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## Injuries that May Have Been Caused by a Crown of Thorns

The crowning of Jesus with thorns is not described in detail by the Evangelists, St. Luke skips this scene completely. One of the aspects that for obvious reasons is not presented in the Gospel descriptions of this circumstance is the extent of the injuries caused by putting the crown of thorns on Jesus' head. Also, for the first Christians this information was not important, as shown in Acts and canonical letters, in which the description of Jesus' crowning was not supplemented with additional information. However, in the following centuries the passion of Christ, including the crowning with thorns, was the subject of reflections for many Christians and was researched by scientists of various fields. These considerations were the result of both piety and the development of fields of science such as medicine, archeology or research on the relics of Jesus' passion and death.

In this article we will deal with the injuries Jesus could have suffered as a result of wearing a crown of thorns, based on the research conducted on the relics of Jesus' burial canvases. The Shroud of Turin, the Sudarium of Oviedo and the Holy Coif of Cahors provide a lot of information about what harm the crown of thorns could have done. Despite many studies, especially those considering the Shroud of Turin, to this day there have been no consensus among researchers about the authenticity of these relics. However, for the needs of this article we

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will recognize the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, the Sudarium of Oviedo and the Holy Coif of Cahors.

### **Traces of crowning with thorns visible on the Shroud of Turin, the Sudarium of Oviedo and the Holy Coif of Cahors**

The Turin Shroud is the most thoroughly examined Jesus' burial canvas. This may be due to the fact that it presents two "paintings", however the way one of them was created has not been discovered until today. The first of them is shaped by various types of fluids such as water, blood, sweat and serum. These stains emerged as a result of direct contact of the material with the body of Jesus. They are present on the fibers and between them, in some places they even pass through the canvas. The second image is in yellow sepia, it has a weak contrast and no contours. It does not appear under the bloodstains which suggests that it was formed after blood, serum and other fluids stained the robe. The form of this image resembles a photographic negative, while the way it was created has remained an unexplained phenomenon to this day.<sup>2</sup>

On the Shroud 13 blood stains can be found in front of the head and 20 in the back. It is possible that there were many other wounds in the back of the head, but long and thick hair caused that they did not leave marks on the Shroud of Turin. According to some researchers, there may have been many more blood spots on Jesus' face, but they were removed when the face was being washed before placing the body in a grave. In addition, the sides and top of the head are not visible on the Shroud of Turin. Surgeons who have studied this canvas speculate that the number of all injuries caused by the crown of thorns could reach about 50 and each of these wounds caused permanent and severe pain.

Due to their arrangement, the head injuries visible on the Shroud of Turin indicate, that the crown of thorns was a kind of a bonnet, and not a wreath that we see in the vast majority of depictions in sacred art<sup>3</sup> arts depictions. The marks on the head draw a circular figure — the edge runs around the head, bends downwards from the front to the back so that it passes through the nape of the neck. The marks of wounds which are believed to be the result of placing the crown of thorns on Jesus' head are red and have a rounded shape with a diameter of about 5 mm. The blood stains are surrounded by a thin line, while in the middle a small dot is visible, which has an intense red colouration indicating the presence of

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<sup>2</sup> A. Marion, G. Lucotte, *Tunika z Argenteuil i Całun Turyński*, tłum. A. Łatka, Kraków 2008, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Ziółkowski, *Całun Turyński. Milczący świadek męki, śmierci i zmartwychwstania*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 119–120.

blood. Such a description is typical for stab wounds whose characteristic feature is a small entrance hole.<sup>4</sup>

The most characteristic trace caused by the crown of thorns which can be seen on the Shroud of Turin is the streak of blood shaped in an inverted three that is on the forehead of the deceased. This specific shape indicates forehead movements and spasmodic muscle contractions responsible for frontal wrinkles.<sup>5</sup> The blood clot is located above the frontal vein and the type of blood which has leaked has been described by the doctors as venous blood.<sup>6</sup> Such compatibility between the type of blood and the blood vessel above it which also occurs in other places is one of the proofs of the authenticity of the Turin Shroud. Furthermore, it sets the border in the dating of the Shroud of Turin because the differences between venous and arterial blood were discovered only in 1593.

