

Carrying a σταυρός: A Re-Assessment of the Non-Christian Greek Sources

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The Gospels tell of Simon of Cyrene/Jesus carrying a σταυρός on the way to crucifixion. In the recent years influential scholars such as Gunnar Samuelsson and John Granger Cook entered a discussion about what we can know about crucifixion and what it was that Jesus carried. Often, scholars assume that carrying a σταυρός was a common crucifixion practice, and refer to a few Greek sources as parallels. Yet, do these sources speak of cross-bearing? In this article it is argued that possibly three of the sources could be counted as parallels to cross-bearing practices represented in the Gospels.

Keywords: cross-bearing, σταυρός, crucifixion, *patibulum*

1. Introduction

The passion stories tell of Jesus and/or Simon carrying a σταυρός¹ and Jesus calls his followers to take up a σταυρός.² But what did carrying a σταυρός mean exactly? In the popular conception, Jesus carried what quite early on became the classic Christian cross structure, the whole cross (†).³

1 John 19.17; Mark 15.21/Matt 27.32/Luke 23.26.

2 Two forms occur in the New Testament, one in Mark 8.34/Matt 16.24/Luke 9.23 with its Markan version reading: εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι, and there is a common tradition found in Matt 10.38, Luke 14.27 and the Gospel of Thomas 55 where the saying is found in a negative form (e.g. 'whoever does not ... is not worthy of me/cannot be my disciple').

3 Such depictions of the cross can be found from an early date at least in Western Christendom (see e.g. R. M. Jensen, *The Cross: History, Art, and Controversy* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2017) 1–48), probably because Latin Christianity mostly abandoned the rather technical word *patibulum* (cf. J. G. Cook, *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* (2nd extended edn; WUNT 1/327; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019) 26–8, who mentions Ambrose, *Abr.* 1.8.72). Only a few occurrences of *patibulum* appear in Christian literature up to the fifth century, and besides Ambrose, only Evagrius, *Alterc.* 25.13, and possibly Eucherius of Lyon, *Instr.* 81.7, speak of carrying a *patibulum*. All early Latin translations of

In support of the view that carrying a σταυρός was an ancient practice, equated with carrying a *patibulum* – the cross-beam to which one was fastened and which was then hoisted up the vertical pole (*stipes*) – scholars have often pointed to several ancient sources. Some recent crucifixion studies have treated these instance of cross-bearing in Latin and Greek sources in the context of a more general study of crucifixion, most notably the major influential studies by Gunnar Samuelsson and John Granger Cook.⁴ While such studies are indispensable, they have understandably integrated these cross-bearing sources in a larger discussion of the terms *patibulum* and σταυρός. Yet the study of the topic can benefit from further (and more detailed) systematic analysis of the sources.⁵

The recent interaction between Samuelsson and Cook shows that there are often contrasting views on what we actually (can) know of crucifixion and cross-bearing. Samuelsson concludes that we cannot be certain of precisely what object Jesus carried to his execution, nor do we know what the other extra-biblical sources on cross-bearing mean. For example, referring to Jesus' call to bear one's σταυρός Samuelsson concludes: 'contra the common view expressed in commentaries, it is not possible to fully define what the texts describe Jesus as talking about'.⁶ Moreover, Samuelsson remarks in reference to the theme of carrying the σταυρός in the passion narrative: 'Neither the Biblical nor the extra-Biblical texts describing someone who carries an execution or a torture tool towards his own punishment are explicit on the theme. These texts do not mention anything about for what purpose the carrying occurred.'⁷ Cook, however, is more confident about the object that was carried, namely, a *patibulum*, or cross-beam.

On the basis of a critical assessment of the sources, with due respect to their ancient context and the fact that they reflect Roman practice, I have recently argued that possibly four of the eight Latin sources that supposedly refer to

the Greek New Testament passages speak of carrying a *crux*, while earlier Latin literature makes no reference to carrying a *crux*.

4 G. Samuelsson, *Crucifixion in Antiquity: An Inquiry into the Background and Significance of the New Testament Terminology of Crucifixion* (WUNT 11/310; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013²); J. G. Cook, *Crucifixion*, 15–34.

5 S. Bøe, *Cross-Bearing in Luke* (WUNT 11/278; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 63–71 gives a useful and brief overview of several texts that are deemed to refer to cross-bearing, but the discussion of these passages is very limited. D. W. Chapman and E. J. Schnabel, *The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus: Texts and Commentary* (WUNT 1/344; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015) 282–92 have eleven pages on often-mentioned sources on cross-bearing, but they contain mostly commentary on the literary context of the passages; there is no critical assessment of whether these should be regarded as actual parallels.

6 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 242.

7 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 245.

cross-bearing are in fact ‘classic’ examples of carrying a *patibulum*: Plautus, *Carb. fr.* 2, Clodius Licinus, *Rer. Rom.* 21, *Lex Puteolana* 11.8–10, and possibly Plautus, *Mil. glor.* 358–60.⁸ But what about the Greek sources that supposedly speak of cross-bearing? Can we say more about them than Samuelsson felt able to? Should the often-mentioned Greek sources be involved at all in a discussion of cross-bearing in the New Testament?

In this article I will focus on the Greek sources that speak of cross-bearing (or, to be more exact, that supposedly speak of carrying a *σταυρός*). In the discussion of these texts I will frequently refer to the studies by Samuelsson and Cook, because their often-contrasting treatment of the sources is illuminating and because their studies have been highly influential. In this article, I will argue that, contrary to Samuelsson’s view, when the sources speak of *carrying* a *σταυρός*, it is possible to reconstruct to a certain extent what they mean. I will show that it is likely that some Greek sources presuppose that what was being carried was a sort of cross-beam, because they mostly presuppose a Roman context, and in the Roman context it is relatively clear what was being carried, a point already made by Cook.⁹ It is not sufficient, when interpreting ancient texts, to analyse them in isolation.

It is important to note that, while in this article we examine the Greek sources, a study of the Latin texts on carrying a *patibulum* is presupposed; as we will see, it is very likely that Roman penal practices influenced the Greek writings under discussion. We will not engage in a discussion on cross-bearing in the whole New Testament here, but will touch upon a number of relevant implications resulting from the study of Latin sources.

2. Greek Texts on Carrying a *σταυρός*

When looking for parallels for New Testament texts/phrases/terms in the ancient Mediterranean world, the first place to look are texts in ancient Greek. This also holds true for the theme of cross-bearing. However, there are actually very few Greek texts that contain the same terminology as that used in the New Testament. Scholarship over the past two hundred years has found a limited number of Greek texts that contain the semantic domains of ‘to carry’ or ‘to take up’ combined with the term *σταυρός* or *ξύλον*, as follows:¹⁰

8 R. van Wingerden, ‘Carrying a patibulum: A Reassessment of Non-Christian Latin Sources’, *NTS* 66 (2020) 433–53. The other four sources lack any clear crucifixion context or do not supply enough information; Plautus, *Bacch.* 361–2; Plautus, *Most.* 56–7; Firmicus Maternus, *Math.* 6.31.58 Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.11.3–5. For rabbinic sources on cross-bearing, see b. Ber. 5c; Gen. Rab. 56.3/Pesiq. Rab.31.2; Gen. Rab. 65.22; Midr. Teh. 22.9.

