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SHROUD OF TURIN: BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHY, ART HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

SUDÁRIO DE TURIM: ENTRE A FOTOGRAFIA, A HISTÓRIA DA ARTE E A ARQUEOLOGIA

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ABSTRACT – After being photographed by Secondo Pia in May 1898, the Shroud of Turin proved to be more than a mere medieval relic: it became a trustworthy source of archaeological imagery, providing a wealth of information about capital punishment widely used in the Roman world, but that there was not much scientific information available: crucifixion. Thus, following an interdisciplinary line, this article seeks to rescue, through the imagery question, not only the burial rites belonging to the ancient peoples but also anatomical aspects revealed by the possible mortuary sheet of Jesus, pointed out by the first scientists who decided to study it.

KEYWORDS – Shroud of Turin, burial, death, photography, archeology

RESUMO – Após ser fotografado por Secondo Pia em maio de 1898, o Sudário de Turim revelou ser mais que uma mera relíquia medieval: torna-se verdadeira fonte de conhecimento imagético-arqueológico, fornecendo diversas informações sobre uma pena capital muito empregada no mundo romano, mas de que não se dispunha de muitas informações científicas: a crucificação. Assim, seguindo uma linha interdisciplinar, este artigo buscará resgatar, por meio da questão imagética, não apenas os ritos de sepultamento pertencentes aos povos da Antiguidade, como também aspectos anatômicos revelados pelo possível lençol mortuário de Jesus, apontados pelos primeiros cientistas que resolveram estudá-lo mais a fundo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE – Sudário de Turim, sepultamento, morte, fotografia, arqueologia

Barbarism and photography

The barbarity we are witnessing, particularly in Palestine, Syria, and Iraq, draws our attention differently. How is it possible, in the 21st century, for gratuitous and media-driven violence to recur, in which children are lured by food but find explosives in the vehicle

that would be the salvation that would blow them up? In which a doctor who voluntarily seeks to alleviate the suffering of others is captured by a group and, in front of the cameras, beheaded in real-time? Or in which we see entire cities razed to the ground, women raped and enslaved, men executed en masse, children turned into mercenaries? What to say from great monuments that, *a priori*, belong to all of humanity, being destroyed simply for propaganda? What to say about a mighty army that enters a tiny strip of land and sweeps through towns and cities, annihilating women, children, and older adults, claiming that this is a just war, even though it is a war of one army?

As we delve into the history of the Middle East, we will see that such scenes have been recurring for thousands of years, mainly because the region has always been the scene of confluence and dispute between great powers that have made it a backyard for their interests.

If yesterday, some dominators razed everything they had before their eyes to destroy the previous identity and build one that suited them, today, what we see is that the pettiness of the forces of power also seeks to do the same. Still, they use their expedients to create a whole media spectacle through images disseminated on the network. Thus, such *spectacularization*, more than a mere accumulation of images, becomes an effective social relationship between people, now mediated by these same images, as Debord (2013) had said.

The perversity that can be seen in this type of social relationship inflicted by this excess of images is the fact that such images end up no longer affecting us by leaving us "insensitive to the scenes of brutality that are enclosed in the walls of history" (BRANDÃO, 2016, p. 211), making our conscience "indifferent to the misfortune of others" (BRANDÃO, 2016, p. 211); or, even worse, making us believe that such barbarities are the rule, not the exception.

This means the opportunity for such images to become paradigmatic and lead us "to reflection and compassion, due to their dimension, novelty, and impact" (BRANDÃO, 2016, p. 211), but "because they no longer affect us, they become indifferent, unstable and go unnoticed. Therefore, all the excitement the new tends to bring is stifled." (BRANDÃO, 2016, p. 211) It is no wonder that increasingly greater

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atrocities are necessary to achieve the objectives of those who make massive use of this *spectacularization*, such as the propagated Islamic State.

FIGURE 1

A Syrian man cries over a dead body after an alleged gas attack
Douma, Damascus, Syria, 2013 (Photo AP /Media Office of Douma)

However, as disturbing and macabre as images like Figure 1 may be, "they end up demonstrating *in hoc tempore* what could only be assumed from the past, that it **must have been like that**! And, because they were conveyed via photography, we are **aware** that they are reflections of reality" (BRANDÃO, 2016, p. 212); they are facts. Even if we continually deny them, "we cannot discard their symbolic power over all of us: we have been persuaded, since childhood, to believe that photographs are made in our **image** and **likeness**" (BRANDÃO, 2016, p. 212), after all, they represent "the image of our time, and many still see it as the **most mimetic** of human representations." (BRANDÃO, 2016, p. 212)

When we look at a photograph like the one in Figure 1, we know that in a given town, village, or city, several people were killed, many of them innocent young people who lived their lives during the war. When we read the caption, the information we had already received from the image is

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expanded: we know that the region was attacked with chemical weapons, hence the apparent cleanliness of the bodies, which show no signs of injury or blood.

However, we are left with the answer of history, which will one day tell us where such an attack came from; the rest will always be speculation from one side. Thus, the image alone cannot provide us with all the information we need; on the contrary, it only gives us some answers.

One thing that stands out in this photograph is how the bodies were prepared for probable burial. All of them are wrapped in a white shroud, with their feet, legs, and torsos tied, exposing only their faces. Such funeral procedures were often unknown in the Christian West[1] – where wooden coffins are used for most burials – but they became a fact due to the massive media coverage of the series of conflicts affecting the Middle East.

Therefore, while photographs are used to exhaustion for spectacle and propaganda, they also help us understand others, their way of acting and thinking, and their culture and customs. In addition, they reveal to us, with astonishment, how humanity has reached its *bestialization*, its use of barbarity and violence in the name of a unidirectionally imposed *status quo*.

Not surprisingly, and precisely due to the photographic process, linen fabric stored in the city of Turin also revealed refinements of cruelty and perversity unknown, even to those who set out to study the New Testament, which, by the way, tells us very little about the crucifixion.

The Shroud, like a photograph of its time, broadens our knowledge of that criminal process that began more than two thousand years ago but which we have become accustomed to, and even to seeing passively and automatically, as a **natural occurrence**. This fact is probably due to the gap created by the lack of archaeological remains, explanatory literature, or imagery that could shed light on such capital punishment.

Nevertheless, the exception until then had been the archaeological discovery made in Jerusalem in 1968 of an ossuary containing the remains of Johanan ben Ha-galgol, who had been crucified around the 3rd century AD. However, in 2017, a team of archaeologists from the

[1]I say Christian because both Jews and Muslims are still often buried this way.

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University of Cambridge discovered, on the site of an old milk bottling factory in the village of Fenstanton, England, five small Roman cemeteries from the 4th century AD containing the remains of 40 adults and five children. In one of them, there was a male skeleton, where a 5 cm iron nail was found embedded horizontally in his right heel bone (*calcaneus*), suggesting that the man may have been crucified (Fig. 2).

Another point we should pay attention to about the Fenstanton skeleton is the position of the arms, similar to that observed in the Man of the Shroud. In this case, the rigidity that the corpse presented in the region of the deltoid muscles is apparent, as they were greatly expanded due to the tremendous effort that the tortured man must have made during the crucifixion. Thus, the arms must have remained in the same position when they were removed from the cross and arrived at the tomb. In this way, it is possible that a certain amount of force was used to close them and place them in front of the pubis, as observed.

From that information, it would have been possible to understand how bestial and barbaric the crucifixion was, in which punishment, torture, humiliation, and propaganda were mixed, all within the law.

Death: something beyond the grave?

As strange as the images of bodies wrapped in shrouds, as seen in Figure 1, may seem to some, it is possible that this was the same procedure used in the burial of Jesus more than two thousand years ago. That is, if we consider the burial shroud, known as the Shroud of Turin, feasible.

As funeral rites are closely linked to the time, culture, and social position of the deceased and the religious beliefs of the society in which they were inserted, there were different ways to perform them: embalming, cremation, and burial. Whether or not the corpse could be exposed for final tributes, the time of exposure (one, seven, or ten days), and the arrangement of the arms, hands, feet, and head.

The custom of burying bodies arose from human non-acceptance of their end, as well as from their hope for a *post-mortem* life. An example of this concern with the afterlife can be found in ancient Egypt, where the belief in immortality resulted from the belief that man was made up of several elements: *Ba*, *Ka*, *Khu*, and *Kat*.