On the whole forehead many other wounds are visible. Blood from these wounds flowed in different directions, which indicates changes in the position of the head during its leakage.<sup>7</sup> Five trickles of blood go towards the eyes, the other disappear in the hair surrounding the face. There are also numerous wounds in the back of the head (in the upper and middle part), but they are mostly hidden under the hair.

Nonetheless, it is possible to identify eight traces of blood in the form of trickles flowing in different directions. Four of them flow to the left, three to the right, whereas only one trickle of blood flows vertically downwards. Furthermore, it is believed that each of them is a result of a separate stab wound.<sup>8</sup>

Another canvas with traces of crowning with thorns is the Sudarium of Oviedo. It is a rectangular linen canvas, measuring 85.5 cm by 52.5 cm. According to the tradition, it was used to covering the face of Jesus after His death, but before placing Him in the grave. The use of this canvas would be a result of the Jewish tradition, which requires covering the head of the deceased if his face has been disfigured.<sup>9</sup>

On the Sudarium numerous traces of blood can be found, according to some researchers there are 70 of them.<sup>10</sup> Other stains on this canvas are the leakage

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<sup>4</sup> B. Barberis, L.F. Rodella, G. Pierucci, M. Labanca, A. Majorana, G. Farronato, M. Boccaletti, *Autopsja człowieka z Calunu. Najnowsze odkrycia tajemnic Calunu Turyńskiego*, tłum. K. Kreczko, Kraków 2015, pp. 77–79.

<sup>5</sup> S. Lamberto, *Calun Turyński. Przewodnik po obrazie pełnym tajemnic*, tłum. P. Soppa, Częstochowa 2000, pp. 20–21.

<sup>6</sup> M. Antonacci, *Zmartwychwstanie. Calun*, tłum. A. Kowalska, Warszawa 2002, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, pp. 25–27; Paul Vignon counted 13 blood clots on His forehead and temples, resulting from 13 different skin punctures (M.G. Siliato, *Calun Turyński. Tajemnica odbicia postaci sprzed dwóch tysięcy lat*, tłum. H. Bzikot, Kraków 1999, p. 230).

<sup>8</sup> I. Wilson, *Calun Turyński*, tłum. J. Piątkowska, Kraków 1985, pp. 30–31.

<sup>9</sup> A. Marion, G. Lucotte, *Tunika...*, pp. 55–56.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 55.

from the nose and mouth caused by pneumothorax. It is a mixture of body fluids and blood that flowed out of the body posthumously. Most likely these leaks were the reason for putting the canvas on when Jesus was still hanging on the cross. Besides, on the Sudarium there are traces of blood described by the researchers as “living blood”. It is the kind of blood that flowed out of the body while a person was still alive. Its effluence was caused by stab wounds, which means that these traces are the result of crowning with thorns. Research shows that these wounds bled about one hour before putting the material on Jesus’ head.<sup>11</sup>

The blood on the Sudarium has the AB blood type, which is the same as the blood present on the Shroud of Turin. In addition, according to the research of Dr. Alan Whangher, the traces in front of this canvas coincide with the spots of the Shroud of Turin at even 70 points, whereas its back part at 50 points.<sup>12</sup> Especially those spots which are located in the vicinity of the deceased’s beard and caused by wounds after the crown of thorns show this compatibility.<sup>13</sup> It follows that both of these canvases belonged to one person.

Another burial canvas showing marks of wounds caused by the crown of thorns is the Holy Coif of Cahors. It is now located in the cathedral in Cahors (France) and is recognized by many researchers as a face-cloth (sudarium), which is mentioned by St. John in his Gospel, “Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and **the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself**” (Joh 20:6–7). However, the same Bible passage is also often referred to the relics of the Sudarium of Oviedo.

The Holy Coif of Cahors is consistent with the records from Mishnah regarding the body of a deceased person who must wear linen canvas covering his head.<sup>14</sup> This type of funeral material is called *pathil*, which is consistent with the Holy Coif of Cahors in terms of the form and type of the material.<sup>15</sup> It was applied to the head and tied under the chin, so that only the part of the face from the center of the forehead to the chin was visible. The manner of putting it on kept the mouth closed, while the seam at the back arranged the material so that the shape was adapting to the human head. The Holy Coif of Cahors has a size adapted to the

<sup>11</sup> G. Górny, J. Rosikoń, *Świadkowie tajemnicy. Śledztwo w sprawie relikwii Chrystusowych*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 158–161.