9 Esp. Cook, *Crucifixion*, 28–32.

10 For the latter, see the discussion of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.69 below.

- Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 7.69 (1st cent. BCE)
- Chariton, *Chaer.* 4.2.7; 4.3.10 (1st cent. CE)
- Plutarch, *Sera* 554a-b (46-after 119 CE)
- Lucian, *Peregr.* 34 (ca 165-80 CE)
- Artemidorus, *Onir.* 2.56 (2nd cent. CE)

2.1 *Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ant. rom. 7.69*

Dionysius of Halicarnassus (ca 55 BCE-ca 7 CE) went from Asia Minor to Rome before 29 BCE and taught rhetoric there.¹¹ He wrote a history of Rome up to 264 BCE, which was published from 7 BCE onward. In book 7, Dionysius recounts an often-told and rather peculiar story. Strange occurrences happened at the time of the consulship of Quintus Sulpicius Camerinus and Spurius Larcius Flavus (7.68.1): unusual sights that appeared to many, abnormal human and animal births, cattle pestilence, sickness etc. A certain farmer named Titus Latinius was brought before the Senate, and he said he had received a message from Jupiter Capitolinus saying that the Romans had offended Jupiter by failing to appoint an acceptable leader of the dance in the recent procession (7.68.3). The farmer first ignored the vision, but after receiving more visions and after harm came to his house because of his disobedience in not relaying Jupiter's warning to the Senate (he even lost a son), the news eventually reached the Senate by word of his friends. The senators at that point finally realised what the incident was that Jupiter had referred to in his message to Titus Latinius: just before a procession a certain Roman citizen (ὄνῆρ Ῥωμαῖος) had ordered one of his slaves to be put to death. He thought it fitting that this slave should lead the procession, bound with his arms stretched out. But during the procession, the slave made indecent movements (τὴν αἰκίαν ἀσχήμονα ἐκινεῖτο), and the senators identified this incident as that of the unacceptable dancer that Jupiter had indicated. The text that scholars have often pointed to as an instance of cross-bearing reads as follows:¹²

A Roman citizen of no obscure station, having ordered one of his slaves to be put to death, delivered him to his fellow-slaves to be led away, and in order that his punishment might be witnessed by all, directed them to drag him through

11 Introductory material taken from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities: Books 1-2* (trans. E. Cary; LCL 319; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943) vii-xxxv.

12 Mentioned by e.g. U. Holzmeister S.J., *Crux Domini atque crucifixio; quomodo ex archaeologia Romana illustrentur* (Rome: E. Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1934) 16-19; H. F. Hitzig, 'crux', PW IV.1728-31; C. H. Brecht, 'patibulum', PW XVIII/4.2167-9; C. D. Peddinghaus, 'Die Entstehung der Leidensgeschichte: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und historische Untersuchung des Werdens und Wachsens der erzählenden Passionstradition bis zum Entwurf des Markus', (PhD diss., 2 vols., Evangelisch-Theologischen Fakultät der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, 1965) 34; Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 69-70; Chapman and Schnabel, *Trial*, 285-7, although the latter two doubt whether it should be counted as a reference to cross-bearing.

the Forum and every other conspicuous part of the city as they whipped him, and that he should go ahead of the procession which the Romans were at that time conducting in honour of the god. The men ordered to lead the slave to his punishment, having stretched out both his arms and fastened them to a piece of wood which extended across his breast and shoulders as far as his wrists (τὰς χεῖρας ἀποτείναντες ἀμφοτέρως καὶ ξύλῳ προσδήσαντες παρὰ τὰ στέρνα), followed him, tearing his naked body with whips.¹³

The first observation is that neither the noun σταυρός nor any verb that means ‘carrying’ appears in the text. However, the fact that the slave is bound (προσδήσαντες) and led through various parts of the city (δι’ ἀγορᾶς; ἄλλος ἦν τῆς πόλεως τόπος) implies that he carried something. The object that was bound to the man and the manner in which this was done are of course of interest to us: a piece of wood (ξύλον) was bound to the slave across the chest/breast (στέρνον), with both hands stretched out (τὰς χεῖρας ἀποτείναντες ἀμφοτέρως). Apparently, this piece of wood was a sort of beam, as it was tied across the chest to the arms,¹⁴ and apparently it did not prevent the slave from walking in the procession (παρηκολούθου) and from being whipped (μαστιγούμενον) through the city.¹⁵ It seems likely that fastening the wood not to the back but to the front of the body gave his fellow slaves a better opportunity to strike at the man’s back (διήκοντι παρηκολούθου ξαίνοντες μάστιξι γυμνὸν ὄντα).

Although Samuelsson is right to note that nothing in the text points to crucifixion,¹⁶ it is understandable that this text has been mentioned as proof of the practice of cross-bearing. At a cursory glance, one *could* infer that it is indeed a reference to cross-bearing,¹⁷ as it was a slave whose execution had been ordered; it was a Roman context and we know that in the Roman context slaves were often crucified or suspended. Furthermore, there is evidence that some who had been condemned to be executed walked through the city bearing a piece of wood.¹⁸

13 The available manuscripts have the same text here: *Dionysius Halicarnaseus: Antiquitates Romanae* (4 vols.; ed. K. Jacoby; Leipzig: Teubner, 1888–1905), or *Dionysius of Halicarnassus: Roman Antiquities*, vol. iv: *Books 6.49–7* (trans. E. Cary; LCL 364; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943) 354–5, from which the translation is taken.

14 A ξύλον was used often in relation to punishment, see LSJ s.v. ξύλον for five different categories.

15 The information that he is led through the city is found at 7.69.1: ἵνα δὴ περιφανῆς ἢ τιμωρία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου γένηται, δι’ ἀγορᾶς αὐτὸν ἐκέλευσε μαστιγούμενον ἔλκειν καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος ἦν τῆς πόλεως τόπος ἐπιφανῆς, ἠγούμενον τῆς πομπῆς ἦν ἔστειλλε τῷ θεῷ κατ’ ἐκεῖνον τὸν καιρὸν ἢ πόλις.

16 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 93–4. Samuelsson also refers to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 20.16, where he notes that ‘[t]here is in fact a similar account ... in which the subsequent execution is described’. When one looks more closely, however, this is in fact a very different occasion, one where large groups of insurgents are punished, not slaves.

17 Cf. Boe, *Cross-Bearing*, 69–70.

18 Cf. Plautus, *Carb.* fr. 2: *patibulum ferat per urbem, deinde affigatur cruci* (‘Let him carry the *patibulum* through the city, let him thereafter be fastened to the cross’); Plautus, *Mil. glor.*

However, Sverre Bøe, Samuelsson, David W. Chapman and Eckhart J. Schnabel are rightly sceptical about the story recounted here involving crucifixion. There is one major problem with identifying this text as a description of actual ‘cross-bearing’ (apart from the absence of any specific terminology referring to ‘carrying’). Apart from Dionysius, the story with the ‘dancer’ appears in Greek literature only in Plutarch, and his terminology is different; he uses φοῦρκιφερ to describe the slave carrying the object. This is derived from the Latin *furca*, a forked object like a Y or a V or perhaps V,¹⁹ which is also found in most of the Latin retellings.²⁰ Dionysius’ use of ξύλον probably covered the meaning of an implement for punishment well enough.²¹ Moreover, the Greek equivalent of *furca*, φοῦρκια, appears for the first time in Plutarch’s writings, i.e. much later than Dionysius.²² Two relatively late (Christian) Latin sources say that the slave was bound to a *patibulum*,²³ but the evidence from non-Christian sources points to a *furca*. Moreover, Samuelsson’s remark that nothing points to crucifixion is still valid: the manner of the slave’s death in Dionysius’ passage is unclear; it only states that the slave was to be put to death (ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ θανάτου).

