A000-Xian-Cross-Post-325 CE



Case no.: 4

Accession Number:

Formal Label: Cross-Reliquary-Roman-350 CE

**Display Description:**

The use of the cross as the authorized emblem of the new religion of Christianity came about by an accidental astronomical apparition. The contest was long in the making between Constantine and Maxentius. Constantine was the son of Constantius I, the Western Emperor of the Tetrarchy or Four-way split of the Empire. This situation did not provide for hereditary succession, indeed, quite the opposite. It encouraged fierce opposition among future contenders. On 25 July 306 CE Constantine’s father died in Britannica and his troops proclaimed Constantine as Augustus in Eboracum (York, England). However, Constantine was far from Rome, where the favorite was the son of Maximian another ruler of the Tetrarchy, Maxentius, who seized the title of Emperor on 28 October 306. Meanwhile, the senior Emperor in the Empire and ruler of the Eastern provinces was Galerius, who had elevated his second-in-command, Severus, to Augustus (essentially the ruler of the western portion of the Empire) and denied Constantine's claim to that title. He viewed Constantine as only a Caesar, and he regarded Maxentius as a usurper. So he sent Severus on a mission to put down Maxentius and held Constantine in abeyance.

Severus moved his troops, which had been previously commanded by Maximian, on a forced march from Mediolanum (ancient Milan) toward Rome, where Maxentius fearing defeat offered Maximian the co-rule of the empire. Maximian accepted, and when Severus arrived at the walls of Rome and besieged it, his troops deserted to Maximian, their old commander. Severus fled to [Ravenna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ravenna), was taken prisoner by Maximian and later committed suicide.

assurance, Severus was nonetheless displayed as a captive and later imprisoned at [Tres Tabernae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tres_Tabernae).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valerius_Severus" \l "cite_note-dimalo-3) One belief is that when Galerius himself invaded Italy to suppress Maxentius and Maximian, the former ordered Severus's death, and that he was executed (or forced to commit suicide) on 16 September 307 at *Tres Tabernae*, near the current [Cisterna di Latina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cisterna_di_Latina).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valerius_Severus" \l "cite_note-abtcs-4)

By 312 the stage was set with Constantine and Maxentius engaged in open hostility with one another, even though they were brothers-in‑law through Constantine's marriage to Fausta, Maxentius’ sister. In the spring of 312, Constantine combined his disparate forces in an effort to oust Maxentius from Rome. He advanced down northern Italy winning battles at Turin and Verona.

Divine corroboration from the heavens played a crucial factor in the acceptance of the cross as the “new” emblem of the disparate Empire. Something was needed to assure troops and commoners alike that a new god that all could see was on the side of a united Empire. It was the 28th of October, 312 CE. Constantine and his Roman troops were double-marching from Arles to Rome to fight Maxentius, who resided in Rome. It just so happened that between August and October of 312 CE was the best time to observe the center of the Milky Way in Europe. Constantine and his troops were looking to the south-east where the center of the Milky Way was positioned. The time was after 3 PM as the Sun was setting in the west, and its light was dimmed. Constantine said to Eusebius, his biographer, “Once upon a time at afternoon, when the Sun turned to west, I saw with my own eyes a Sign of Cross that was built from light and lying on the Sun” (Eusebius Pamphilius). Another contemporaneous author, Lactantius, reports that Constantine drew this sign on the shields of his soldiers as ”Chi-Rho”. The materialized witness of the vision can be seen on the roman coins that have been issued

by Constantine in 317 CE. Finaly, the vision was reflected in the Labarum - the

emblem of early christian church,



Similarly, medicine was another key factor in establishing the needed savior in a time of health crisis in the Empire, and, indeed, in any military garrison after a battle. Prior to 325 CE Jesus had been regarded as a healer and magician who was adept at physical ailments and psychosomatic medicine. Jesus also had a medical background as a Jewish rabbi and physician, since his father was also a technikos (s) or medical doctor who measured curative compounds (not one who measured wood as a carpenter, as had been incorrectly translated and explicated). One of the main challengers of the cult of Jesus was the cult of Asclepius (Coffman 1992).

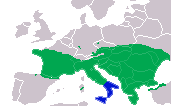
Asclepius with his daughter Hygeia had been so instrumental in healing the wounded and sick during and after the Peloponnesian Wars in the sixth century BCE that both were elevated to godhoods. Writing in 475 BCE, Pindar described Asclepius as a hero, the son of the god Apollo and a mortal woman, Coronis. This could be interpreted that, like Jesus, Asclepius was born out of wedlock so the easiest thing to do was to ascribe the birth to a divine father. It is generally assumed that he was at first venerated as a local hero in Tricca, Thessaly, where his grave is located, and that he and his daughter subsequently became deified (Schouten 1967:8-11). His cult had diffused rapidly throughout the Greek and later the Roman worlds as sickness and battles had demanded caregiving on a wide scale.