<sup>12</sup> P.B. Bollone, *101 questions sur le Saint Suaire*, Milano 2001, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> A. Marion, G. Lucotte, *Tunika...*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>14</sup> I. Rooryck, *Une relique insigne du Christ au Tombeau: la sainte Coiffe de la cathédrale Saint-Etienne de Cahors*, <https://saintecoiffedecahors.com/index.php/2018/12/09/histoire-et-patrimoine/> [accessed 18.11.2019].

<sup>15</sup> J. de Climont, *The Mysteries of the Shroud*, Paris 2016, p. 73.

head of an adult male. It consisted of 8 layers, imposed one on top of each other and then sewn together into one whole.<sup>16</sup>

Based on the chemical analysis of some fragments, made in 1839, it was found that the examined spots were blood, not a painted counterfeit.<sup>17</sup> There are 10 wounds visible on this material, which are recognized as caused by crowning with thorns.<sup>18</sup> The stains on the inside of the Holy Coif of Cahors complement the stains on the forehead and neck of a man from the Turin Shroud.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Crown of Thorns on Jesus' head during the crucifixion**

In the Gospels the Crown of Thorns appears only in the scene of mocking Jesus by soldiers. The Bible describes when it was applied to Jesus' head, but there is no information about when and by whom it was removed. On the basis of information from the Gospels we do not know if Jesus had the Crown on His head during the Way of the Cross and when He was hanging on the Cross. In addition, none of the Evangelists mentions that someone would take the Crown after it was removed from Jesus' head, which must have happened at the latest before Jesus was wrapped in funeral canvases, in which He was buried. Only the images created several centuries later show that at the time of the crucifixion the Crown of Thorns is still on Jesus' head. Also crucifixes show Jesus with the Crown of Thorns. Thus, on the basis of sacred art it could be concluded that the Crown of Thorns was removed only after the body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross, however in the further turn of events the artists no longer agree with one another. Some of them depict Jesus in arms of His Mother and having a the Crown of Thorns on His head, while others show that at that moment the crown was already removed from His body. It should be remembered, however, that sacred art does not seem to be a great authority in this matter. This is shown especially by the fact that Jesus is depicted by many artists with the Crown of Thorns in the shape of a wreath, while research shows that it is rather a kind of a specific bonnet.

Matthew the Evangelist mentions that Jesus, after having been mocked, put His canvases on again, "and after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him" (Matt 27:31). This version of events is consistent with the story from the Gospel according to Mark, "and after they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, and put His

<sup>16</sup> P. Milliez, *La résurrection au risque de la science. Etude historique et scientifique des cinq linges, sur la mort et la résurrection de Jésus, du Linceul de Turin au Voile de Manoppello*, Paris 2017, pp. 43–45.

<sup>17</sup> P.B. Bollone, *101 questions...*, p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> P. Milliez, *La resurreccion...*, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> J. de Climont, *The Mysteries...*, p. 73.

garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him” (Mar 15:20). However, this scene is presented differently by John the Evangelist:

and the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; and they began to come up to Him, and say, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and to give Him blows in the face. And Pilate came out again, and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.’ Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, the Man!’ (Joh 19:2–5).

We can infer from this testimony that Jesus may have not been given His own garments back before the Way of the Cross. This would mean He carried the Cross not only with the Crown of Thorns on His head, but also wearing purple. However, this version of events remains in contradiction with a high value of the purple robe and the following part of this story which says that before the crucifixion not *the purple* was removed from Jesus’ body, but the *garments* that the soldiers divided among themselves and *the tunic* they casted lots for, “the soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece” (Joh 19:23). A scene describing soldiers sharing Jesus’ garments and casting lots for His tunic can also be found in the synoptic Gospels (Matt 27:35; Mar 15:24; Luk 23:34). This means that Jesus did not go the Way of the Cross dressed in purple, but was again disguised in His own garments, as described by two of the synoptic Gospels. However, this situation is not typical since usually convicts carried the cross naked.<sup>20</sup> Removing and donning garments while wearing the crown of thorns may show another suffering Jesus had experienced. Such activities caused the crown of thorns to move and as a result the wounds on the head were getting bigger and deeper. If, however, taking off and putting on the robes would force Jesus to remove and put on the crown again, it would cause new wounds. One could also hypothesize that along with taking off the purple robe Jesus also removed the crown because mocking Jesus already came to an end. However, it seems to be a very unlikely version of these events as the tradition and the relics of funeral canvases show that Jesus was still wearing the crown of thorns at the time of the crucifixion.<sup>21</sup>

