

The Gospel of Peter, The Forgery of Pliny the Younger, Written in 112 CE *Substitution, Political Backdating, and Military Reaction.*



Stylus primum, pilum deinde.
The stylus of 112, the javelin of 115.
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Abstract

This philological and historical study proposes the possible attribution of the Gospel of Peter to Pliny the Younger, composed in Bithynia-Pontus around 112 CE. Pliny the Younger is argued here to have acted in his capacity as Legatus Augusti in order to cover a military operation disastrous for Rome.

The hypothesis rests on three pillars: (1) the identification of a precise political motive — to cover the humiliation and crucifixion of the King of the Jews at Pella in 107 CE; (2) the claim that the apparent anomalies of the text are consistent with a cultivated Latin-speaking author of the early second century; and (3) a traceable diffusion through the Alexandrian scriptoria. The subsequent Kitos revolt (115-117

CE) is interpreted as the response of Hellenistic Jews in the East to the fallacious narrative imposed by this scroll.

Keywords

Gospel of Peter · Pliny the Younger · falsum · pseudepigraphon · crucifixion · King of the Jews · Via Regia · Docetism · Ignatius of Antioch · Nazoraean network · Kitos War · Edessa · backdating · Petronius · provincial cognitio · Davidic lineage · Palma · Alexandrian scriptoria · Serapion of Antioch · Lusius Quietus

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Preliminary Statement

This working paper is a public thesis, submitted to each reader’s judgment. It does not present itself as an academic thesis in the institutional sense; it deliberately preserves a necessary freedom. It proposes a historical reconstruction through an ascending method.

Accordingly, all commentaries and opinions after 116 lie outside the chronological window examined here (102-116) and outside the chain of events under review.

This public thesis remains open to remarks, observations, and amendments. It was made possible by wide access to online archives, something impossible before the digital age, and by the assistance of AI. AI was only the chisel of the stonemason. The chisel does not make the work.

The author is Christian; the historical existence of Jesus Christ, the Passion of Christ, the crucifixion, and the resurrection are not disputed in this thesis.

1. Philological Comparison: Gospel of Peter / Pliny the Younger

This first inquiry began with the Gospel of Peter itself. That text opened the initial breach: a small thread protruded from the skein; I took hold of it and pulled. From that point came the elementary questions of any inquiry: who? when? why? where? how? who benefits?

That is, in substance, the work of the historian. The Greek word *historia* first means “inquiry.” It is not merely a matter of receiving a transmitted narrative, but of interrogating it, dismantling it, and then asking whether its pieces can be arranged otherwise.

As the questions advanced, the whole reassembled itself like a puzzle whose pieces already existed, but had been scattered, displaced, or filed in the wrong order.

The first task was therefore the search for the author. After several unproductive hypotheses, a serious candidate appeared: Pliny the Younger. From that point onward, the correlations followed one another. A first concordance led to another, then another still, until a coherent structure emerged: a possible author, a political motive, a historical moment, a network of diffusion, and a military consequence.

1.2 Chronological Calibration: Pilate and Herod

The text anchors its narrative within the 26-36 CE window by means of two real historical references: Pontius Pilate and Herod Antipas. Yet the author commits a revealing procedural error: he calls Antipas *basileus* — king — whereas Antipas was only tetrarch of Galilee. This was precisely the title he claimed and which Caligula refused him in 39 CE. A Palestinian author contemporary with 33 CE would not have made such an error. A Latin-speaking Roman in Bithynia, reconstructing the context of 33 from documentary sources, naturally writes *rex* by administrative analogy, and his Greek copy gives *basileus*. It is the same kind of procedural anachronism found in the great ancient *falsa*.

1.3 Cascading Cognito as Narrative Structure

The narrative structure of the Gospel of Peter is that of a provincial administrative report moving upward: soldiers -> Petronius Polianus (field officer) / Atticus Herodes (consular authority) -> Pilate (§38-46). This is the provincial *cognito* — the Roman judicial inquiry — transposed into gospel narrative. The structure is identical to Letter X.96, where information ascends from informers to Pliny and then to Trajan. No Christian evangelist thinks in those terms. Pliny does so instinctively, because this is the grammar of his office.

1.4 The Seven Testamentary Seals

Epecrisan epta sfragidav (§33): seven seals placed upon the tomb. In Roman law, the *testamentum* requires exactly seven seals from seven witnesses (*septem signis signatum*). This is a precise notarial procedure, familiar to any jurist and proconsul. It is entirely absent from the Judean context of 33 CE, where the sealing of a tomb obeys no fixed numerical protocol. Pliny, proconsul and jurist by training, inserts it by professional reflex.

