

## THE TWO- AND THREE-LOCK HAIRSTYLES IN EARLY PORTRAITS OF JESUS

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Several authors have speculated that the Shroud was the model for early artistic renderings of the face of Jesus. This idea, originated by Paul Vignon in 1938, proposes that unique and sometimes bizarre artistic features present in the early portraits of Jesus can be explained by the presence of corresponding features on the Shroud image. John Walsh expressed the idea clearly in *The Shroud*, (Random House, 1963) when he wrote: "If the Shroud was the progenitor of the traditional Christ [images], then something of the parent must have carried over into the offspring!"

A classic example of these artistic oddities is the topless square |\_| found on the Pontianus catacomb painting near Rome that dates to the VIII<sup>th</sup> century. This feature corresponds precisely to a |\_| shape found between the brows of the Shroud image.

This article proposes a Shroud-based explanation for the two-lock and three-lock hairstyles often found in portraits of Jesus as early as the VII<sup>th</sup> century.

The two-lock hairstyle is exemplified in the series of Justinian II coins minted between A.D. 692-695. The two locks on the forehead on those coins descend from the middle of the hairline to form a ^ (Fig. 1). An example of the three-lock hairstyle is the Head of Christ mosaic in the Church of Santa Sophia, which dates to the VII<sup>th</sup> century. These three locks descend to form a /\ shape (Fig. 2).

Several hypotheses have been offered to explain the two- and three-lock hairstyles. An article in the March 1988 *Shroud Spectrum International* entitled "Questions without Answers" speculated that the locks "seem to be nothing more than a stylistic affectation of the Greeks since it adorns the foreheads not only of many holy people ... but also ordinary people in the crowd". The recent ASSIST Newsletter, Volume 1, No. 2, referring to the two locks on the Justinian II Tremisses suggested "the so-called epsilon flow of blood on the forehead as the possible source of the forelocks". This particular hypothesis fails to explain the obvious dissimilarity between the blood flow and the locks in both shape and location. A more plausible and straightforward explanation for the two- and three-lock hairstyles can be found on the Shroud image.

The natural Shroud image shown in Figure 3 has been highlighted to reveal two markings in the middle of the forehead that



Fig. 1: Justinian II coin.

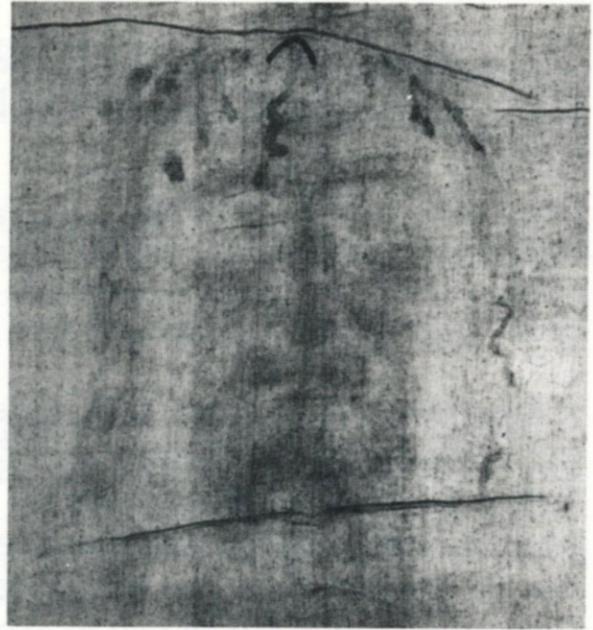


Fig. 3: Shroud image indicating the two-lock hairstyle.



Fig. 2: Head of Christ, mosaic, Church of Santa Sophia, Salonica.

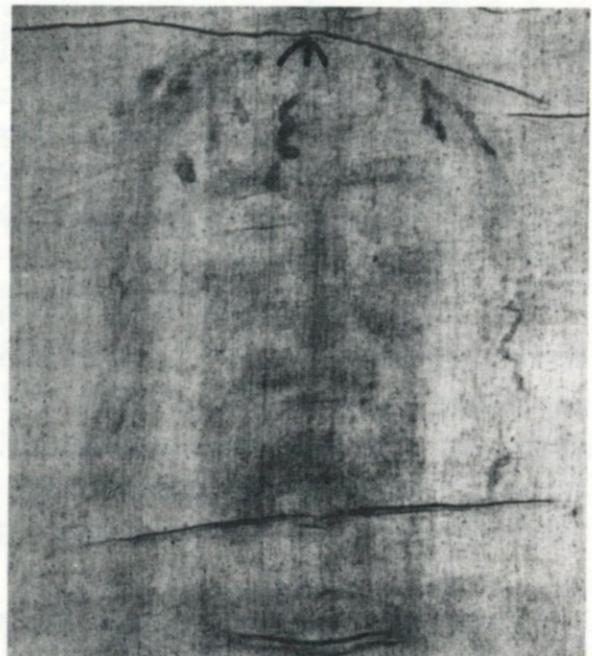


Fig. 4: Shroud image indicating the three-lock hairstyle.

correspond precisely with the two-lock hairstyle we see on the Justinian coin. The photograph of the Shroud face available from the Holy Shroud Guild is the only image this writer has found that clearly shows these markings. It is possible that reprints of the image in books or magazines may not show these markings clearly because detail can be lost in the reproduction process.

A further examination of the Shroud image reveals a weave or thread line that bisects the  $\wedge$  in a manner that suggests the basis for the three-lock hairstyle. Figure 4 has been highlighted to reveal this weave line and the two outer markings that combine to form the  $\wedge$  feature. This weave line extends downward on the forehead and appears to form the left side of the  $\lfloor$  seen on the Roman catacomb painting.

I propose that an artist who chose to incorporate the more natural appearing Shroud markings into a portrait would depict the two-lock hairstyle. An artist who was more rigorous in transposing all the Shroud markings, including the weave or thread line, would depict a three-lock hairstyle.

The  $\wedge$  and  $\swarrow$  features clearly present on the Shroud image appear to explain both the two- and three-lock hairstyles in early portraiture of Jesus. The presence of these distinctive features on both the Shroud and portraits of Jesus extending back to the VII<sup>th</sup> century strengthens the hypothesis that the Shroud was the model for these early portraits.