358–60: Pa. *quid ais tu, Sceledre? Sc. hanc rem gero. habeo auris, loquere quiduis.* | Pa. *credo ego istoc exemplo tibi esse pereundum extra portam, | dispessis manibus, patibulum quom habebis* ('Pa. What do you say, Sceledrus? Sc. I have this job. I have ears, speak what you will. Pa. You'll soon have to trudge out beyond the gate with outspread arms in that attitude, I take it, when you will have the *patibulum*.')

19 Plutarch, *Cor.* 24; ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ φοῦρκιφερ ὃ γὰρ οἱ Ἕλληνας ὑποστάτην καὶ στήριγμα, τοῦτο Ἰρωμαῖοι φοῦρκαν ὀνομάζουσιν, LCL 80.178. See for discussion of the *furca* Cook, *Crucifixion*, 37–44.

20 Livy 2.36.1 (*sub furca caesum medio egerat circo*, LCL 114.336–7); Cicero, *Div.* 1.55 (*per circum cum virgis caederetur, furcam ferens ductus est*, LCL 154.284–5), whose source is Fl. Coelius Antipater F48 (see T. J. Cornell, ed., *The Fragments of the Roman Historians* (3 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 1.263–4, II.412); Valerius Maximus 1.7.4 (*servum suum verberibus mulcatum sub furca ad supplicium egisset*, LCL 492.84–5); Lactantius, *Inst.* 2.7.20–1 (*verberatum servum sub furca medio circo ad supplicium duxerat, L. Caelius Firmanus Lactantius: Divinarum institutionum libri septem. Fasc. 1 Libri I et II* (ed. E. Heck and A. Wlosok; Leipzig: Saur, 2005) 146). Augustine, *Civ.* 4.26 and Iulius Paris, *Epit.* 1.7.4 (who interprets Valerius) also report this event, but do not mention that the slave carried or was bound to something.

21 See n. 14 above.

22 Plutarch, *Cor.* 24; *Quaest. rom.* 280F (LCL 305.106–8).

23 Arnobius 7.39.2 (*servum pessime meritum per circi aream mediam transduxisse caesum virgis et ex more mulctasse post patibuli poena*, *Arnobius: Contre les gentils*, vol. VI: *Livres VI–VII* (ed. and trans. B. Fragu; Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2010) 61); Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.11.3 (*anno enim post Romam conditam quadringentesimo septuagesimo quarto Autronius quidam Maximus servum suum verberatum patibuloque constrictum ante spectaculi commissionem per circum egit*, LCL 510.110). See for discussion Van Wingerden, ‘Carrying a *patibulum*’.

Therefore, this text should not be regarded as an extra-biblical reference to cross-bearing.

2.2 *Chariton, Chaer. 4.2.7/4.3.10*

The second Greek source that has been quoted in reference to cross-bearing is Chariton, *Chaer.* 4.2.7 and its retelling in 4.3.10.²⁴ Chariton's romantic novel was probably written between 25 BCE and 50 CE²⁵ and it contains a fair amount of historical references. In fact, it is the only extant classical novel which is linked to historical persons.²⁶ The story relates to events that supposedly happened approximately 400 to 500 years earlier. Yet, 'while Chariton required a background of historical events for his characters, the background had to fit the characters, not vice versa ... he was prepared to adapt the record drastically to secure what he wanted'.²⁷ This is an important issue, for it raises the question posed by Bøe: 'Does it inform us about procedures of crucifixion in Italy or Persia in 400 BC or about crucifixion in Greece in the first century CE?'²⁸ In his dissertation, Christoforo Iavicoli has opted for the former hypothesis by listing this text among Persian witnesses to cross-bearing,²⁹ while if the latter were the

24 See e.g. M. Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 81–2; H.-W. Kuhn, 'Die Kreuzstrafe während der frühen Kaiserzeit: Ihre Wirklichkeit und Wertung in der Umwelt des Urchristentums', *ANRW* II.25.1 (1982) 648–793, at 769; H.-W. Kuhn, 'Kreuztragen', *Neues Bibel-Lexikon*, vol. II (ed. M. Görg and B. Lang; Zürich: Benziger, 1996) 551–2; P. C. Iavicoli, *La crocifissione nell'ambiente ebraico* (ed. A. de Simone; Florence: MEF Firenze Atheneum, 2006) 374; Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 67–8; J. G. Cook, 'John 19:17 and the Man on the *patibulum* in the Arieti Tomb', *Early Christianity* 4 (2013) 427–53, at 451–2; Chapman and Schnabel, *Trial*, 287–8 and many commentators on the gospel passages.

25 *Chariton: Callirhoe* (ed. and trans. G. P. Goold; LCL 481; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) 2. Also, see *Chariton Aphrodisiensis: De Callirhoe narrationes amatoriae* (ed. B. P. Reardon; Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana; München/Leipzig: Saur, 2004) 17; *Chariton von Aphrodisias: Kallirhoe* (ed. K. Plepelits; Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur 6; Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1976) 4–9; C. R. Montero, 'Chariton von Aphrodisias: Ein Überblick', *ANRW* II.34.2 (1994) 1006–54.

26 S. Schwartz, 'Rome in the Greek Novel? Images and Ideas of Empire in Chariton's Persia', *Arethusa* 36 (2003) 375–94, at 381 and the note there.

27 Goold, LCL, 481.14.

28 Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 67.

29 Iavicoli, *La Crocifissione*, 374. Iavicoli interprets Chariton's description as a Persian form of crucifixion and compares it with 'the standard' Roman practice (374): 'L'autore non dice che fossero legati alla croce pur essendo l'occasione propizia avendo notato che erano legati fra loro collo e piedi; anzi Mitridate ricorda come cose distinte le catene e la croce: se avessero avute le braccia legate al patibolo non vi sarebbe stato bisogno neppure di legarli tra loro collo e piedi. I cruciali lungo la via non sono flagellati o sevizati, come presso i Romani gli schiavi sotto il patibolo o la forca; ma soltanto condotti alla croce. Il cruciario sale e scende dalla croce; e non è affatto tirato con funi sulla croce; similmente essi portano la croce e non la trovano sul luogo destinato, già piantata. Dunque è portata a

case, it would be necessary to argue that contemporary (Roman) crucifixion practice influenced the narrative.³⁰ Cook clearly favours the latter option, as he notes that the condemned carry *patibula*.³¹

When Samuelsson discusses the use of σταυρός in Chariton's novel, he notes that the use of σταυρός is parallel to the punishment of crucifixion, and he accordingly concludes that this is seen as one of the few accounts of cross-bearing.³² Yet Samuelsson notes also that 'it is unknown what they actually carried', although he gives no substantiation for this.³³ While Samuelsson draws attention to the foreign aspect (τὴν ἕξωθεν φαντασίαν σκυθρωπήν) of the carrying of the σταυρός as a whole, Bøe notes that this 'foreign' aspect only pertains to the detail of being 'chained together by feet and neck' as a deviation from the normal procedure.³⁴ There is no consensus, therefore, about whether this should be counted as a reference to cross-bearing.