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FIGURE 2

Skeleton 4926, the crucified man, was found in one of the Roman cemeteries unearthed in the village of Fenstanton, England, 2017 (Photo by Albion Archaeology)

Once death was confirmed, the mummification process began with the evisceration of all internal organs – except the heart – always with the participation of a priest wearing an Anubis mask. The brain, whose function was unknown, was liquefied through the nostrils and discarded. The body was washed and immersed in natron for forty days to dehydrate. After this period, the body was bandaged with linen strips. It is worth remembering that members of royalty had their hands crossed on their chests (Fig. 3), while other people had their arms close to their bodies; in addition, it is worth remembering that not everyone could afford the costs of this expensive and time-consuming process. Once the bandaging process was completed and amulets were inserted inside, the mummified body was placed in one

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or more sarcophagi; the removed organs were placed in canopic jars[2].

FIGURE 3

Egyptian mummy, circa 300 BC/150 AD, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, 2016 (Photo by Jack Brandão)

One fact that draws attention in Egyptian funerals is the excessive concern with the image of the deceased, whose physical body, *Kat*, indicated the decay to which all beings were exposed, but which was, in a certain way, inhabited by his *Ka*. This was the vital force that accompanied all men from birth, even after death, hence the need for offerings, food, and goods so that he could use it in his visit to the tomb. (Fig. 4) He could even go to heaven to talk to the gods but always returned to visit his *Kat*. To do so, he needed to recognize him. This is why those people were concerned with always keeping his image in the tomb (the house of *Ka*), even through a mask or a stone statue. If the mummy deteriorated, his *Ka* could enter one of the images displayed there.

Another significant image for ancient Egypt was the representation of the deceased's name, his *Ren*, without which he could not be presented to the gods

[2]Each of the vases had the representation of one of the sons of Horus and symbolized each of the cardinal points: Hapi (lungs), the north; Kebehsenuef (intestines), the west; Duamutef (stomach), the east; and Imseti (liver), the south.

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on his journey to the afterlife. Without a name, the being became inferior to things and wandered aimlessly and without rest.

There were burials and cremations for the Greeks, but there was a whole ritual preparation before that. Thus, when death was confirmed, the eyes and mouth were closed by the closest relative, and the oldest woman in the family prepared the body, washing it and anointing it with oil. After that, they dressed it, placed it in a *kliné*, with its feet facing the door, adorned it with flowers and jewels, and covered it with a white **shroud**.

From there, there was its solemn exposition, the *prothesis* (*πρόθεσις*), as can be seen in several terracotta pinnaces from the classical period, such as the one in Figure 5. In it, we see the dead man in the *kliné*, a type of high bed, with some women of the family and mourners (they beat their heads and show despair) next to him, while the men are represented with their arms raised. After this exposition, which lasted a maximum of one day, the *ekphorá* (*ἐκφορά)* began the funeral procession, either to a necropolis or to the pyre.

The Romans inherited many customs from the Greeks and added others. When a relative died, the family became *funestae* and could not offer any sacrifices to the gods. The closest family member would approach the deceased and give him a last kiss, closing his eyes; the other relatives would call out the name of the deceased several times throughout the day (*conclamatio*). The body was then removed from the bed and placed on the ground (*deponere*), where it was washed with hot water, anointed, and perfumed. After the bath, it was dressed, and the *obulum* was placed in its mouth. From that moment on, it was ready for exposure in the *lectus funebris* (Fig. 6), with the feet facing the door and the arms at the sides of the body.

Like the Egyptians, Roman patrician families were somewhat concerned with the representation and memory of their dead, so they made their death masks, the *imagines*, while still in their *lectus funebris*. These were also carried during the funeral procession (*pompa*) when family, friends, and enslaved people walked to the burial site outside the city walls.

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FIGURE 4

Linen sheets taken from inside the tomb of Ramose and Hatnofer, 18th dynasty, circa 1479/1458 BC, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2016 (photo by Jack Brandão)

If there were a burial, *humatio* would be performed – when three portions of the earth were thrown over the dead person. As for cremation, the dead person was placed on the pyre, his eyes were opened, and his name pronounced for the last time; and, when it was lit, the mourners turned their faces away. After the total incineration, the flames were extinguished with wine, and the mortal remains (*ossilegium*) were collected. Then, the *os resectum* was performed, when a finger of the dead person, which had been removed before being cremated, was inserted into the cinerary urn, and this was deposited in a *columbarium*.

There was a crucial difference between Jewish funeral honors and those of the Greeks and Romans: cremation was strictly forbidden. According to the Jews, after someone's last breath and their death was confirmed, their eyes were closed, and their body was washed (*taharah*) and anointed with oil. After this, the feet and hands were wrapped in linen cloths, and the mouth was closed by the closest family member, with a cloth that wrapped around the chin towards the head; then, the body

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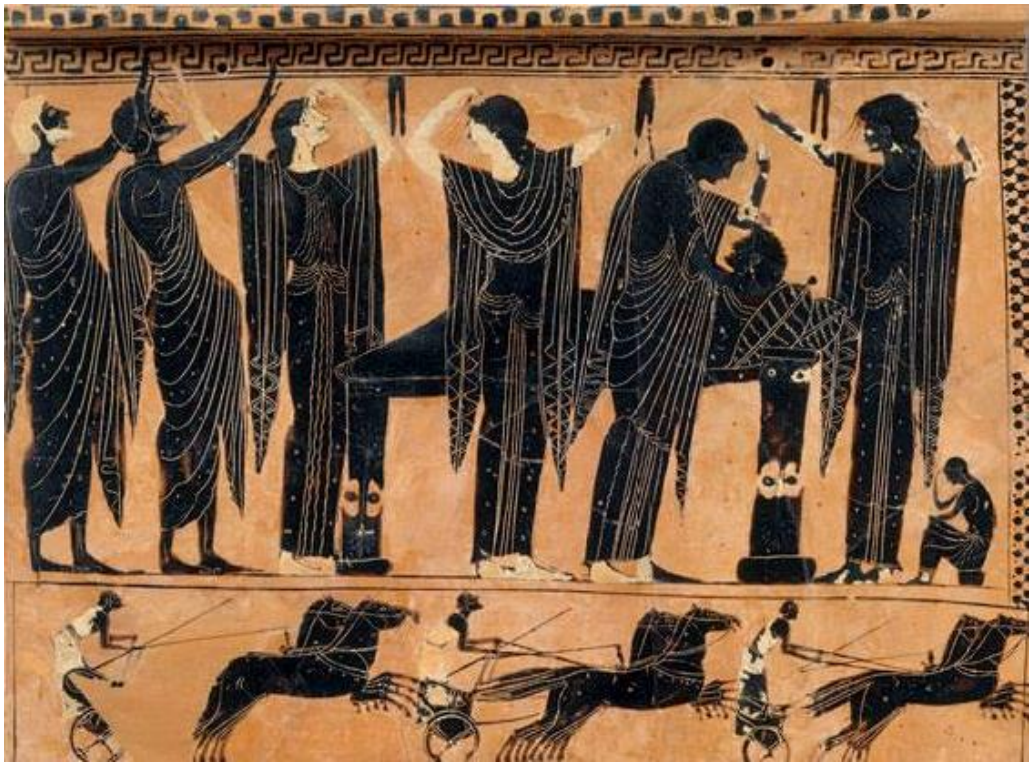
was dressed and wrapped in a linen shroud (*tach'richim*). Spices, myrrh, and aloe were sprinkled to perfume the body, which would be buried within hours or the same day.

In the first century of the Christian era, there were two procedures for Jewish burial: in the first year, the body was buried in the ground in shallow graves; after a year, the bones were removed and placed in ossuaries, kept inside the same tomb. This was dug out of the rock by the wealthiest families (Fig. 7), becoming a proper family obligation, so it was not customary to share it with strangers.

Despite the Jews' prohibition of images due to the Mosaic Law, many stylized ones were found in the ossuaries. Something similar cannot be said of the *logotic* image, that is, the name of the deceased, which was often inserted on the outside of them.

FIGURE 5



Pinax depicting the *prosthesis*, circa 520-510 BC,
Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

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Photography and the resignification of the Shroud as an object of research

When the Italian photographer Secondo Pia obtained permission to photograph the Shroud of Turin in May 1898, he could not have imagined what awaited him when his plates were developed: that yellowish figure resembled the contours of a body, faded and veiled for centuries, not only was it revealed in that photographic negative, but it also transformed that object – from a mere religious relic – into one of the most studied in the 20th century.

This is especially significant in a period such as the scientific 19th century, when the mere mention of any religious content would be enough, in academic circles, to rule it out as an object of study. After Pia's photograph, however, this prejudice became an obsession, either to discredit it or to prove its authenticity.

The question was how a technique such as photography could have been used on an object that was supposedly fake and probably of medieval origin – it only appears in the historical records of the West around 1350, in Lirey, France – if even its chemical process had existed for less than a century. This was without considering its positive-negative method, which was only a few decades old.