The emblem of Asclepius was a stave with a single encircling serpent (not the caduceus with two encircling serpents). In the Asclepieia’s abaton where patients were healed, a bevy of pan-Mediterranean, non-venomous, Asclepian snakes (*Elaphe longissimi=Zamenis longissimus*) were regularly let loose at night while patients were sleeping, since these snakes with their flicking tongues were regarded as essential to ingesting any rodents or other harmful waste that were seen as obstacles to the health of the patients. However, the Church successfully vilified these natural sanitation methods of Asclepius and his followers by making the serpent the chief agent of Satan in the Garden of Eden, thereby implying that Asclepius and his cult were also agents of Satan along with women in general and Hygeia in particular.

However, the cult of Asclepius was so successful that the cult was invited to Rome and a hospital or Asclepieion was built of stone on Tiber island in the heart of Rome in the form of the actual fourth century CE Roman caravel that had carried the practitioners of the Asclepius cult from their home in the Peloponnese:



Ancient fourth century CE Roman caravel similar to the one that had brought the Cult of Asclepius to Tiber Island. After https://www.kisspng.com/png-caravel-ancient-rome-merchant-vessel



Left: *Zamenis longissimus* after http://www.hlasek.com/foto/elaphe\_longissima\_ab8249.jpg Right: The range of Asclepian snakes (*Zamenis longissimus*) that overlaps the range of Asclepieia hospitals. After https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/35/Zamenis\_longissimus\_dis.png

The Roman Asclepieion (figure on the left) was built in the image of the actual ship that had carried the practitioners of the cult to Rome from Greece. This engraving of a typical 16th century vessel with an obelisk mast obviously took license with reality but the general idea was sound as it was based on ancient sources*.* The Roman Asclepieion was reconstructed and engraved by Pirro Ligorio on his map of ancient Rome and printed by Jacopo Rossi in 1561*.* After <http://rubens.anu.edu.au/htdocs/laserdisk/0008/875.JPG>.

The figure on the right shows the Tiber Island as it was in 2008. After https://lh6.googleusercontent.com/-O30o8eEG6z0/U8EoWjSauJI/AAAAAAAAAY0/ojp0Z2MeR9Q/s524/tiberIslandModern.png

Beneath the trees, hidden in the foreground, is the 293 CE prow of the ship that constituted the Roman Asclepieion which is still visible. However, a Roman Catholic hospital has been built from most of its pillaged ruins, when, after 325 CE, pillaging of temples and statues by “Christian” mobs was rampant. The attempt to find an emblem that would incorporate a known “healer” was fraught with the intrigue of a palace murder, as none in the hierarchy of the Church would admit of the value of Asclepius and his cult for fear of usurpation of their control of the edifice and its coffers.

The issue of a search for a compatible emblem of their Church came from the wife of Constantine, Helena. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 CE) about 350 CE was first to recount how Helena, Constantine’s mother, had rushed to Jerusalem after the Council of Nicaea had formulated the Nicaean creed and ensconced Jesus as one person of a triune god. There she allegedly found, buried in a corner of Jerusalem (where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher stands today) three stakes with transverse bars, which she deemed were ancient implements of execution. Also, she was convinced that one of these had been the very device to which Jesus was affixed three centuries earlier, but she needed proof. Later historians provided this in their versions of the story. Gelasius of Caesarea (c 330-395 CE) and Rufinus of Aquilea (344/345–411 CE) recounted an innovative apocryphal story of how she discovered the burial of the three devices used at the crucifixion of Jesus and of two thieves, St. Dismas and Gestas, who had been allegedly executed with him. Allegedly, she found that one implement of execution had a horizontal titulus bearing “INRI”, an acrostic for *Iesu Nazarini Rex Iudaeorum*. However, as Gelasius related, Helena was still uncertain about her find until she received a divine miracle that revealed that this cross was, indeed, the “True Cross”.

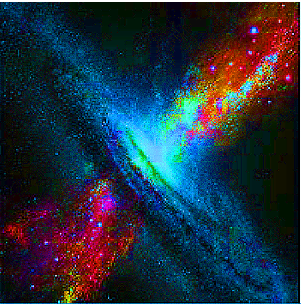
In about 350 CE St. Cyril sponsored the idea that the cross on which Jesus was executed was, in fact, the one that had been found by Helena. The artifact became the treasure of Jerusalem to St. Cyril’s redounding fame. Renowned as a trophy it became the object of looters and was captured by its foes but afterwards secured from them and placed in Jerusalem’s holiest church, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was the reputed place both of the crucifixion and the tomb of Jesus. Pieces of it were broken into relics for the faithful, and one of these fragments forms the center of the Vatican Cross. Those alleged fragments which survive were made into the earliest crosses of the Coptic Church with their equal arms, but soon forgeries were made of any old piece of wood, often not even of the right species. The Eastern Orthodox Church solved the problem for itself by claiming that the True Cross was made from any of three different types of wood: cedar, pine or cypress. Take your pick.