At any rate, the narrative contains an episode in which the narrator relates how some of Chaereas' fellow prisoners try to escape and murder someone in the process. When they are captured, the governor Mithridates orders that all sixteen prisoners be punished. Their punishment consists in carrying (ἐκφέρει) their σταυρός on the way to their execution by crucifixion (ἀνασταυρώ). The text is as follows:

They were duly brought out, chained together at foot and neck, each carrying his own cross (ἐκάστος αὐτῶν τὸν σταυρὸν ἔφερε). The executioners added this grim public spectacle to the requisite penalty as a deterrent to others so minded. Now Chaereas said nothing as he was led off with the others, but on taking up his cross (τὸν σταυρὸν βαστάσας) Polycharmus exclaimed, 'It is your fault, Callirhoe, that we are in this mess. You are responsible for all our troubles!'³⁵

Chaereas recounts this event in 4.3.10, which, interestingly, shows that he equates the σταυρός upon which he hung with the one he had carried (together with 4.3.9). Chaereas cries out to Mithridates:

spalle la croce probabilmente intera, comunque debba intendersi lo strumento del supplizio; tale croce però, appare in tutto diversa dal patibolo o furca romana.' I would say that a more critical reading is needed.

30 Cf. Kuhn, 'Kreuzstrafe', 689 n. 233: 'Der Einfluß zeitgenössischer Kreuzigungspraxis müßte dann wenigstens nachgewiesen werden.'

31 Cook, *Crucifixion*, 260. For discussion on the theme of crucifixion as originating in mystery cults from Persia, see e.g. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 82 n. 36.

32 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 142.

33 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 140. The discussion on Plutarch is found on pp. 111–25, yet it is not clear to what part Samuelsson refers.

34 Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 68.

35 Goold, LCL 481.198–9.

Faithless Callirhoe, wickedest of all women! Because of you I have been sold, have wielded a shovel, have carried a cross (καὶ σταυρὸν ἐβάστασα) and been delivered into the hands of the executioner.³⁶

As Steven D. Smith has pointed out, several scholars have argued that there are Roman themes in Chariton's novels, for example in the description of certain thematic interests, power structures, half-citations and allusions.³⁷ The novel does not feature either Rome or the Roman Empire, but, as Catherine Connor has written, 'just because Chariton's novel doesn't mention Rome doesn't mean that it is not about – or at least a response to – Rome'.³⁸ Thus, Sandra Schwartz has argued that the novel paints an ambiguous picture of imperial Rome without mentioning it explicitly.³⁹ Moreover, the city of Aphrodisias, Chariton's supposed home, had 'close ties' with Rome.⁴⁰ Additionally, if the novel reflects the political context of the first century CE,⁴¹ it would not be strange for Chariton to borrow ideas or customs from Roman forms of punishment, especially if we consider that we know that Romans carried out crucifixions in Asia Minor in the Roman era.⁴² No Greek writer before Chariton or the gospel narratives described any individual carrying a σταυρός. It seems very much possible that Chariton introduced the carrying of the cross as a 'gloomy, foreign spectacle', as he himself says in 4.2.7, as if the Persians had invented it, especially if Persia is a foil for Rome, as Schwarz has argued.⁴³ (Perhaps Chariton thought that the practice of carrying one's execution device originated in Rome.)⁴⁴ It could have functioned as a novelty that was reminiscent of Roman practices current in the days of Chariton himself. This is, of course, a guess, but it is an informed one. Nevertheless, the love story presents itself as a noteworthy verbal

36 Goold, LCL 481:206–7.

37 S. D. Smith, *Greek Identity and the Athenian Past in Chariton: The Romance of Empire* (ANS 9; Groningen: Barkhuis & Groningen University Library, 2007) 10–13 and 192–8.

38 C. Connor, 'Chariton's Syracuse and its Histories of Empire', *Space in the Ancient Novel* (ed. M. Paschalis and S. Frangoulidis; Ancient Narrative Supplementum 1; Groningen: Barkhuis & Groningen University Library, 2002) 12–26.

39 Schwartz, 'Rome in the Greek Novel?', 391: 'To return to the question with which this article opened: is Rome to be found in the Greek novels? It is both nowhere and everywhere ... Chariton's novel illustrates the ambivalent attitudes of the Greeks toward their Roman rulers and the complex processes that went into forming an identity in a multicultural universe.'

40 S. Tilg, *Chariton of Aphrodisias and the Invention of the Greek Love Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 24–32.

41 Smith, *Greek Identity*, 6–13.

42 See J. G. Cook, 'Roman Crucifixions: From the Second Punic War to Constantine', *ZNW* 106 (2013) 1–32 esp. 6, 7, 8, 10.

43 Schwartz, 'Rome in the Greek Novel?', 377–8.

44 It seems that the texts under consideration are all linked to Rome, as we will note in the conclusion.

parallel of the gospel traditions,⁴⁵ in the sense that a σταυρός is carried and the condemned is crucified on the same tool (we do not know how), and another similarity is that both traditions can be linked to a Roman context.

Although Chariton's suspension accounts have been identified with crucifixion,⁴⁶ this is less clear if we look at how the noun σταυρός appears in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. The noun is found sixteen times,⁴⁷ but there is no indication of what form the crucifixion takes. The story is not clear about the precise shape of the execution tool, other than that Chaereas was somehow mounted (ἐπιβαίνοντα τοῦ σταυροῦ) on it: Mithridates and the others arrive while this is being done (present active participle)⁴⁸ and this probably excludes impalement as execution method, which caused almost immediate death.⁴⁹ That the σταυρός must not be equated with the *patibulum* too quickly is clear from *Chaer.* 4.3.9–10, where Chaereas implores Mithridates to put him back on the σταυρός, which he carried for Callirhoe's sake. We have to acknowledge Samuelsson's statement that '[t]he form of this tool, e.g., crux commissa (T), crux immissa (†), crux simplex (I) or something else, is however not revealed'.⁵⁰ Yet to exclude entirely the possibility that the condemned carried what the Romans called a *patibulum* and what was sometimes referred to as the horizontal bar would be to posit too strong a dichotomy. Σταυρός is a term that could be used both for the transverse bar as a separate object and for a pole (either for impalement or suspension), and that could additionally be used as a synecdoche. But then again, Chariton's text does not inform us of the use that was made of the object, i.e. it does not indicate whether the execution tool consisted of one or more parts. Personally, however, I think two aspects in particular must be taken into account: (1) the remarkable similarities with the gospel traditions; (2) the firmly established connection with first-century Rome that can be detected in the novel. These things considered, this passage could be regarded as a parallel to carrying a σταυρός in the New Testament, though it is not a *clear* parallel.