Faced with this imbroglio, there was no alternative but to seek to understand the reason for that alleged use and how it was possible. Thus, if, on the one hand, there was a certain credulity regarding the appearance of that image (painting or contact with bodily fluids), rational explanations without any links to transcendental questions were always sought; on the other hand, they sought to reject any attempt to credit the piece with veracity, even within the Church, such as the French priest Ulysse Chevalier.

In 1899, he sought to demonstrate its falsehood through various texts, culminating in his work ***Étude critique sur the origin du Saint Suaire de Lirey-Chambéry-Turin***, from 1900. In this work, however, he only used medieval documentary surveys that dealt with the subject, completely ignoring possible scientific questions, as if it were possible to do so in the 20th century.

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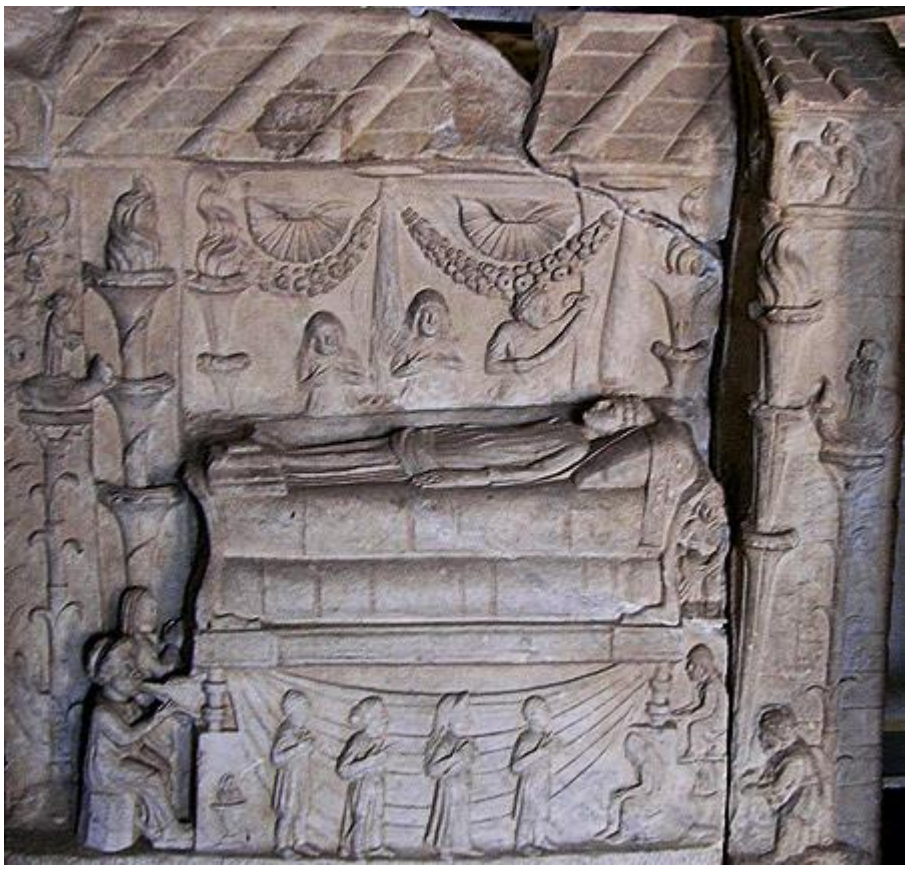
FIGURE 6



Mourning relief from the Tomb of the Haterii on the Via Labicana, Rome, 2nd century, Profane Gregorian Museum

In the same year that Chevalier published his work, a copy of the photograph of the Shroud came into the hands of an agnostic scientist at the Sorbonne, Yves Delage, who was to examine it. Impressed by its anatomical perfection, he presented it to his disciple, Paul Vignon, with whom he conducted a series of analyses. The results of his studies were presented at the *Académie des Sciences* in 1902 when he stated that the figure was not the result of a mere painting but rather created through some physical-chemical process, so it was very likely that the artifact, was the shroud of Jesus.

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FIGURE 7

Tomb of the "family of Herod", Jerusalem, 1st century AD
(photo by Zev Radovan)

Numerous criticisms were raised in academic circles regarding his statements, whose ideas would have been relegated to total ostracism had it not been for the efforts of Vignon and his publication, ***Le Linceul of Christ***, still in 1902. Despite their poor quality, Delage's disciple presented his research results in work based on Secondo Pia's photographs, which was the only reference available at that time.

This fact, however, changed when a professional photographer, Giuseppe Enrie, was invited to photograph the relic at the solemn exhibition of the Shroud in 1931. This is because if there were doubts about the authenticity of Secondo Pia's photos, they were finally discarded. For this to be possible, several **precautions** were taken: in addition to the official photographer, five others would assist him and guarantee – before a notary – that there was "no sign of retouching" (SOLÉ, 1993, p. 115) on the plates, as well as on their copies.

Thus, given the irrefutability attributed to the photographic originals, the Turin Shroud effectively became an object that

must be studied to uncover why that unusual image formation and the body's particularities. New studies were carried out – always through photographs – especially anatomical ones, with which it was verified whether or not the artifact was an authentic human representation in the mold of the photograph itself (*acheiropoeiéton* – not made by human hands) or whether it was nothing more than an ingenious painting.

These particularities attracted the attention of several doctors and specialists, including the French surgeon Pierre Barbet, who began studying the anatomical aspect of the body represented on the Shroud in the 1930s. More than that, he demonstrated great investigative perception, undertaking a major interdisciplinary research project, expanding his scope beyond the medical question, and delving into the archaeological, historical, and artistic fields to clarify the details of the torture of crucifixion used for centuries by the Romans. With this material in hand, he compared them with the information obtained from the Shroud, publishing, over the next two decades, several results of his research that would culminate in the work **The Passion of Christ According to the Surgeon**, from 1949, in whose preface he states that his original intention "was to verify the anatomical veracity of the impressions on the Holy Shroud." (BARBET, 1976, p. 9)

Shroud of Turin: an archaeology of the crucifixion

The anatomical analysis carried out by Barbet, together with his experiments with cadavers, revealed unknown particularities of the methodology used by the Romans in their executions, especially that of crucifixion, ignored by historians and artists for centuries.

It is striking that after Constantine and Licinius ratified the Edict of Milan (313 AD), which consequently abolished crucifixion as a capital punishment, it took just over a century for the practices involving such torture to disappear simply. This was reinforced to a certain extent by two factors: first, despite it no longer being used as a capital punishment, the aura of infamy surrounding crucifixion remained negatively, for some time, in the imagination of the Roman Empire since the punishment was generally associated with the rabble of society, who were despised by the upper class. Thus, given the contempt that such an image

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afflicted the community in which they were inserted, Christians needed to nullify it and insert, in its place, the cross as a symbolic object of redemption. Second, there was no iconographic model of crucifixion precisely because of this horrendous vision that the torture evoked. Thus, since Paleo-Christian art did not have a pagan model to serve as a standard, the idea of the cross and the crucifixion was relegated to a later moment.

It is worth noting, however, that although the act did not belong to the artistic canon, it was employed in popular circles through graffiti or tagging to insult, protest, or declare something veiledly. Examples of this are in Rome and Pompeii and their ancient buildings. There is one, however, that catches our attention: the graffiti of Alexamenos from the 3rd century (?). In it, we see the stylization of a crucified person, whose head is that of a donkey, and who has at his side a person raising one of his hands, in a sign of adoration, probably Alexamenos, since next to him we can read: *ΑΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟς CЄΒΕΤΕ ΘΕΟΝ*, something like "Alexamenos worships his God." (Fig. 8)

Thus, due to the lack of paradigms, the early Christian artist, when he wanted to portray the crucified Jesus, established his model that would, in a certain way, be used by others. This can be exemplified by looking at an ivory reliquary from the 5th century, found in the British Museum (Fig. 9), or the representation of the crucifixion of Jesus on the door of the Basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome. In this one, by the way, there is not even the presence of the cross (since it is possible to see only the tip of the *patibulum* advancing under the hands of the three), but its stylization, based on the arms of Christ and the thieves at his side.

Even though the two representations are quite different in terms of their plastic construction – since, as we said, it is necessary to construct a paradigm – what unites them, for example, is the use of the *subligaculum* (a type of underwear). This is because even the faces they present are not similar: in one, we see a beardless young man (or with an almost imperceptible beard), as in the first Roman representations of Jesus; in the other, we have a more mature man with a long beard.

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FIGURE 8

Decal of graffiti made on a wall in the Palatine, Rome, probably 3rd century

In Figure 9, it is possible to recognize the naked figure of Jesus due to the words of the title above the cross: REX IUD – "King of the Jews," as well as the presence of the halo around his head. His hands are nailed on the palms, and it seems his feet are suspended, in a completely abnormal position, as if floating. It should not be forgotten that the artist, at this point, is not seeking to portray either the death or the suffering of Jesus but the path he had to take to reconnect heaven and earth and to demonstrate his glory; it is no coincidence that such constructions show him with his eyes open.