The results of studies by G. Sassu are one of the evidences in favour of crucifixion of Jesus with the crown of thorns on His head. He conducted the series of experiments involving volunteers. They were intended to show how a crucified person raises and lowers his head while breathing. His study shows two possibili-

<sup>20</sup> G. Ricci, *La Sindone Santa*, New York 1976, pp. 82–85.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 88–89.

ties: symmetrical and asymmetrical movement. The second of them turned out to cause trickles of blood to spread consistently with the traces of blood on the head from the Turin Shroud. This compatibility occurred both in the front and back side of the image recorded on this funeral canvas. According to G. Sassu's research, the blood flowed vertically in the back and front of the head during the inhalation (in the second phase of lifting). However, during exhalation (phase of descending) the blood flowed from left to right in front of the head and from right to left in the back of the head. During apnea (the first phase of lifting) the blood flowed from right to left in front of the head, while from left to right in the back of the head.<sup>22</sup> These studies clearly show that some of the traces visible on the Shroud of Turin related to the crowning with thorns were the result of Jesus' breathing as He hung on the cross.

The Sudarium of Oviedo also indicates that Jesus had a crown of thorns on His head during the crucifixion. The spots visible on this canvas did not appear at the same time. We can mention three phases of their formation. They are distinguished on the basis of shape and placement of the tracks. The first spots were formed when the body was in a vertical position, while the head was leaning and skewed to the right, most likely it was leaning on the arm. Taking into account that this material was used to cover the face of Jesus, it had to be founded while Jesus was still hanging on the cross. At that moment He was already dead since the marks on the canvas show no movement resulting from breath. Most of the stains on the Sudarium of Oviedo were formed in this phase. However, some of the blood visible on this material flowed out when Jesus was still alive. This stems from the fact that the blood which had not completely coagulated yet soaked in the material as the result of wrapping the head in the canvas. Moreover, the stains from pleural effusions which came out of Jesus' mouth and nose after His death can be seen of the Sudarium of Oviedo. At that time the canvas was folded in half, covering mainly the nose and mouth. An hour later the body was taken from the cross and the material was removed from the face, spread and then put on Jesus' head again, but in a different way. When the canvas was replaced, it had the shape of a cone which was tied at the top of the head. During this time more traces are appearing on the cloth. The last phase of formation of the stains occurs when the body is carried to the grave. Subsequently, the canvas is removed and it has no more contact with the body. The material is probably placed in the grave somewhere nearby to the body.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> G. Sassu, *Sugli atteggiamenti della testa nelle fasi di «innalzamento» e di «accasciamento» dei crocifissi, all'uomo della sindone* [in:] *La sindone scienza e fede. Atti del II Convegno Nazionale di Sindonologia, Bologna 27–29 novembre 1981 con il patrocinio della Regione Emilia Romagna e dell'Università degli studi di Bologna*, Bologna 1983, p. 200.

<sup>23</sup> G. Górny, J. Rosikoń, Świadkowie..., pp. 158–161; A. Marion, G. Lucotte, *Tunika...*, pp. 66–67.

At the beginning folding the canvas in half can mean that Jesus still had the crown of thorns on his head at that moment, which made it impossible to put the canvas on correctly. Unquestionably, there are many other factors that may have caused the material to be initially put on in such a way, therefore it is not an evidence determining the time of taking the crown off the head of Jesus.