2.3 Plutarch, *Sera* 554a–b

The versatile and prolific writer Plutarch (*ca* 45–125 CE), from Chaeronea in Boeotia, studied in Athens, then went to Rome and travelled around the Roman Empire. One of his writings contains an often-quoted passage that is linked to 'the

45 Chariton, *Chaer.* 4.2.7's use of σταυρός and φέρω agrees with Luke 23.26 and Chaereas' recapitulation in 4.3.10 with σταυρός and βασιτάζω with Luke 14.27 and John 19.17.

46 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 141–2; Cook, *Crucifixion*, 260–2; perhaps Chapman and Schnabel, *Trial*, 701–2.

47 Chariton, *Chaer.* 3.3.12; 3.4.18; 4.2.7 (twice); 4.3.3, 5 (twice), 6, 8, 9, 10; 4.4.10; 5.10.6; 6.2.10 (twice), 8.8.4.

48 Chariton, *Chaer.* 4.3.5.

49 Cook, *Crucifixion*, 3.

50 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 141.

historical reality of criminals condemned to death by crucifixion carry[ing] the cross, i.e., the crossbeam, from the court – or the prison in which they had been held – through the city to the place of execution’.⁵¹

In *De sera numinis vindicta* (written after 81 CE), Plutarch gives Quietus an account of a discussion at Delphi between himself, his brother and several others. The title of the treatise, ‘On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance’, appears to represent the standpoint of a certain Epicurus, who has already left the group. Plutarch, however, explains why the punishments of the gods are slow in coming. At one point, he advocates the view that ‘divine punishments’ are really a form of therapy; they are measures taken by the gods to correct and prevent harm. In 554a, Plutarch quotes Hesiod, in order to show that evil already bears its own punishment within it. He explains this by two analogies, the second of which is of interest to us:

[A]nd whereas every criminal (κακούργων) who is punished (τῶν κολαζομένων) must carry his own cross (ἐκφέρει τὸν αὐτοῦ σταυρόν) on his body, vice frames out of itself each instrument of its own punishment.⁵²

Most scholars (of crucifixion) agree that this text speaks of cross-bearing,⁵³ but Samuelsson’s view is worth noting. He claims that it is unclear what the σταυρός here is and contends that it ‘is some kind of punishment tool, probably a suspension tool, but which kind? As mentioned earlier, a pointed pole – the suspension tool used in an impaling – lies closer at hand than a cross (†).’⁵⁴ Samuelsson justifies this on the basis of the use of the noun σταυρός in Plutarch’s *Moralia*, which he claims is ambiguous.⁵⁵ Yet, when we look closely at the noun σταυρός in Plutarch’s work (it appears only seven times in total),⁵⁶ we see that Samuelsson is clearly biased towards his own prior definition of σταυρός as a pointed stake/pole. For example, the first instance of σταυρός that Samuelsson gives – Plutarch, *Flam.* 9.3⁵⁷ – contains no reference to anyone being impaled or any other details of its use and is in fact a quotation, not a

51 Chapman and Schnabel, *Trial*, 291. For numerous references, see Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 122 n. 317.

52 Text and translation (slightly adapted) from *Plutarch: Moralia*, vol. VII (ed. and trans. P. H. De Lacy and B. Einarson; LCL 405; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959) 214–15.

53 See e.g. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 77; Iavicoli, *La crocifissione*, 375; Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 66–7; Chapman and Schnabel, *Trial*, 291; Cook, *Crucifixion*, 245–6.

54 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 123.

55 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 121.

56 The other six are Plutarch, *Flam.* 9.3; *Pomp.* 35.1; 62.4; *Dion* 48.2; *Art.* 17.5; *An vit.* 499d.

57 Plutarch’s biography of Titus Flaminus, where Plutarch mentions that Titus was annoyed by Philip’s reaction to provocation by Alcaeus of Messene (See LCL 102.346: ἄφλοιοις καὶ ἀφυλλοῖς ὁδοῖτορε τῶδ’ ἐπὶ νότῳ, Ἀλκαίῳ σταυρὸς πῆγνυται ἡλίβατος).

term specifically used by Plutarch, as Samuelsson holds.⁵⁸ That a σταυρός is sometimes used for the purposes of fortification or to create a palisade⁵⁹ does not automatically mean that all the instances of σταυρός refer to a pointed stake, although the evidence from Plutarch is too meagre to settle this issue. Σταυρός is a broad term, with multiple uses, as is shown by Plutarch's rhetorical question in *An vit.* 499d: ἀλλ' εἰς σταυρόν καθηλώσεις ἢ σκόλοπι πήξεις; Samuelsson notes here that σταυρός implies suspension, because the verb καθηλώω implies nailing and not impaling as Plutarch's other alternative (σκόλοπι πήξεις) suggests. On the next page, he then states: 'The noun [σταυρός] leans toward impaling while the verb implies nailing.'⁶⁰ Clearly Plutarch is giving an 'either/or' example, and this shows that the term σταυρός is not used solely as 'pointed stake'.⁶¹ It seems rather contrived to insist that σταυρός means a stake (for impaling) in this text, while the function of the rhetorical question shows otherwise. Samuelsson should have allowed for a wider semantic range for this term. As to the traditional view that Plutarch speaks in *Mor.* 554a–b of cross-bearing, i.e. carrying a *patibulum*, as in some Latin sources: there are grounds for caution here. On the basis of his valuable discussion of the terms, Cook assumes a priori that the relationship between the two terms is clear and he equates σταυρός here with *patibulum*.⁶² Plutarch's example envisions punishment (τῶν κολαζομένων) for an evildoer (κακούργων), but a clear crucifixion context is absent, although both Samuelsson and Cook agree that it must refer to an execution.⁶³ Plutarch's use of κολαζομένων does not always imply death.⁶⁴ Moreover, it remains to be demonstrated that Plutarch is talking here about Roman practices, if there was such a thing as a 'common Roman' practice at all.⁶⁵ It is evident that Plutarch was very much engaged with Rome, as his own life as well as his writings show.⁶⁶ Therefore, he could easily have been familiar with the practice that a condemned person carried his torture device (*patibulum*) on the way to execution (crucifixion). The verbal agreement with the gospel traditions, however, is the

58 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 120.

59 Plutarch, *Pomp.* 35.1, 62.4; *Dion* 48.2.

60 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 122.

61 Cf. Cook, *Crucifixion*, 245–6.

62 Cook, *Crucifixion*, 245–6.

63 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 146, 122: 'Plutarch mentions briefly something that appears to be a kind of custom connected with execution by suspension'; Cook, *Crucifixion*, 245 translates 'every criminal condemned to death'.

64 E.g. clearly in Plutarch, *Art.* 29; seemingly so in Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1040c; not in Plutarch, *Sera* 565a; 566e; in the other four instances it is not clear: Plutarch, *Cohib. ira* 459e; *Sera* 561c; *Fac.* 944b; *Lat. viv.* 1130d.