This representation model would permeate the iconography of the crucifixion of Christ for centuries despite the particularities that would occur in both the East and the West. However, from an anatomical point of view, as Dr. Pierre Barbet points out after he analyzes the Shroud of Turin, this configuration proved completely wrong despite its approximation to the actual event. This **inconsistency** can be exemplified by the use, by artists (with scarce

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exceptions, especially in the 17th century), of nails in the palms of the hands, not in the wrists.

When we read the image of the man printed on the Shroud of Turin, we see a significant blood mark on the wrist (*carpus*), not on the palm (*metacarpus*), as seen in Figures 9 and 10. Although evident to many today, this fact was not so for artists of the past who were attached to tradition and were unfamiliar with the execution process mentioned above since the nails could never have been applied there, not because of the difficulty of piercing the skin, the palmar aponeurosis, the muscles or the tendons (Fig. 12), or even because of excessive bleeding (which would be possible if the upper palmar arch had been pierced), but because, once the body was suspended, the pressure of its weight would fall precisely on the nails, and these, having nowhere to rest, would rupture the superficial and deep transverse metacarpal ligaments, causing the tortured person to fall from the cross, if he had not been tied up.

FIGURE 9

Crucifixion of Christ and the hanging of Judas,
panel of ivory reliquary circa 420/430 AD, British Museum, London

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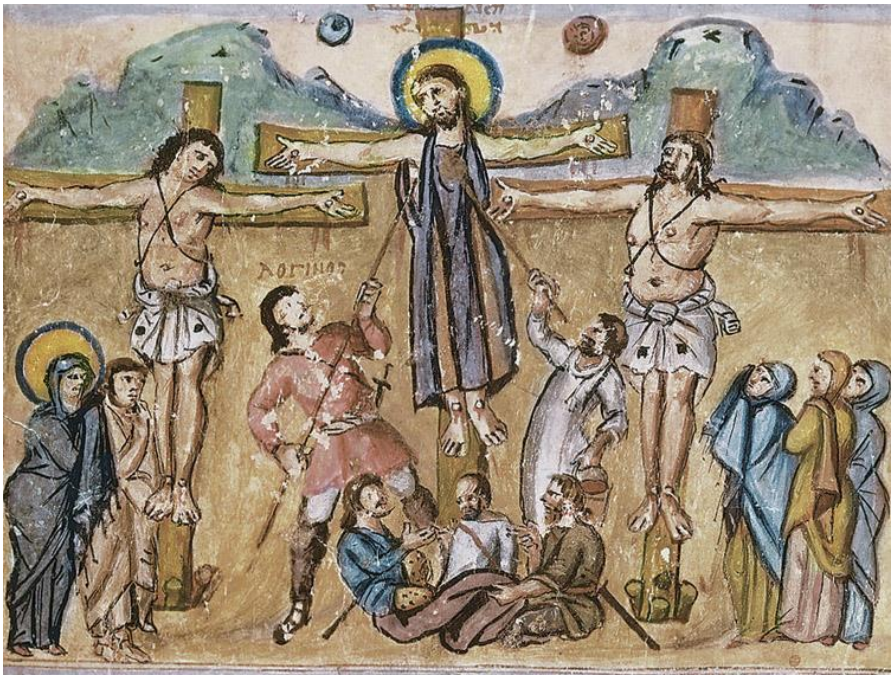
FIGURE 10



Crucifixion of Christ, illumination from the Rabbula Gospels
circa 586 AD, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Florence

Another fact that still draws attention in the Shroud, ignored by artists in representations of the crucifixion due to ignorance and tradition, is the absence of the thumb. Barbet (1976), when using cadavers in his experiments, noticed that, when inserting a nail into the carpus, the nail pierced it directly "without resistance and without noise" (BARBET, 1976, p. 131). However, it "inclined a little" (BARBET, 1976, p. 131), causing the thumb to contract abruptly. When taking an X-ray of the hand, the surgeon thought that he had broken some bones, but they were all intact; in addition, the fact that the nail entered at an angle could be seen in the X-ray because "the shadow of the square nail appears rectangular because of its obliqueness. The nail entered Destot's space[3]; it moved away, without breaking a single one, the

[3] It is worth checking out a recent study on the subject, in which researchers question certain points of Barbet's research and, by using cadaver arms, introduced the nail not into Destot's space, but into the radiocarpal space: BEVILACQUA, M. *et alii*: "How was the Turin Shroud man crucified?", in **Injury**: International Journal of the Care of the Injured, 45S, 2014, p. 142-148.

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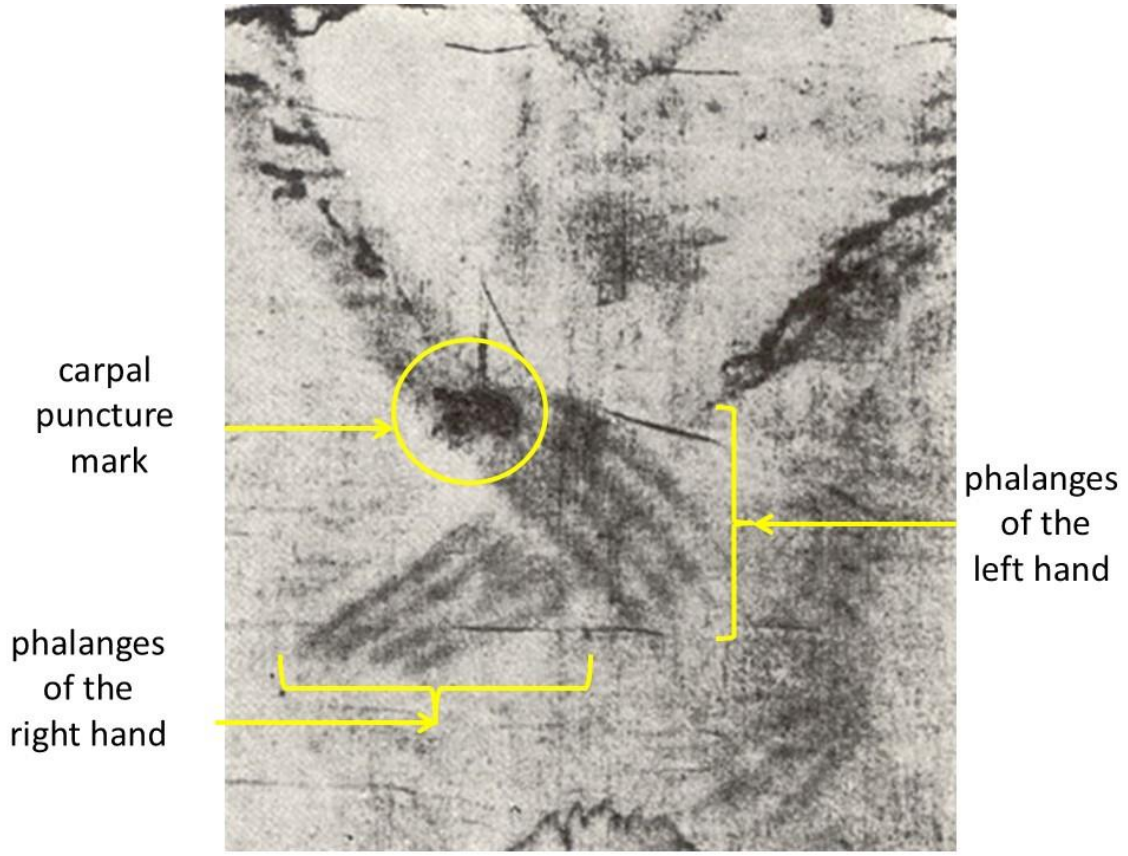
four bones that limit it [...]". (BARBET, 1976, p. 132)

FIGURE 11



On the Shroud, the puncture mark on the hands is on the carpus, not the palm, as represented by most works of art

Barbet's interdisciplinary steps show that the surgeon carried out a long series of research to understand the crucifixion process from an archaeological and historical point of view, always seeking to relate it to the Shroud of Turin. One of the points raised and not even used in art concerns the cross.

The French surgeon showed that a man in the condition Jesus found himself in moments before being tortured – *hematidrosis*, the sadism suffered by the Roman soldiers, the significant bleeding caused by the scourging and the crowning with thorns – could never have carried a cross the size that artists represent. The researcher

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explains that the instrument of torture was divided into two parts: the *patibulum* – the upper beam, a movable part that the tortured person was forced to carry – and the *stipes* – an immobile part that remained fixed in place.

