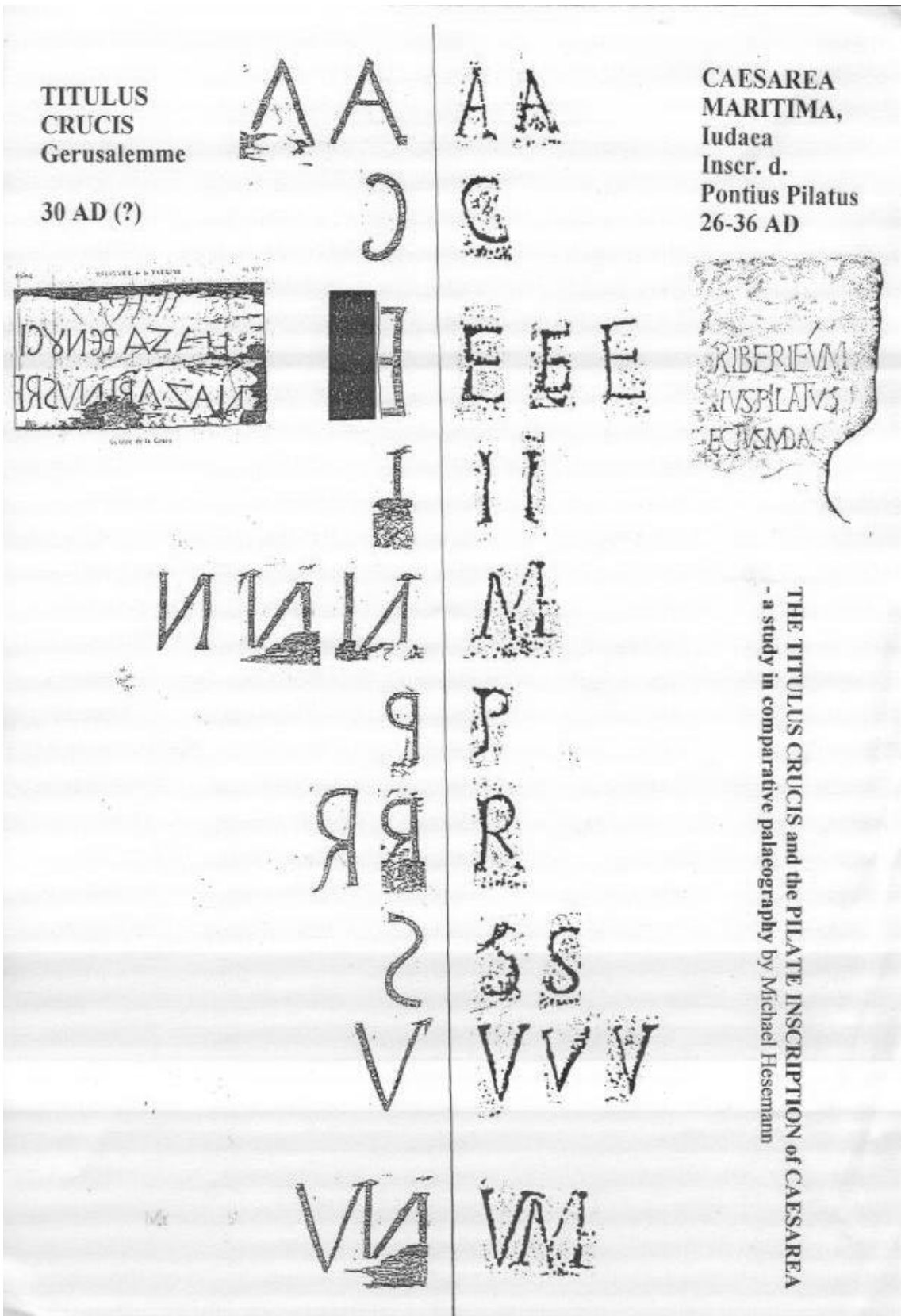


Figure 4