65 Cf. Kuhn, 'Kreuzstrafe', 689.

66 On Plutarch and his relationship with Rome, see e.g. C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

most persuasive argument.⁶⁷ The train of thought can be easily followed here: Jesus is condemned and executed by the Romans, and he carries a *σταυρός* (which apparently is part of Roman practice); Plutarch talks about a condemned person carrying a *σταυρός*; therefore the texts refer to the same practice. Although this is not improbable, we should be careful in accepting it. Clearly, Plutarch talks about how a criminal carries a *σταυρός* on his body (*τῷ μὲν σώματι*). The inference often made is that the individual carried it on his back and this could indicate that it was attached to the person. But we do not know this for sure. Moreover, there is no clear crucifixion context. Yet there are two factors that make it likely that this passage *does* refer to crucifixion and thus to cross-bearing, as some Latin sources do too. (The word *σταυρός* is used either because there was no technical term for *patibulum*, or because Plutarch was not aware that there were different terms in Latin, as the word *patibulum* is not very common.) First, due to his acquaintance with the Roman Empire and its customs, and probably with forms of crucifixion/suspension in his own area, it is likely that Plutarch is referring here to Roman practices. Second, there is no evidence that carrying a *σταυρός* was ever used for anything other than capital punishment.

2.4 *Lucian, Peregr. 34*

We will discuss the fragment from Lucian of Samosata (*ca* 165–80 CE) briefly, as it is not often linked to cross-bearing.⁶⁸ Lucian wrote the satirical *De morte Peregrini* shortly after the death of the cynic Peregrinus Proteus in 165 CE. Lucian's account, which portrays Peregrinus as a charlatan and Christians as simpletons, contains a short passage which is connected with cross-bearing:

Anyhow, he [Peregrinus] was being escorted by crowds and getting his fill of glory as he gazed at the number of his admirers, not knowing, poor wretch, that those who are led to the cross (*καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ τὸν σταυρὸν ἀπαγομένοις*) or in the grip of the executioner have many more at their heels.⁶⁹

Peregrinus seemed to be revelling in the number of his followers. Yet Lucian makes the point that those who will be crucified (and those in the grip of the executioner) have a larger entourage. How does this relate to cross-bearing? Bøe notes: 'Lucian does not speak of carrying the cross, but the choice of the verb *ἀπάγω* in the passive voice seems to suggest the role of a victim on the way to his own crucifixion.'⁷⁰ The clause *καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ τὸν σταυρὸν ἀπαγομένοις* leaves room for action by the victim ('and those who are led to the *σταυρός*').

67 The use of *ἐκφέρω* and the object *σταυρός* resembles Luke 23.26 (with the use of *φέρω*).

68 See e.g. Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 70.

69 Text and translation (slightly adapted) from *Lucian*, vol. IV (ed. and trans. A. M. Harmon; LCL 302; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936) 38–9.

70 Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 70.

Whether ‘those who are led’ carried their own σταυρός is not discussed, and indeed it is not Lucian’s point. An interesting parallel can be found in Dionysius’ *Ant. rom.* 12.6.6 (ἐπὶ τοὺς σταυροὺς ἀπήχθησαν),⁷¹ and it seems that ἐπί + σταυρός + ἀπάγω is a parallel to the much-used passive forms of *in crucem agere*.⁷² Yet Bøe’s statement that ‘we should not take this text as firm attestation of cross-bearing in antiquity’⁷³ should be expressed in stronger terms: neither this text, nor the one from Dionysius (*Ant. rom.* 12.6.6), can be regarded as instances of cross-bearing.

2.5 Artemidorus, *Onir.* 2.56

References to Artemidorus’ *Oneirocritica* (the interpretation of dreams) often appear in New Testament discussions on cross-bearing.⁷⁴ The author of the *Oneirocritica* refers to himself as ‘of Daldis’, and in earlier works ‘of Ephesus’ (3.66). Although the seemingly autobiographical material in the *Oneirocritica* may have a stylistic purpose, it seems ‘safe to conclude that Artemidorus strongly identifies with western Asia Minor, a fact that is corroborated by his incorporation of a large number of topographical references and linguistic elements from his region into his text’.⁷⁵ Artemidorus seems to have travelled in Asia Minor, Greece and Italy⁷⁶ and the work was probably written during the Antonine and Severan dynasties, i.e. in the second part of the second to the early third century. Galen (late second to early third century) mentions an Artemidorus ‘of Phocaea’ (also Asia Minor, 15.444), who might be the same author.⁷⁷

71 LCL 388.220. Cf. the use of ‘leading to death’, in e.g. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.3.4 (καὶ μετὰ ταύτην ἀπαγομένους τὴν ἐπὶ θανάτῳ τοῖς ἀγίοις μάρτυσιν); (probably the author) Seleucus of Alexandria, *De proverbis Alexandrinorum*, 34 (τοῖς ἐπὶ θάνατον ἀπαγομένους ταύτης μετὴν τῆς παρρησίας).

72 Cf. Cook, ‘Roman Crucifixions’, where one can find e.g. Livy 22.33.1–2; Orosius, *Hist.* 5.9.4; 6.18.33; Cicero, *Clu.* 187; Valerius Maximus 8.4.2; Suetonius, *Cal.* 12.2.

73 Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 70.

74 Mostly because of verbal agreement in the noun σταυρός and the verb βαστάζω, cf. Luke 14.27 and John 19.17. Excluding commentaries, see e.g. J. Lipsius, *De cruce libri tres: ad sacram profanámque historiam utiles; unà cum notis* (Antwerp: Joannem Moretum, 1594) 39–40, but also Holzmeister, *Crux Domini*, 16–19; Peddinghaus, ‘Leidensgeschichte’, 36; J. Blinzler, *Der Prozeß Jesu* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1969⁴) 360; R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*. (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 914; S. Légasse, *The Trial of Jesus* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1997) 80, 149 n. 25; Iavicoli, *La crocifissione*, 375; Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 65–6; E. Cantarella, *I supplizi capitali. Origine e funzioni delle pene di morte in Grecia e a Roma* (rev. edn; Milan: Feltrinelli, 2011) 180–4; Cook, ‘John 19:17’, 451–2; Chapman and Schnabel, *Trial*, 291–2; Cook, *Crucifixion*, 31–2; 290, 423 n. 34, 424.

75 D. E. Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus’ Oneirocritica: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 2.