Furthermore, there are still numerous gaps that neither the Gospels nor, consequently, art could answer regarding the process of Jesus' execution and death, but which were elucidated through studies of the Shroud, such as the flagellation and the crowning with thorns. The latter for having been unique; the former is because many believe only the Master of Nazareth has suffered.

In the case of the scourging, the Gospels do not give any information or details about it, limiting themselves to merely citing the act: Matthew (Mt 27:26) and Mark (Mk 15:15), for example, only say that Pilate "had him flogged" (*φραγελλόω,* transliteration of the Latin *flagellare*); Luke, in turn, only highlights that Pilate, when trying to release the Galilean Master, since he did not consider him worthy of capital punishment, said on two occasions, trying to appease the fury of the Jews: "I will punish him (*παίδευσις*) and then I will release him[4]" (Lk 23:16 and 22). The evangelist, however, uses the verb *παίδευω,* which refers to the correction that should be given to children, when punishment and chastisement are also used. John, following Matthew and Luke, says: "Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged"; however, unlike the others, he uses another verb *μαστῑγόω* (whip).

Thus, due to the little importance given by the evangelists, we are compelled to conjecture that the flagellation:

a) either must have been commonplace at that time, hence their lack of concern with the details: everyone already knew about it;

b) or the act took place in a restricted manner, limited only to its Roman executioners, probably in the basements of the Antonia Fortress, far from the observation of the people.

It should be noted, however, that flagellation, more than a punishment or torture, was a preliminary act that everyone condemned to death in Rome would have to undergo, although it was not restricted to the criminal sphere, as it also covered the domestic, military, and public

[4]In the Vulgate: *lojatum ergo illum dimittam* ("Therefore I will let him be corrected").

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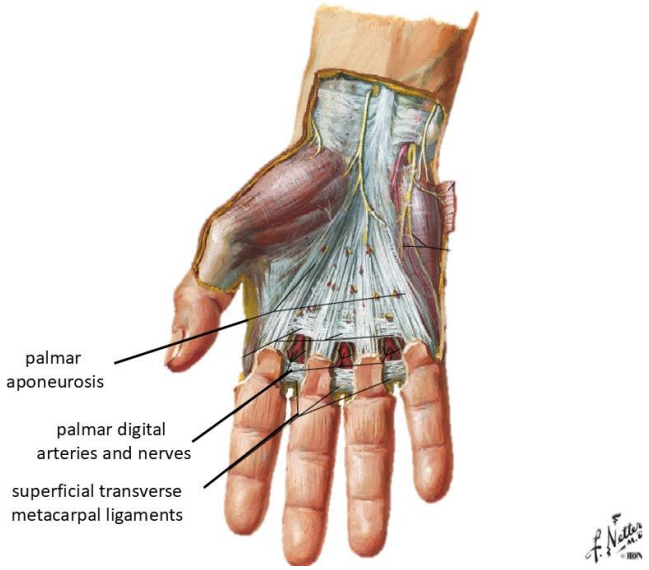
domains. The marks seen on the Shroud and referring to this act led many Sindonologists to seek clarification in archaeology throughout the 20th century so that it could respond to their concerns. Research was carried out in search of the remains of the flagrum Roman and its appearance, as well as how it would have inflicted those marks present on the Shroud. Such a search, however, was in vain since none of the results were, as we will see, conclusive.

FIGURE 12



Superficial dissection of the palm (NETTER, 2008, plate 459)

Around 1902, Paul Vignon sought to elucidate the existence of these particular marks, looking for answers in ancient literature and archaeology. It is no wonder that he consulted several works that dealt with the subject, such as the **Dictionary of Roman and Greek Antiquities** by Anthony Rich. However, the closest one he found was a *flagrum* "made not of thongs, but of chains only being fastened to the handle of the scourge, which leads us to think that the buttons are very, especially large and heavy […]. We have in mind must have been lighter […]." (VIGNON, 2002, p. 39) Faced with this impasse, he **created** a model, within

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plausibility, that could correspond to what he was looking for but had not found. In this way, the way was opened for new research to be carried out to understand capital punishment, like the crucifixion, leaving us with very little concrete data.

Faccini (2008) and Nicolotti (2017) realized more than a century later that the *flagrum* known by common sense – with three strips, probably made of leather, with dumbbell-shaped spheres at their ends – had, in reality, been created by the French sinologist in his search for an instrument of torture that corresponded to what he saw on the Shroud.

It is interesting to note that, despite Nicolotti's (2017) accurate criticism of the use of *flagrum* by Vignon, the Italian researcher, in his eagerness to discredit the French researcher of the early 20th century, calls his creation (the alleged *flagrum*) of "pure fantasy" (NICOLOTTI, 2017, p. 49), since it had not been "has been neither forgotten nor rediscovered: it is simply that, so far, no one has ever seen it." (NICOLOTTI, 2017, p. 49)

It could not have been different since it is Nicolotti (2017) himself states in his article:

> it is extremely difficult to find and identify actual scourges in a good state of preservation because some of the materials used to make them were perishable (the strings and usually the handle as well if made of wood), and they lack a canonized identifying type, as well as, in most cases, aesthetic refinement: an object destined for slavish and bloody purposes was not worthy of precious or complex craftsmanship. Archaeologists can only make a positive identification when the context of discovery is very explicit […]. (NICOLOTTI, 2017, p. 39)

Although no traces have been found to prove the existence of the *flagrum*, which could have caused wounds similar to those seen on the Shroud, the mere existence of Etruscan and Roman bronze pendants of various shapes – which even resemble the supposed *dumbbells* used by Vignon –, presented by Nicolotti himself (fig. 13), could be evidence that the path taken by Vignon was not so absurd. Such objects, by the way very similar to those propagated by the Italian researcher, not only existed but could also have been affixed to the *flagra* used in some regions of the empire, either as an experiment or mere sarcasm, even more so in a province as problematic as Roman Judea was in the first century of the Christian era.

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FIGURE 13

Various bronzes from Etruscan and Italic excavations (NICOLOTTI, 2017, p. 31)

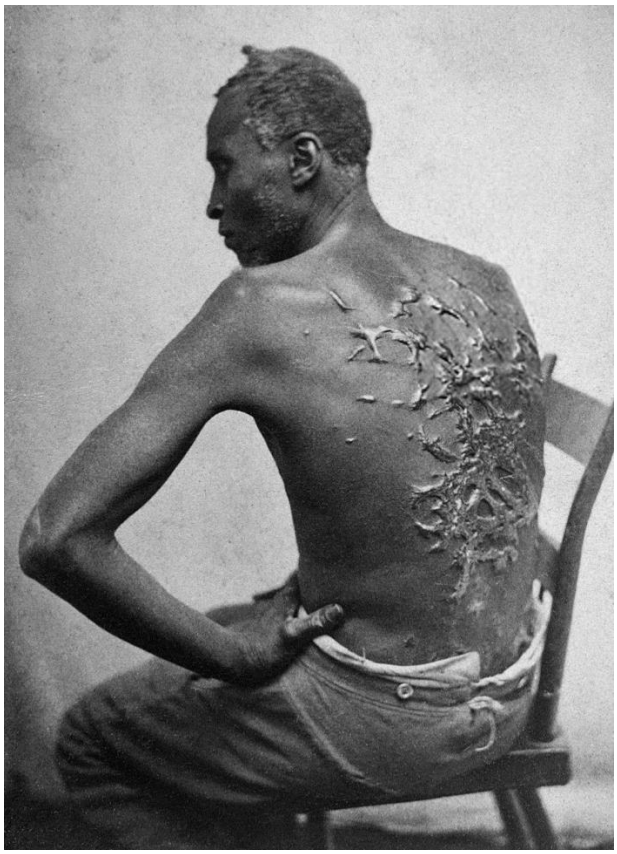
Therefore, due to the lack of information regarding the flagellation in the Gospels and the absence of models that served as a basis for artists, they were forced to create their patterns. This was improved and modified over the years, hence the lack of regularity that can be seen not only in Jesus' position but also in the wounds, the people present, the instruments that inflicted the punishment, or where it occurred.

Despite this fact, Nicolotti (2017) states that the marks present on the Shroud – seen by the Italian researcher as a painting of Humanism – have their origin in the same flagellation instruments displayed in medieval paintings, regardless of whether these are also mere image constructions that have no pretensions to what we call reality.