### **Is it possible that the thorns from the crown pierced the skull into the brain?**

Pious texts describing the damage caused by the crown of thorns, in their most violent versions of events, believe that the thorns pierced the skull all the way to the brain.<sup>24</sup> However, results of the tests carried out on the Holy Coif of Cahors do not mention the marks that could indicate such great head injuries. Such canvas put on a head and adhering there for some time should have leakage spots appropriate to the puncture of the skull and brain tissue damage. Also, no such traces were found on the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo. Undeniably, this does not totally exclude such a possibility since none of the relics we have discussed have yet been exhaustively tested. Besides, we cannot be sure that based on these relics, even well-researched, we can tell about every wound that appeared on the body of Jesus during His passion. However, the hypothesis that the thorns pierced the skull reaching all the way to the brain seems unlikely from a botany point of view. Vaughn Bryant conducted an experiment on a corpse of a 35-year-old woman in order to verify if it is possible for the *Gundelia tournefortii* thorns (one of the plants considered to be the building material of Jesus' crown of thorns) to do the damage such as indicated by the Turin Shroud. The first attempt was to inflict a wound with a single thorn that was held between the fingers of the person conducting the experiment. The spike was set at a small angle and a lot of force was used, but despite this the spike only slightly penetrated the scalp. During the next trial a piece of plant with several spines was used, again with a lot of pressure and different angles between the thorns and the skin. None of the spikes pierced the scalp in this test. It led to the destruction of the spikes only when more pressure was applied, while still no major damage was done to the skin. Alan Whanger also conducted a similar experiment. Similarly, this did not

<sup>24</sup> Such information is found, for example, in a passion song from the 18th century “*Dobranoc Głowo Święta*”; considerations on websites such as: MA, *Zanurzymy się w Męce Jezusa!*, <https://bezale.pl/2018/02/24/zanurzymy-sie-w-mece-jezusa/> [accessed 12.11.2019] where we read “Many thorns pierced Him up to the brain (32 wounds)”. Also, Saint Faustyna in her *Diary* mentions that when Jesus gave her His crown of thorns, its thorns stuck into her brain (F. Kowalska, *Dzienniczek. Miłosierdzie Boże w duszy mojej*, Warszawa 2011, p. 47).



lead to any significant injuries of the scalp, let alone the skull.<sup>25</sup> There are several other plants considered as the building materials of Jesus' crown of thorns, e.g. *Zizyphus spina Christi* or *Sarcopoterium spinosum*. These plants could probably cause more head damage compared to *Gundelia tournefortii* which was used in the experiments. However, it seems that these thorns would be destroyed by pressure instead of breaking through the skull into the brain. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account not only the toughness of the thorns, but also the need to use large force and the adequate angle of thorns to the head.

Thus, we see that piercing even only the scalp with thorns is not easy. It seems even more unlikely that the thorns of plants considered as used to make the crown of Jesus would be able to pierce the skull. However, this does not mean that the wounds caused by the crown of thorns were shallow and painless. The Holy Coif of Cahors, the Shroud of Turin or other relics show us the extent of the injuries Jesus suffered as a result of having the crown of thorns put on His head. They caused continuous pain and relentlessly irritated the nerves due to the constant presence of thorns in the head wounds.

### **Were some of the blood marks removed due to the washing of the face?**

Washing the body is a very important issue that must be taken into account when examining the injuries Jesus suffered during the passion. This shows how complete the traces left on the funeral canvas actually are.

The Gospels do not describe the body washing among funeral activities which were done in the case of Jesus. Matthew mentions only the wrapping of Jesus in a canvas, "and Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away" (Matt 27:59–60). Moreover, according to this Evangelist the women went to the grave not intending to complete the funeral but just to see the grave (Matt 28:1). Also Evangelist Mark writes that "Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb" (Mar 15:46). However, intentions of the women heading to the grave are shown in a different way, this time as a desire to complete funeral rites, "and when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices that they might come and anoint Him" (Mar 16:1). As we can see, the Gospel according to St. Mark also does not mention anything about washing the body, but only about wrapping Jesus in a cloth and the desire to anoint him with fragrant oils. This

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<sup>25</sup> F.T. Zugibe, *The Crucifixion of Jesus: A Forensic Inquiry*, New York 2005, pp. 30–32.

last activity, however, was not carried out as when the women reached the tomb, Jesus' body was no longer there. Moreover, according to Luke the body of Jesus was not washed or even anointed with oils,

and he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. And it was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus (Luk 23:53–24:3).