76 See e.g. Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.pr and 5.pr.

77 See Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus’ Oneirocritica*, 1–8.

The text we are interested in reads:

A criminal seeing someone carrying (βαστάζειν) one of the chthonic demons, either Pluto himself or Cerberus or another from Hades, indicates [that he is] to carry a cross (σταυρὸν βαστάσαι). For the cross (ὁ σταυρός) resembles death, and one who is about to be nailed to it first carries it (πρότερον αὐτὸν βαστάζει).⁷⁸

Intriguingly, in a recent edition, Daniel E. Harris-McCoy translates σταυρός with ‘crucifix’.⁷⁹ The use of ‘crucifix’ is incorrect because it is anachronistic and it differs from a σταυρός altogether: the latter is a torture device while a crucifix is an artistic object that represents Jesus’ crucifixion.⁸⁰ While Samuelsson discusses all the other supposed instances of cross-bearing, he has curiously omitted this fragment.⁸¹ Cook discusses this passage in his excursus on ‘*Patibulum and σταυρός*’, where he notes that because of his travels, Artemidorus ‘was certainly aware of Roman crucifixion practice’.⁸² What is more interesting is Artemidorus’ apparently matter-of-fact statement (see the causal conjunction γάρ) that crosses are carried.⁸³ This leads Cook to believe that Artemidorus is falling back on common knowledge of ‘Roman crucifixion practice’ because of his travels.⁸⁴ Moreover, Cook is certainly right to think that Artemidorus probably meant the transverse bar of the ‘cross’, because Artemidorus seems to imply that a σταυρός for crucifixion consists of two beams (ἕκ ξύλων) which are nailed together, as seen in 2.53:⁸⁵

78 The most recent critical edition of the Greek text is the already-mentioned Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus’ Oneirocritica*, which is based on R. A. Pack’s *Artemidori Daldiani Onirocriticon libri v* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1963). The critical editions show no interesting variation in the two available manuscripts *Codex Laurentianus* 87.8 (L, eleventh century) and *Codex Marcianus* 268 (V, fifteenth century) for this passage. Only αὐτῶ is added in V after ἰδόντι σταυρὸν βαστάσαι, and the introduction is slightly different, βαστάζειν δέ according to L, with V omitting δέ. See the critical apparatus in Pack, *Artemidori*, 185. The critical edition of the Arabic version is integrated in the edition of Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus’ Oneirocritica*, 42. Translation my own.

79 Harris-McCoy, *Artemidorus’ Oneirocritica*, 239: ‘To carry one if the Chthonic deities ... signifies ... that a crucifix will be carried. For the crucifix also resembles death, and the one who is going to be nailed to it carries it beforehand.’

80 Cf. Jensen, *Cross*, 74, who notes that ‘art historians have been unable to identify an unambiguously Christian crucifix before the fourth or early fifth century, and only a few examples before the sixth century’.

81 It is only mentioned in footnotes in Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 122 n. 315, 140 n. 392, 142 n. 400 (although Artemidorus’ work is mentioned in the running text, but is not discussed critically), 241 n. 24 and 245 n. 39.

82 Cook, *Crucifixion*, 28–32.

83 Cf. Bøe, *Cross-Bearing*, 66.

84 Cook, *Crucifixion*, 32.

85 Cf. Cook, *Crucifixion*, 32.

Being crucified is a good thing for all sailors. For the cross is made from beams (ἐκ ξύλων) and nails (ἤλων) like the ship, and its mast is like a cross (ἡ κατάρτιος αὐτοῦ ὁμοία ἐστὶ σταυρῶ).

Samuelsson discusses these passages as well, and it is worth quoting him when he addresses his doubts as to whether the κατάρτιος was a cross- or T-shaped mast:

It is a good assumption that the mast of an ancient ship had some kind of yard to hold up and spread the sail. With the yard suspended without sail, the mast would have been fairly ‘cross-shaped.’ But there is a significant leap from that assumption to stating that this was the universal form of mast, the one Artemidorus and his readers automatically envisioned when they said/heard κατάρτιος (mast). If there were an obvious similarity between a κατάρτιος and a σταυρός in the sense ‘cross’ (+), why did other ancient authors not pay attention to that?⁸⁶

The answer to the question is that κατάρτιος is a very rare word indeed, and before Artemidorus (as a quick TLG search shows) appears only in Cyranides, *Nat. hist.* 4.67.9 and in Aelius Herodianus, *Partitiones* 53.9 and 178.5, and thus Artemidorus’ comparison between a κατάρτιος and a σταυρός can be seen as novel.⁸⁷ But together with the statement from *Onir.* 1.76, ‘if he is a criminal he will be crucified (σταυρωθήσεται) because of the height and stretching out of hands (τὴν τῶν χειρῶν ἔκτασιν),’ we can infer that it must have been a horizontal bar.⁸⁸ It could, of course, be argued that this was above the person’s head, but that would render another (transverse) beam useless (and we know that two beams were used). It might be inferred from the passage further on that this stretching out of hands is horizontal, because Artemidorus refers to a mast (with a horizontal component).⁸⁹

The text of *Onir.* 2.56 shows clear correspondence with the gospel passages (e.g. the use of βαστάζω and σταυρός in Luke 14.27 and John 19.17). This, together with Artemidorus’ travels and other uses of σταυρός, makes a strong case that *Onir.* 2.56 is referring to a practice that we see elsewhere in antiquity: a condemned individual who carries the transverse bar used to construct a T-shaped execution tool (whether this was a *crux immissa* or *crux commissa* does not matter).⁹⁰

86 Samuelsson, *Crucifixion*, 277.

87 For a ship mast/sail linked with the cross in early Christian literature, see e.g. Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 55; Hippolytus, *Antichr.* 59; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 29.8. Cf. H. Rahner, ‘Antenna Crucis. IV: Das Kreuz als Mastbaum und Antenne’, *ZKT* 75 (1953) 129–73.

88 Cf. Cook, *Crucifixion*, 32, 289.

89 See also R. van Wingerden, ‘Horizontal or Not? The Patibulum in Sallust, *Hist.* 3 Frg. 9’, *Biblica* 99 (2018) 592–9.

90 Cf. Cook, *Crucifixion*, 32.

3. Sources on Cross-Bearing Reassessed

According to the Gospels, Jesus' cross was carried by either Simon of Cyrene or Jesus himself (Mark 15.21parr./John 19.17). This practice is attested in several sources which we have assessed here. We have seen that two ancient sources should be disregarded when it comes to cross-bearing, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* vii.69 and Lucian, *Peregr.* 34, because they lack the relevant terminology and/or details. As for the other three sources (Chariton, *Chaer.* 4.2.7, 4.3.10; Plutarch, *Sera* 554a–b; Artemidorus, *Onir.* 2.56), they very likely refer to the practice described in the gospel passages. However, we should stress that there is no certainty, and caution should be exercised in calling these sources witnesses to the practices described in the New Testament, because the context is sometimes ambiguous. Either way, what connects these three passages is that they were written by authors who were very familiar with Roman imperial customs, and very likely had knowledge of Roman penal practices as well. This does not, however, prove that there was a consistent and widespread practice in the whole of the Roman Empire of compelling the condemned to carry their cross; these writers could easily have picked up the idea while in Rome or in Italy. In fact, the two sources that could be regarded as witnesses to cross-bearing, unlike the gospel traditions, contain indirect information about the carrying of a cross (Plutarch, Artemidorus); they assume that the practice is common but they use it for their own literary purposes. The third source, from Chariton, also contains indirect information about cross-bearing, as it is a fictional novel. It is important not to forget this. However, Chariton, too, assumes that his readership is acquainted with the practice. Ironically, the two sources that cannot be regarded as proofs are closest to the passion accounts in that they tell of events leading up to the death/execution of the protagonist (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Lucian). Thus, all in all, the practice of carrying a $\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ was certainly practised outside Rome, as the Gospels attest, but otherwise no extant Greek source with an actual report of cross-bearing (e.g. from Greek-writing historians) is found outside Rome.⁹¹

The passages from Chariton and Artemidorus clearly link carrying a $\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ to death by execution. In Plutarch this is not entirely clear (but is probably implied). Although the evidence is sparse, I would argue that carrying a $\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ in antiquity in general should not be seen as a separate punishment without execution, but always as a prelude to execution upon the same device that was being carried. Moreover, any punishment that the sources mention in relation to a $\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ always seems fatal.