One can, therefore, ask whether this statement comes simply because it was not possible to find a *flagrum* that corresponded to the marks fixed on the fabric, or why the instrument that became known was nothing more than a construction by Vignon, or even why the Italian researcher does not admit the possible authenticity of the Shroud? Would he act differently if there were

archaeological proof of such a *flagrum*? Probably not. In this way, this archaeological gap is more than enough for the Italian researcher to reject any possibility of the Shroud's authenticity: "Everything is fully compatible with the timeframe in which the **Shroud was created**, the first half of the 14th century." (NICOLOTTI, 2017, p. 58, emphasis added)

FIGURE 12



Scars of Peter, a whipped slave, in Louisiana, USA, 1863
(photo by Matthew Brady)

To support his thesis, Nicolotti uses medieval images that address this theme. However, he did not want to see the obvious fact that this imagery does not belong only to the 14th century but was constructed over four centuries. Not to mention the fact that none of

the works presented has a reproduction, even remotely close, of the regularity of the possible marks of flagellation present on the Shroud, such as its inclination, symmetry, and apparent differences on the different sides of the body of the possible tortured person depicted there, demonstrating that he could have been tortured by different people and of different heights.

If such a finding were possible, that is, if the same pattern of marks were found in both the works of art and those on the Shroud, would this be conclusive proof that the Shroud was a creation of the period? Not necessarily, but there would be a strong possibility. However, what we see in the examples used by Nicolotti is, on the contrary, a jumble of disconnected and irregular marks and smudges that do not even manage to indicate the wounds produced by the very instruments depicted by the characters in the scene, except for the color red used to indicate blood.

Once again, it must be repeated: these artists were not concerned with reproducing factual truth but with translating concepts from the religious field into imagery, leading their readers to a greater understanding of theological and faith-related issues. Thus, if an artist of the period had created the Shroud, he would also have reflected such concepts inherent to that moment since he would have followed the paradigmatic pattern established in the period.

Another point that deserves our attention is the fact that Nicolotti (2017) cites a conference by Faccini (2008) in which she seeks to demonstrate that there are marks on the Shroud that go beyond those of the *flagrum* de Vignon, produced by other instruments, such as switches, like the Roman fasces, as seen in several images presented here (Figs. 15, 18, 21, 22 and 23).

Nicolotti, in turn, will use that deduction by Faccini to corroborate his thesis that the Shroud was nothing more than a medieval creation[5] since there are representations of instruments similar to those she claims to have found on the Shroud in artistic works of the period. He, taking advantage of this fact, which had not been raised in this way in syndonological studies until then, mixes it with his conclusions about

[5]Its origins are believed to date back to the 12th and 14th centuries, according to the now discredited carbon 14 test carried out in 1988.

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the lack of conclusive evidence of a *flagrum* along the lines of that presented by Vignon to discredit the Turin Shroud.

However, in his eagerness to prove his thesis, he reserves few lines to analyze the artistic fact. He forgot or was unaware that artists in that period sought paradigms in their image construction process and, in their absence, constructed one that others would follow over the years based on their own personal and collective experiences.

In the same way as the imagery of the crucifixion, that of the flagellation was in the dark; that is, there were no elements to mirror other than the reality in which the artist was inserted. So, he imitated how these punishments were carried out in public, as he saw it, and as he wanted the other to see, but it with a striking difference: the one who would be portrayed there would not be a criminal, but the Son of God, that way the scene could not be exactly as it occurred in public squares. Hence, the particularities present in this representation would never coincide, *ipso facto*, with actual events.

It is worth noting that from the *corpus* of images that we have gathered about the theme in the period between the 9th and 19th centuries, only two elements remained the same throughout this process: the figure of **Jesus** and the **column**; the others, in turn, proved to be interchangeable elements. Even the figure of Jesus is found in two distinct positions: one compatible with the process of flagellation, in which he is facing the column, but with his back to the reader (P1), as can be seen in a Carolingian psalter from the 9th century (fig. 17); the other, the most used throughout the centuries and utterly incompatible with this process, with his back to the column, but facing the reader (P2).

Using the same irony employed by Nicolotti (2017), it is not necessary to go back centuries in search of images of people who were whipped to demonstrate how artificial and illogical the position of flagellation would be in most medieval images that deal with this theme, especially the position in which Jesus is seen from the front (P2).

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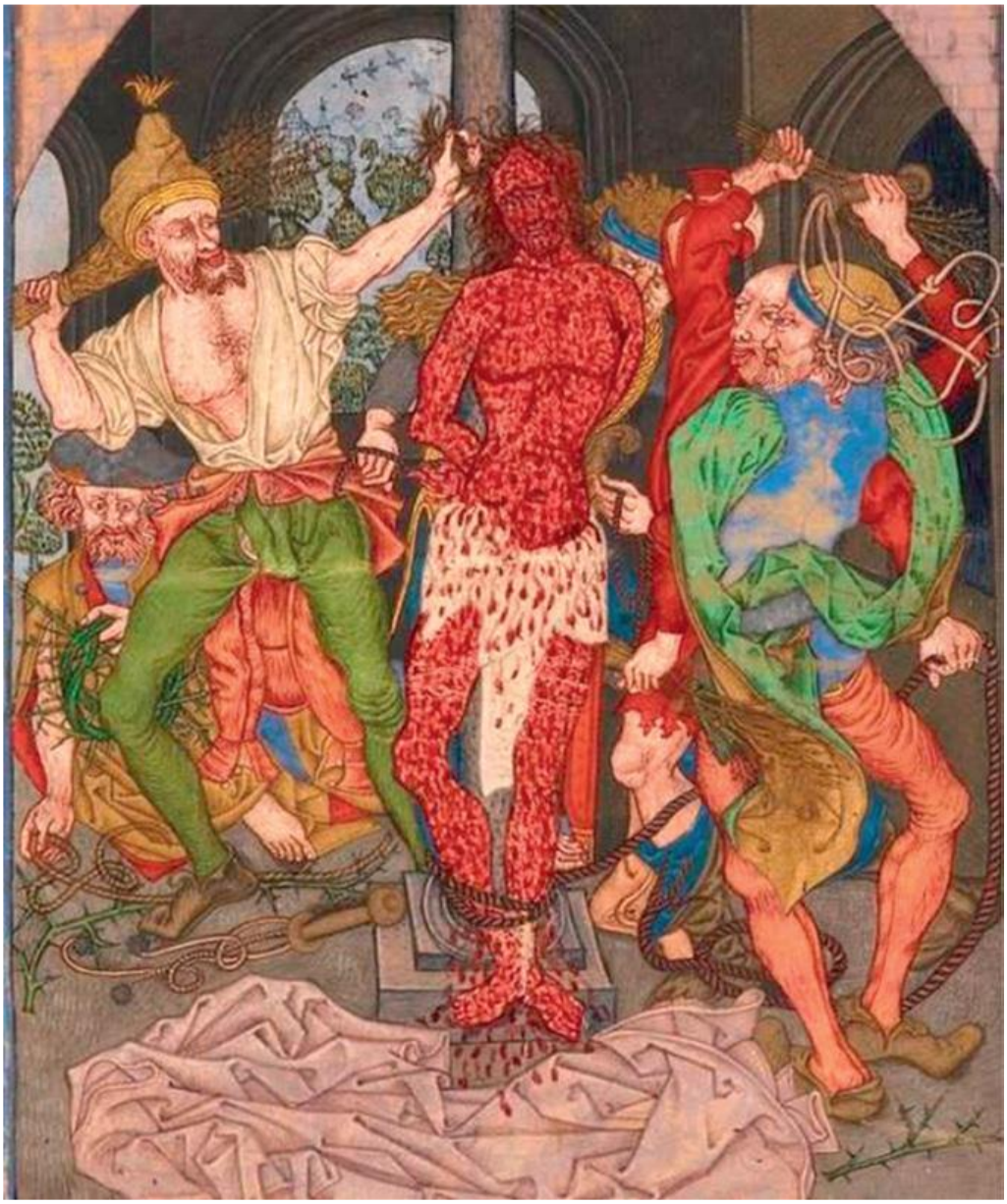
FIGURE 15



Flagellation of Christ, Harley MS 1892 manuscript, British Libray, ca. 1490

Through photographs of enslaved people in the 19th century, it is possible to see the obvious: the marks of the lashes on the backs of

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the tortured, not on their chests, since the one who suffered the punishment could even be killed, unless that was the executioner's intention (fig. 14). Even before the advent of photography, the German Rugendas, around 1827, and the Frenchman Debret, around 1830, painted scenes of daily life in Rio de Janeiro, including public punishments by whipping enslaved people, in which the tortured were seen facing the pillory (P1) with their hands tied up, taking the whips on their backs, not on their chests (fig. 19).