The scene is presented differently by John the Evangelist. Although he also does not mention that the body was washed, he adds, however, Nicodemus also takes part in the funeral rites and brings the fragrances, “and Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews” (Joh 19:39–40). This element is omitted in synoptic Gospels, but finds its confirmation on the Shroud of Turin, on which the traces of myrrh and aloe were found.<sup>26</sup>

According to Jewish tradition, the body of the deceased should be washed with warm water and anointed several times. There is no doubt that Jesus' body was anointed with fragrant substances since on the Shroud of Turin many traces of plants were found, including aloe or myrrh<sup>27</sup>, which were used for anointing the deceased in Jesus' times. Traces of these plants also appear on the Sudarium of Oviedo<sup>28</sup>, which would mean that this material was still on Jesus' head or perhaps lying somewhere nearby during the process of anointing. John the Evangelist, as described above, also testifies to this in his Gospel. The anointing with fragrances alone does not prove that the body was washed before being laid in the grave. Probably the first anointing of the deceased took place before washing the body. Therefore, it is possible that Jesus' body was only anointed once, then immediately wrapped in burial canvas and laid to the grave.<sup>29</sup> We also need to consider the fact that some of the traces of blood and other fluids were removed

<sup>26</sup> M. Hesemann, *Milczący świadkowie Golgoty. Fascynująca historia relikwii mężczyzny Chrystusa*, tłum. K. Zimmerer, Kraków 2006, p. 352.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> A. Paterek, *Najcenniejsze relikwie chrześcijaństwa*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 38–39.

<sup>29</sup> J. Bennett, *Święta Chusta, Święta Krew. Tajemnica Sudarionu z Oviedo, nieznannej relikwii Grobu Pańskiego*, tłum. P. Zarębski, Rzeszów–Kraków 2011, p. 171.

by putting a material on Jesus' head, which covered His face while He was still hanging on the cross and for some time preceding part of the funeral activities. Although this cloth was used to cover the face, not to wipe it, a significant part of the blood and other fluids emanating from the body was absorbed by the material. This is an additional factor that makes it difficult to answer the question regarding washing Jesus' face. For this reason, it is possible that what indicates washing the face before the burial, was in fact owing to the use of the canvas known today as the Sudarium of Oviedo.

According to R. Jackson, Jewish burial regulations suggest that Jesus' body was not washed. Halacha describes several circumstances in which the deceased does not need to be washed before being wrapped in canvas. It is enough if at least one of these conditions have been met. However, in the case of Jesus' death all four of them were fulfilled which suggests that Jesus' body was not washed before being laid in the tomb. The conditions listed by Halacha include: 1. Man had a hemorrhage during his lifetime, which did not stop even after death, and died abruptly. This provision often referred to women who died during childbirth. Due to the large blood loss, which was a symbol of life, the body was not washed to leave as much blood as possible; 2. Death was a punishment for a religious offense; 3. The person was removed from the Jewish community during his lifetime; 4. Death was the result of a murder committed by a non-Jew.<sup>30</sup>

The Shroud of Turin and the traces visible on it are also taken into account in the discussion about washing the body of Jesus before being laid in the grave. There is a trickle of blood on the forehead that clotted in the shape of an inverted three, which is one of the traces on the Shroud often noted during the discussion of this topic. The direction of blood flow indicates the vertical position of the body during formation of this trace. It could not emerge after washing the face since then the body was already in a horizontal position. In addition, this shape suggests movement of the forehead during formation of the trace. Other stains occurring on this cloth which suggest there was no washing before the burial, are the numerous bloodstains on the neck and head.<sup>31</sup> Significant in this matter are the studies carried out by G. Sassu, which prove that the directions of the blood flow visible both from the front and the back of the head are consistent with the individual phases of the breathing of the man who hangs on the cross.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, researchers involved in the study of the Shroud of Turin disagree about whether Jesus' body was washed before being laid in the grave. According to some, the Shroud of Turin denies washing the body before the burial, while others believe that there are too few traces on this cloth, and thus, possibly the body had to be

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, pp. 171–173.

<sup>31</sup> G. Ricci, *La Sindone...*, pp. 86–89.