After this story gained wide acceptance, the equal-armed cross gave way to a new version of the cross, one with a longer vertical post in keeping the Helena’s find. However, even this elaboration was inaccurate, since the Roman version of the execution implement was a “T-shaped” post with a cross-piece at the top without a vertical projection beyond the cross-piece. The objective of executing a person using this device was first to collapse the rib cage and hence restrict the ability to breathe by strapping the person’s arms to the cross-piece and secondly to dehydrate the prisoner to death. The “T-shaped”

emblem never did make it as a viable one for the Church, but the Russian orthodox church did incorporate the titulus into its design: , but even this is incorrect as the titulus is placed above the head of the crucified on the extended vertical post, and there is a slanted cross piece ostensibly to allow the prisoner to have a foot-hold, but this would have vitiated the effect of collapsing the rib cage.

In the ancient world an astronomical sign was sure to capture the imagination of the populace at large and to corroborate any expected signs from on high that a miracle had been seen. On May 7, 351 CE probably late in the afternoon as darkness is the best backdrop for this phenomenon, St. Cyril and the inhabitants of Jerusalem witnessed a dazzling cross in the heavens, stretching from Mount Golgotha to the Mount of Olives, and *shining like the Sun for several hours*.[43](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/9071/9071-h/9071-h.htm" \l "R43) And this marvelous vision is vouched for by St. Jerome, Socrates, Matins, and the Alexandrine Chronicle, as well as by St. Cyril; and memory of it is still kept alive by the Greek Church as a solemn festival is held upon anniversaries of that day.

This particular "salutary sign" was an equal-armed cross the cause of which has only been ascertained with the Hubble space telescope. In all probability it was a jet from a black hole intersecting with a distant galaxy. This phenomenon has been recorded in historical records. The jets from black holes, which are visible in dark space, have been recorded in the 21st century with the Hubble telescope. No jets from the Milky Way have seen yet.



Jets from a black hole intersecting with a distant galaxy after a Hubble space telescope image rendered by an astronomy artist. After

The Church went to great lengths in order to induce people to believe that the cross was essentially a *Christian* symbol; which tends to show that there was a danger of thinking otherwise.

It is also clear from the evidence already quoted concerning the adoption by Christians in the fourth century of a symbol they denounced in the third, that whether Jesus was executed upon a cross-shaped instrument or not, that was not the chief reason why the phallic symbol of Life became recognized as the symbol of the Christ.

The striking fact that though, as will be shown, the cross of four equal arms (a cross which, as we have seen, preceded the Latin cross as a Christian symbol, and one form of which is still the favourite symbol of the Greek Church; while even in the other two great divisions of Christendom its numerous variations, wheel-like and otherwise, as a whole dispute the supremacy with the Latin cross) occurs many times upon the coins of Constantine, yet it was the so-called Monogram of Christ or adapted solar wheel of the Gauls which the Christians of the fourth century were most careful to claim as a Christian symbol, should also be noted. For though the cross of four equal arms was also put by Constantine upon his coins as a solar symbol, yet that, being then, as for ages previously, a symbol of the Sun-God of world-wide acceptation, and one which as we shall see had already appeared as such upon Roman coins, it was not so much a Gaulish symbol as the other; and it was evidently because that other was the symbol followed by the triumphant leader of the Gauls and his victorious army, that the Christians wished to specially identify it with the Christ.

In any case, whether the so-called Monogram of Christ was more or less forced upon Christianity when Constantine made our faith the State Religion of his empire, or whether it was adopted by Christians of their own volition, it was a politic move (than which few possible moves could have done more to secure the triumph of our faith) to accept as the symbol of the Christian Church what was at one and the same time the symbol of Constantine, of the Roman State, and of the universally adored Sun-God.

That the more generally accepted symbol of the Sun-God, the cross of four equal arms, should in time supplant the more local one, was of course only to be expected; as was the adoption of a cross with one arm longer than the others, as being the only kind which could possibly be connected with the story of Jesus as the Christ incarnate.

**LC Classification:**

Date or Time Horizon:

Geographical Area:

**Map:**

**GPS coordinates:**

Cultural Affiliation:

Media:

Dimensions:

Weight:

Condition:

Provenance:

**Discussion:**

**References:**

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