1.5 Pilate’s Formula of Exculpation

Egw kaqareuw tou aimatov tou uiou tou qeou (§46). This is the Greek calque of a Latin formula of administrative non-liability. Psychologically, it is identical to the opening of Letter X.96: *sollemne est mihi... ad te referre*. Pliny discharges responsibility onto Trajan exactly as Pilate discharges responsibility onto Herod. It is the institutional psychology of the official who protects himself, transposed into narrative form.

1.6 The Washing of Hands — A Jewish Gesture Attributed to Pilate

The learned tradition itself recognizes that Pilate’s washing of hands “is not Roman, but Jewish” (Baslez, 2003). A Roman prefect would not wash his hands according to a Judean rite. This is a ritual detail collected from an external source — as documentary information — and incorrectly attributed to Pilate by an author seeking to Romanize the prefect’s exculpation without mastering Palestinian usage.

1.7 Docetism as Involuntary Stoic Rationalism

Autov de esiwpa wv mhdena ponon ecwn (§10) – “he remained silent, as though he felt no pain.” This clause belongs to an external rationalizing observer, not to a believer. For a man of letters nourished by Roman Stoicism, a divine being does not suffer physically; that is the premise. The Docetism which Serapion of Antioch detects around 190 CE is not a deliberate heretical option: it is the cosmological reflex of a Latin writer trained in philosophical abstraction and writing in Greek.

1.8 Greek as a Linguistic Costume

The Greek of the Gospel of Peter is correct, but not spontaneous. Its participial constructions are heavy, calquing the Latin ablative absolute. Circumstantial participial clauses – of the type exhgoumenwn autwn a eidon – reproduce Latin syntax in transposition. This is the Greek of a cultivated Latin speaker, not the organic Greek of an eastern community. The text is written in Greek because it must appear to come from an eastern Hellenophone milieu. Greek is a costume, not a native language.

1.9 Comparative Table of Topoi

Topos	Pliny X.96	Gospel of Peter
Exculpation of the Roman official	Sollemne est mihi... ad te referre (§1)	Egw kaqareuw tou aimatov (§46)
Centurion as investigative pivot	Ex duabus ancillis per tormenta (§9)	Petronius ton kenturiwna (§31, 38-45)
Administrative order of silence	Hetaerias esse vetueram (§8)	Ekeleusen... mhden eipein (§49)
Fixed day / liturgical night	Stato die ante lucem (§7)	Th nukti h epefwsken h kuriakh (§35)
Formal sealing	Sacramento se obstringere (§7)	Epecrisan epta sfragidav (§33)
Provincial contagion	Superstitionis istius contagio (§10)	Ouai taiv amartiaiv hmwn (§25)
Cascading cognitio	Informers -> Pliny -> Trajan	Soldiers -> Petronius Polianus -> Atticus Herodes -> Pilate (§38-46)

1.10 The Modal Substitution: Stoning -> Crucifixion

The most significant lacuna in the Gospel of Peter is what it does not say. Yeshua, described as a blasphemer and seducer by the local religious authorities, should have undergone the capital procedure prescribed by Hebrew law for that offense: stoning (Sekilah), whose protocol is rigorously fixed in the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 6:4). This legal reality is so strong that rabbinic memory itself preserves it, the Talmud explicitly stating that Yeshu was led out to be stoned (Sanhedrin 43a).

This legal modality is nevertheless entirely absent from the Gospel of Peter, before later being awkwardly smoothed over in the canonical redactions, where the reflex of stoning appears only in spontaneous crowd movements, as in John 8:59 and 10:31.

The author of 112 CE, though aware of stoning, deliberately erases it. He substitutes Roman crucifixion for the sentence of local law. This transfer of penal modality is not a theological nuance; it is the founding act of Pliny the Younger’s falsum. It dresses an eastern religious verdict in the form of a Roman political execution, forcibly inserting imperial authority as the sole organizer – and guarantor – of the outcome.

Internal Index: The Gospel of John (8:59 and 10:31)

Even in the later canonical Gospels, which attempted to smooth the narrative, the natural reflex of the crowd and the authorities in response to blasphemy resurfaces. The raw fact is this: twice, when Jesus is accused of blasphemy, the text says, “they took up stones to throw at him” (John 8:59) and “the Jews again took up stones to stone him” (John 10:31).

2. Historical Reconstruction and Contextualization, 102-116

2.1 Rome after the Dacian Wars: the Economic Necessity of the Via Regia

An Empire Short of Resources (101-106 CE)

Trajan’s Dacian wars (101-102 and 105-106 CE) represent the most considerable military effort of the Empire since the civil wars. For the first war, approximately 150,000 men were deployed – 75,000 to 80,000 legionaries and 70,000 to 75,000 auxiliaries. For the second, the effort was still larger: fourteen legions, two newly created legions (II Traiana Fortis and XXX Ulpia Victrix), or roughly 175,000 to 200,000 men deployed – nearly half of the Empire’s military strength. Such mobilization, sustained for six years, represented an unprecedented financial hemorrhage. The imperial treasury was exhausted.