<sup>32</sup> G. Sassu, *Sugli atteggiamenti...*, p. 200.

hastily washed with warm water. According to the others, a relatively short time at which Jesus' funeral took place caused that this was done inaccurately, which is why the streak of blood in the shape of an inverted three remained on his face.<sup>33</sup>

### Final conclusions

Both the relics of the Sudarium of Oviedo and the Holy Coif of Cahors are a complement to the wounds made by the crown of thorns, which can be seen on the Shroud of Turin. However, even the combination of injuries that these three relics show does not give a complete picture of the wounds inflicted by the crown of thorns. We are not sure whether each of the wounds left a stain on any of these fabrics. Moreover, long and thick hair impedes the analysis even of those wounds that left a mark.

It is equally difficult to investigate when the crown of thorns was removed from Jesus' head. None of the Gospels tell when this happened or mention the crown of thorns in further descriptions of Jesus' passion. Analyzing the Gospel texts we can only conclusively say that Jesus had the crown on His head when the soldiers mocked Him, and when He was led outside by Pilate for a final decision to be made about His case. However, the results of research on the Sudarium of Oviedo indicate that the crown of thorns may have been on Jesus' head even after His death.

There is less doubt concerning how deep thorns from the crown could penetrate the body. From the traces visible on the Turin Shroud, the Sudarium of Oviedo and the Holy Coif of Cahors, it appears that the crown of thorns was able to inflict very serious wounds, although it did not penetrate the skull bones into the brain. This is also confirmed by research on the plants considered as those from which the crown for Jesus could have been made. Nonetheless, the pain caused by it was prolonged and, especially in the beginning, caused heavy bleeding and constant nerve irritation.<sup>34</sup>

The question of not washing the body of Jesus before He was laid in the tomb also seems to be certain. Considering the accounts of the Evangelists, Jewish law and traces on Jesus' burial materials, it must be recognized that washing the body was not done in Jesus' case. Some researchers believe that washing the body was performed in this case. They argue that there is not enough blood on the Shroud of Turin for the type of passion Jesus had. However, this argument stems only from the assumption that there should be more traces. Nevertheless, texts of all

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<sup>33</sup> J. Bennett, *Święta Chusta...*, pp. 171–173; G. Ricci, *La Sindone...*, pp. 86–89.

<sup>34</sup> B. Barberis, M. Boccaletti, *Calun. Kwestia wciąż otwarta*, tłum. A. Soćko, Kielce 2011, pp. 102–104.

Gospels and the provisions of Jewish law, plead in favour of the hypothesis that Jesus' body was not washed before the burial. Moreover, many traces on the Shroud of Turin show that they emerged when Jesus was still hanging on the cross or even earlier, and not when the body was already wrapped in the canvases and laid in the grave.

### Summary

The article is the attempt to answer the question: what physical injury could cause the Crown of Thorns, which was placed on the head of Jesus. Analysis of this event and its effects, was carried out on the basis of the study of the Shroud of Turin, Sudarium of Oviedo, Sainte Coiffe. In addition, there has been included information on Jewish funeral procedures and the study of plant species, which served the soldiers to make the crown of thorns for Jesus.

### Keywords

Crown of Thorns, Passion of Jesus, wounds, Shroud of Turin, Sudarium of Oviedo, Sainte Coiffe

## Obrażenia, jakich mogła dokonać korona cierniowa

### Streszczenie

Artykuł jest próbą odpowiedzenia na pytanie, jakich obrażeń fizycznych mogła dokonać korona cierniowa, którą żołnierze włożyli na głowę Jezusa. Analiza tego wydarzenia oraz jego skutków została przeprowadzona na podstawie zarówno badań sydonologicznych, jak i tych, które poświęcone są innym płótnom uważanym przez wielu badaczy za użyte podczas czynności pogrzebowych Jezusa, czyli Chusty z Oviedo i Czepca z Cahors. Ponadto zostały również uwzględnione informacje na temat żydowskich procedur pogrzebowych tamtych czasów oraz badania prowadzone nad rośliną, z której została zrobiona korona cierniowa Jezusa.

### Słowa kluczowe

korona cierniowa, Męka Jezusa, obrażenia, Całun Turyński, Chusta z Oviedo, Czepiec z Cahors

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