FIGURE 16

Passion beam, National Museum of Catalonia, Spain, 1192/1220

Medieval artists, unlike their counterparts from the Renaissance onwards, did not seek to portray reality but to lead their readers, in this specific case, to *pathos* (*πάθος*). Furthermore, images in this period were used to instruct the faithful, translating handwritten words through them, as in the case of Figure 15, whose exaggeration and imprecision, from the point of view of reality, is surprising. This is because if a man were in this position (P2) and were flogged by three or four people, as is depicted, it would not be a punishment but an execution. Furthermore, the marks printed on the tortured do not correspond with the objects employed, despite Nicolotti (2017) stating that "The marks on the body of the man wrapped in the Shroud, therefore, coincide with the forms of the scourges that men

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of the Middle Ages were familiar with and artists were accustomed to representing." (p. 57)

FIGURE 17

Stuttgarter Psalter, Württenbergische Landesbibliotek, Germany, ca. 820AD

It should be noted that, despite the contradiction of this model – Jesus facing the column (P2) – this one became paradigmatic, as it would be the most used from the mid-14th century onwards, as we will see below. However, between the 10th and 13th centuries, although artists inserted Jesus behind the column with his hands tied in front of it (P1), they used an extremely thin pillar that would barely serve any architectural purpose (figs. 14, 16, and 18), since the intention was to show the Master's face inserted in the scene of the flagellation.

This means that the scene itself was secondary since the image of the Savior was worthy of emphasis; the rest were mere accessories, such as the executioners, usually one on each side and using different types of whips and bundles of rods. Therefore, what was essential to show was the extent to which the Son of God submitted himself out of love for humanity.

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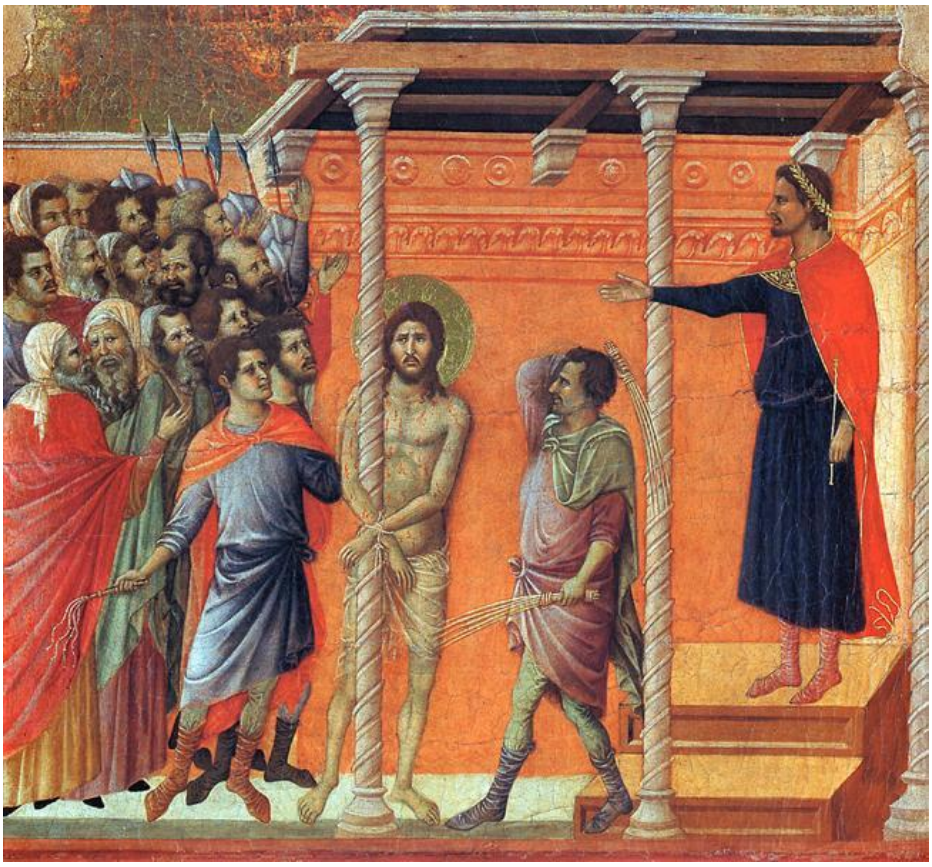
FIGURE 18



Flagellation of Christ, Duccio, Metropolitan Opera Museum, Siena, 1308

Therefore, we reiterate once again that it is not the real world that they want to portray but an idea, which is why they seek to show the face and body of the Master of Nazareth, showing the wounds of the scourging that do not need, under any circumstances, to demonstrate reality, but rather the main intention behind those marks: Redemption. Even when the representation is in an external environment, such as a pillory, the column is exaggeratedly thin; it is nothing more than a prop to represent the scene. Just as the scourging was not revealed in the Gospels, there is **freedom** of

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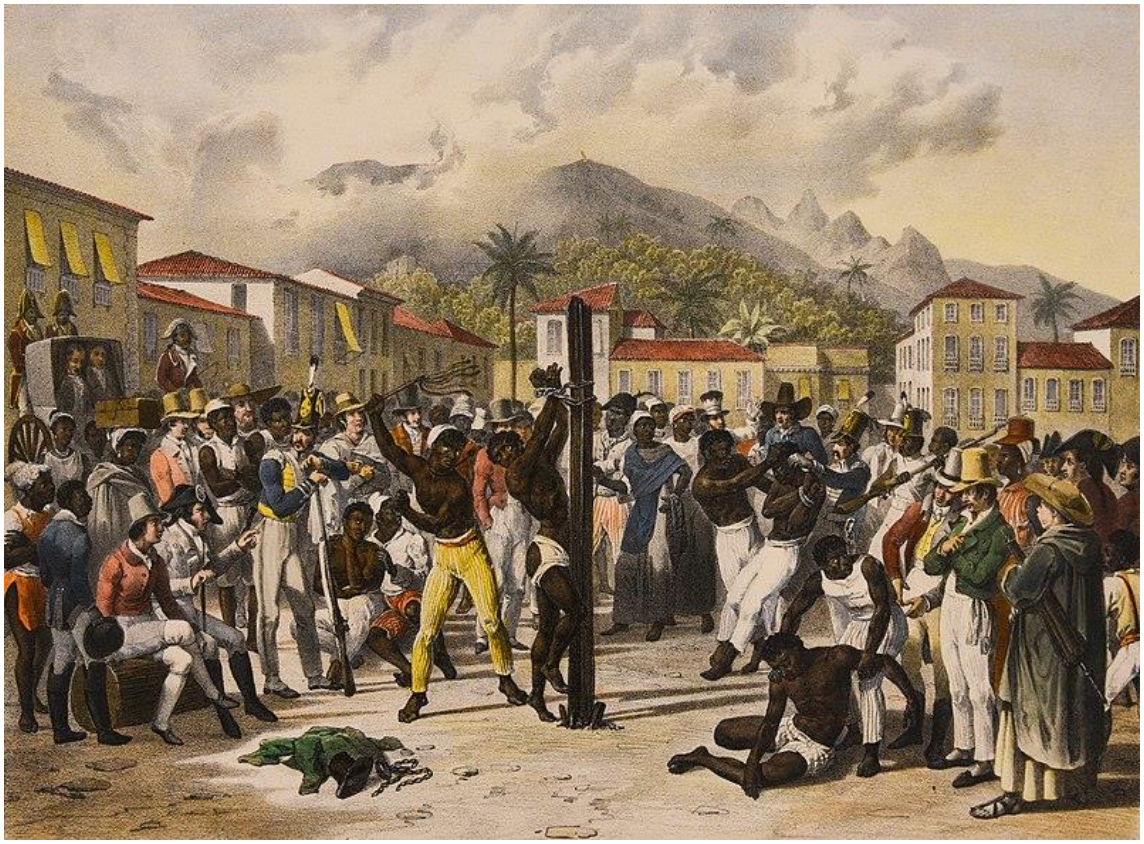
expression until the moment in which a paradigm for the theme is established. From then on, it does not matter whether the scene occurs in front of Pilate (fig. 16, 18, and 20), in a courtyard, in a cubicle (fig. 22), or in a public square. (fig. 21)

FIGURE 19



Public punishments: Santa Ana square, Rugendas, Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, 1827

If the evangelists did not describe the event, it is probably because there were no witnesses; therefore, for the artists, it matters little to represent the tortured being punished in front of the governor, in the basements of the Antonia Fortress, in the presence of the population, or their absence: what matters is the protagonist, not the act itself, much less its location and instruments, after all, they are nothing more than mere props.