91 The same goes for the Latin sources, which were all composed in/around Rome, see Van Wingerden, 'Carrying a *patibulum*'.

The period in which the three texts that probably discuss σταυρός-carrying were written spans about two centuries, and Chariton is probably earlier than our first New Testament occurrence, i.e. in the Gospel of Mark. This means that the Gospels are not the earliest Greek sources on cross-bearing, although the passages where Jesus says that his followers must take up their cross predate the final gospel texts. Consequently, whereas in Latin the carrying of a beam (*patibulum*) first occurs in written sources at quite an early date (third century BCE),⁹² the first extant Greek cross-bearing sources only appear well into the first century CE. Just as there are few Latin sources (probably four), the number of Greek sources that testify to the classic idea of cross-bearing is low (three). It is likely that cross-bearing was simply not a matter of great interest to ancient authors, just as other practical aspects/procedures of crucifixion; the Gospels likewise are very brief about the actual crucifixion of Jesus.⁹³ This does not mean that the practice was rare, but nor can we assume on the strength of the textual evidence that it was common or widely known – although these sources seem to assume that their readership was familiar with the practices described. Together with the Latin sources (esp. the Lex Puteolana, which presupposes a legal basis), the conclusion seems warranted that the practice was widespread.

Moreover, just like the three sources on cross-bearing above, the New Testament passion accounts are set in a Roman context, and even more explicitly so, as the Gospels portray Jesus' crucifixion as a Roman punishment enforced by a Roman functionary and executed by Roman soldiers in a territory governed by Rome. It seems reasonably safe to assume that there was at least some continuity in the practice of crucifixion, and thus that Jesus/Simon carried, as the Latin says, a *patibulum* (there is no mention of a *crux* being carried, so there is no reason to assume, given that the imperial context was the same, that the carrying of a σταυρός refers to the cross as a whole).

Additionally, what we have seen in the Greek, but also in the Latin, sources is that the condemned carries his own cross, not another man's.⁹⁴ The accounts of Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus' cross are therefore all the more remarkable. While some have argued (albeit on other grounds)⁹⁵ that this was an invention,

92 Van Wingerden, 'Carrying a *patibulum*'.

93 The Gospels do not state how crucifixion was done: Mark 15.24 Καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτὸν; Matt 27.34 Σταυρώσαντες δὲ αὐτὸν; Luke 23.33 ἐσταύρωσαν αὐτὸν; John 19.18 αὐτὸν ἐσταύρωσαν.

94 Both Plutarch and Chariton use σταυρός combined with a form of αὐτός. Cf. Mark 8.34/Matt 16.24/Luke 9.23, Matt 10.38. Luke 14.27 and John 19.17 have reflexive pronouns (ἑαυτοῦ and ἑαυτῶ). See, for the Latin, Van Wingerden, 'Carrying a *patibulum*'.

95 W. J. Lyons, 'The Hermeneutics of **Fictional Black** and **Factual Red**: The Markan Simon of Cyrene and the Quest for the Historical Jesus', *JSHJ* 4 (2006) 139–54. Chapman and Schnabel, *Trial*, 276–82 present sources that seem to show that forcing Simon is consistent with the practice of the requisitioning of provincials (ἀγγαρεία). However, Laurie Ann

most scholars agree that it lends some veracity to the story, and it is understandable that scholars should seek to explain why Simon was forced to carry Jesus' cross. Also, there is a striking difference in the choice of verbs. While the New Testament uses αἶρω and λαμβάνω often, these are absent in the sources examined here.⁹⁶ The Greek sources use φέρω and βαστάζω. Further inquiry into the choice of verbs might shed light on cross-bearing in the New Testament.

These assessments may also affect the question of the historicity of the sayings under discussion. We will make some brief observations here. The cross-bearing sayings in Mark 8.34parr. are often regarded as post-Easter because it would be in the interests of the earliest Jesus followers to present Jesus as foreknowing the manner of his own death. This would function as an encouragement for the intended community, which was experiencing persecution.⁹⁷ The Jesus Seminar attributed this saying to a later tradition because of 'its implied Christian understanding of the cross'.⁹⁸ However, (1) if Jesus was engaged in fierce conflict with the religious authorities, he was likely aware of his impending fate;⁹⁹ (2) carrying a σταυρός in relation to crucifixion seems well founded as a historical practice; (3) it is likely that Jesus was familiar with the forms of capital punishment, including crucifixion, which were in use in ancient Palestine, Syria and Egypt under Roman authority even *before* his own crucifixion.¹⁰⁰ It is not implausible therefore that

Brink has shown that ἀγγραπεία refers to official transport (carts/animals) and not persons. The sources mentioned show that there was much illegal requisitioning by the Roman military, and therefore there was a need for regulation. Simon was thus probably compelled illegally. L. Brink, 'Going the Extra Mile: Reading Matt 5:41 Literally and Metaphorically', *The History of Religions School Today: Essays on the New Testament and Related Ancient Mediterranean Texts* (ed. T. R. Blanton IV, R. M. Calhoun and C. K. Rothschild; WUNT 1/340; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) 111–27.

96 See e.g. R. Laufen, *Die Doppelüberlieferungen der Logienquelle und des Markusevangeliums* (Bonner Biblische Beiträge 54; Bonn: Verlag Peter Hanstein GmbH, 1980) 303 n. 10. For αἶρω, see Mark 8.34parr.; 15.21; Matt 27.32. For λαμβάνω, Matt 10.38.

97 See e.g. J. Donahue, *The Theology and Setting of Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (1983 Pere Marquette Theology Lecture; Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1983); E. Best, *Disciples and Discipleship* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986); A. Winn, *The Purpose of Mark's Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda* (WUNT 11/245; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 82, 84.

98 R. W. Funk, R. W. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997) 78; see also 79.

99 See e.g. V. Howard, 'Did Jesus Speak about his Own Death?', *CBQ* 39 (1977) 515–27; P. Balla, 'What Did Jesus Think About His Approaching Death?', *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Roots* (ed. M. Labahn and A. Schmidt; JSNTSup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001) 239–59, esp. 250).

100 See esp. Cook, 'Roman Crucifixions', 1–32, esp. 12 on Varus and the two thousand (Josephus, *A.J.* 17.295). S. McKnight, *Jesus and his Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005) 154–5: 'The logic is simple

Jesus uttered something like the Synoptic cross-sayings (Mark 8.34parr.; Matt 10.38/Luke 14.27).¹⁰¹ It is necessary, however, to explore further the question of the historicity of these passages, as well as the implications for the interpretation of the texts on cross-bearing sayings in their respective Gospels.

and unavoidable: if Jesus called his disciples to a willing martyrdom, for which there is plenty of evidence (Q 12:4–9; 14:27; 17:33), we can infer with the utmost probability that he too, saw his own death approaching.’

¹⁰¹ See also J. Kahmann, ‘Het volgen van Christus door zelfverloochening en kruisdragen’, *TvT* 1 (1961) 205–26, at 218–19.