Even before the first half of the 14th century, it is clear that many of

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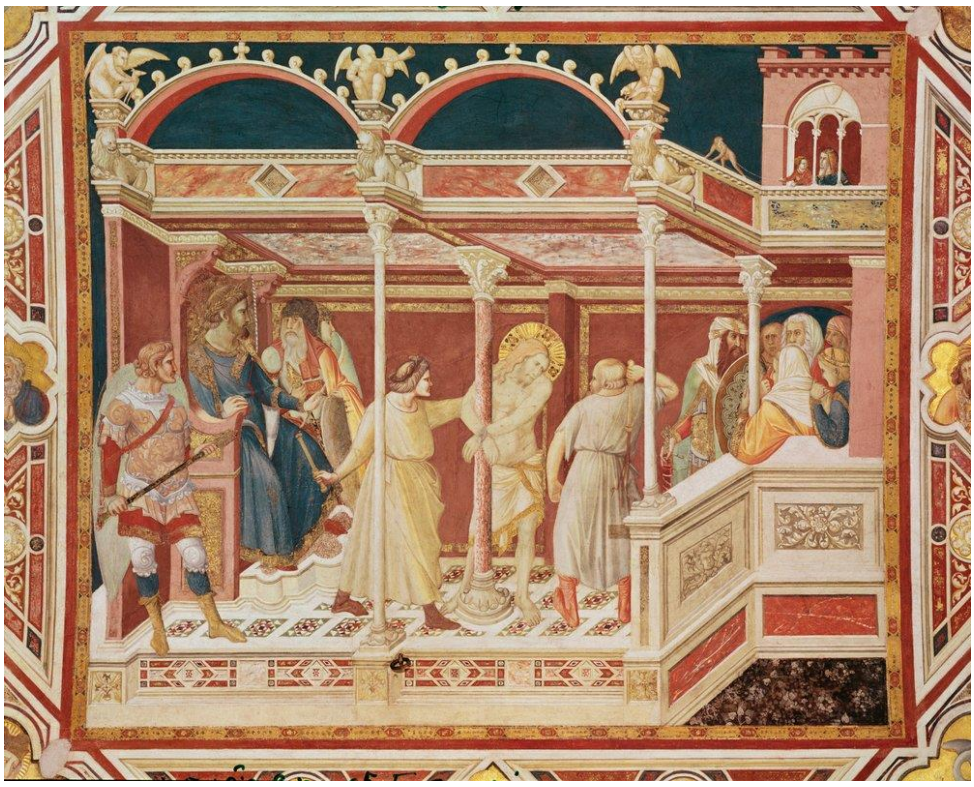
the artistic representations of the flagellation changed, especially the position of the central figure of the scene, Jesus. Now he is seen from the front (P2), tied to the column, exposing his torso. His arms, however, are no longer tied in front of his body and are moved to his back. It is also clear that both his belly and legs may be tied, as in the images of Guariento di Arpo, from 1344 (fig. 22), that of the Master of the Karlsruhe Passion, from 1440 (fig. 23), or that of Michael Pacher, from 1450

FIGURE 20



Flagellation of Christ, Pietro Lorenzetti, Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, 1320

When you see the image of Guariento di Arpo, for example, it gives the impression that the artist, realizing the artificiality of the scene, places Jesus' right leg behind the column, perhaps showing where he should be. The Master's eyes look directly at the readers so they can participate in the event. However, something similar occurs with the executioners who, in a static

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position, fix theirs on Jesus' face. As if it were all just a mere pose, they care little about the body they are whipping, demonstrating, once again, that He is the central figure in the scene since everything else is nothing more than a mere accessory.

FIGURE 21

Flagellation of Christ, Guido of Siena, Lindenau Museum, Altenburg, 1280

In most of the models analyzed, the tradition regarding the number of executioners is maintained: two, one on each side of the tortured person, with each one using a different instrument: a possible *flagrum* and a bundle of thin rods, probably tied at the base. It is evident that the previous model – Jesus behind the column (P1) – will also be used since it has become paradigmatic, just as the number of executioners can be greater than two.

Despite the propagation of this new standard (P2) and its artificiality, as we have already suggested, some works are even more **unrealistic** from the point of view of **faithfully representing** the world but perfectly compatible with the standards established by the artistic genre in which they are inserted. It is clear, therefore, that

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such works could never even serve as a comparative parameter with the Shroud of Turin, whose realism, proportions, and anatomical pattern of possible wounds are shown with a realism that medieval art never employed.

FIGURE 22

Flagellation of Christ, Guariento di Arpo, Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena, 1344

In some of these medieval works, we see Jesus' arms tied in front, even though he is on the obverse of the column, such as the flagellation of Pesaro from 1420, that of Jaume Baçó from 1450, or that of the Master of Wroclaw from 1486 (fig. 23). In this particular painting, Jesus is not even tied, but suspended from the column by a rope that crosses his chest and in front of which he has his arms crossed.

What may seem like a contradiction on the part of the artist is nothing more than an

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iconological codification that shows that the Master demonstrates his total submission to the Father since the arms in this position – crossed on the chest – represent humility, as Cesare Ripa (2007, p. 500) shows us in his **Iconology**.

FIGURE 23

Wroclaw Master of 1475/87, National Museum in Warsaw, 1486

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There are, therefore, more than one hundred and twenty marks in the image of the Shroud referring to the flagellation (fig. 24), not counting the other possible marks raised by Faccini (2008). As previously said, such regularity does not correspond to medieval works that used little or exaggerated them. In this way, the shroud has already made humanity think about the last days of a man who could have been wrapped in it, thus, a unique archaeological instrument.

As for the crown of thorns, this was also summarily ignored by artists, appearing only around 1308 in some works by the Sienese master, Duccio di Buoninsegna, "and, even in these, one has the impression of seeing a 'tiara', not the helmet of thorns, as the shroud of Turin would have us assume. (BRANDÃO, 2014, p. 203)

FIGURE 24

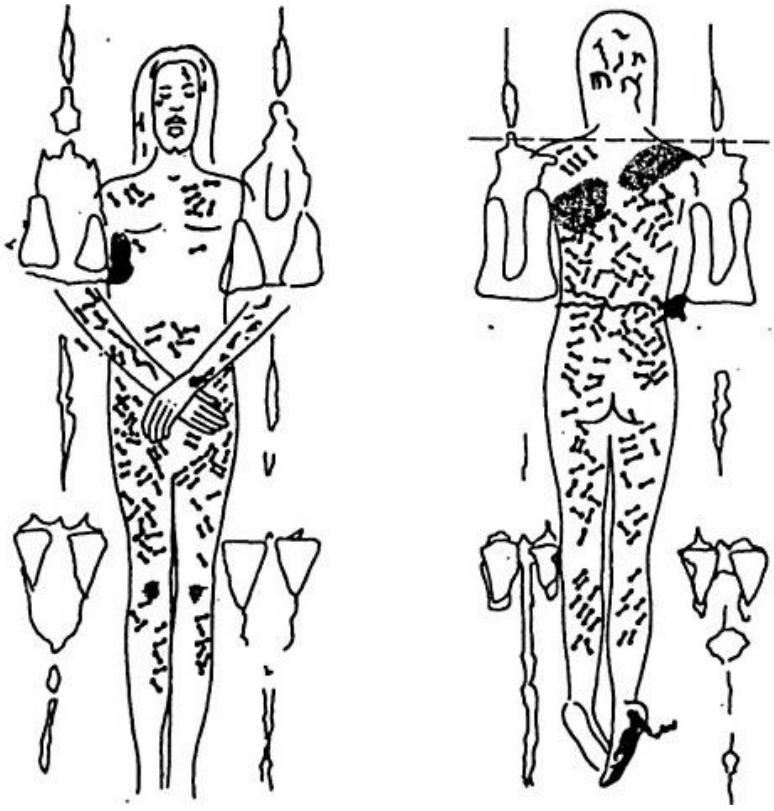

Diagram of the whippings and abrasions on the shoulders (SOLÉ, 1993, p. 171)

Final Considerations

We seek to demonstrate the power of the image, particularly the photographic image, and its ability to clarify both the historical and the archaeological aspects, as occurred with the Shroud of Turin after being photographed by Secondo Pia in 1898.

On the one hand, it is used to exhaustion as a form of propaganda or even as a form of *spectacularization* of society, leading us to indifference in the face of barbarity; it can also show us what is hidden from our eyes, opening us to reflection and consideration, as well as to knowledge of the new. Furthermore, it insists on not letting us forget certain past events; after all, we are sure that a particular fact happened, whether positive or negative.

It is no wonder that one of the significant concerns of certain peoples in antiquity – as it is today – was that the memory of important events and the image of their deceased loved ones would endure. If at first memory alone was enough, it was no longer sufficient, and soon new expedients were needed: figurations, statues, death masks. After all, more than a memory of the **other**, the image of the **self** was also its part, and even if the body disappeared, its image would not. We only need to recall, for example, the mummies of Fayum.

In light of this, we come to the Shroud of Turin, which turned out to be, in a way, also a photograph; after all, somehow, the image of the body of a tortured man was fixed on the linen cloth, serving as a support. Through it, scientists of the 20th century were able to glimpse unimaginable events of one of the most abominable acts that man invented to make others suffer: crucifixion.

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