Dacian Gold – Insufficient Resource and Structural Cost

Trajan conquered Dacia for its gold and silver mines and for the personal treasure of Decebalus, captured in 106 CE. These resources were real, but non-recurring and insufficient. The structural problem was immediately apparent: the province of Dacia, north of the Danube, was difficult to defend against barbarian incursions and required the permanent mobilization of many soldiers – up to 50,000 men. This recurring garrison cost cancelled the mining revenues. Rome had spent more than it gained. Cassius Dio himself notes that the exploitation of Dacian mines did not suffice to cover the expenses of the province.

The Need for a Recurring Commercial Flow

What Rome sought in 106 CE, after the Dacian wars, was not another province to defend; it was a recurring, predictable flow of revenue without major military cost. Tolls on trade routes met exactly that need. Arabia Nabataea had for centuries controlled the Via Regia – the Road of Kings – the axis descending from Damascus toward Petra, Aqaba, and the incense, myrrh, and spice routes toward India and Arabia. The tolls on this caravan flow represented considerable annual revenues, with no heavy garrison and no difficult front to defend. This was exactly what Rome needed after 106.

Palma and the Annexation of Aqaba (106 CE)

Aulus Cornelius Palma, governor of Syria since 105 CE, received from Trajan the mandate to annex Arabia Nabataea and seize control of the Via Regia. The operation was conducted in 106 CE with remarkable speed; the Nabataean kingdom did not resist. The new province of Arabia was created, with Bostra as its capital. Palma took control of Aqaba, the maritime outlet of the entire route. Tolls, caravan monopolies, supply routes in incense and spices: everything became Roman.

Within the Dionian method – *prophásei mén* as against *tē d’ alētheía* – the official pretext for the annexation was a breach of the succession protocol of the Nabataean kingdom. The true reason was fiscal: Rome, exhausted by six years of Dacian wars, needed to appropriate a commercial flow in order to finance its army. Cassius Dio, who systematically attributes Trajan’s wars to the desire for glory (*doxēs epithymía*), does not see, or does not say – the strictly financial dimension of the operation. Yet this is what explains the haste of the annexation in 106, in the very year of the capture of Sarmizegetusa.

2.2 The Road of Kings — Palma’s Motive

In 106 CE, Aulus Cornelius Palma annexed Arabia Nabataea for Trajan. The new province of Arabia gave Rome control of the Via Regia, the Road of Kings, the commercial axis descending from Damascus toward Petra, Aqaba, and the incense, myrrh, and spice routes toward India and Arabia. It was the most important commercial and strategic operation in the region for generations: tolls, caravan monopolies, supply routes — all became Roman.

The Judean, Nazoraean, and messianic communities that lined this route — from Pella toward Petra, Aqaba, and Transjordan — recognized a legitimate authority that was not Roman. They paid tithes, communal obligations, and loyalties toward a Davidic center. This parallel network of loyalty and moral economy short-circuited Roman control of the route. The Davidic heir — the King of the Jews recognized by these communities — was a direct obstacle to complete Roman commercial seizure of the Via Regia. Not militarily. Structurally.

2.3 14 Nisan 107 CE — The Execution of the King of the Jews at Pella

Palma mandated the column of Petronius Polianus for a surgical elimination. The column moved up the Road of Kings, investigated, and ascended toward Pella in order to arrest and kill the head of the Nazoraean network, which competed with Rome’s commercial network.

On 14 Nisan 107 CE, the day of the slaughter of the paschal lamb, the King of the Jews was arrested and crucified at Pella, on the height of the mountain. Rome had the official titlature inscribed on the cross: *basileuv twv Ioudaiwv* — the King of the Jews. It was a deliberate act of state. The execution was juridically presided over by the consular Tiberius Claudius Atticus Herodes (H.E. III, 32); Petronius Polianus was the field officer.

The name of the field officer — Petronius Polianus — is the real name of the column commander in March-April 107 CE, documentarily attested alongside Palma and Claudius Severus. Pliny, composing the Gospel of Peter in 112 from Bithynia-Pontus, had access to the military archives of the 107 operation. He does not invent the name; he transfers the actual name of the executing officer. Pliny chooses Petronius rather than Atticus Herodes — the consular figure legally responsible — because Atticus was a prominent senatorial figure, from the richest family in Athens, still identifiable in 112, and because implicating him directly would have been politically impossible. He takes the name of the more discreet equestrian officer on the ground. No Palestinian evangelist of 33 CE would have named a Roman centurion; no canonical Gospel does so. This name is the involuntary signature of the 107 operation within the falsum of 112.

Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea, H.E. III, 32: “[Simeon son of Clopas] suffered martyrdom under the reign of Trajan and the consular Atticus. He was condemned to be crucified.” Tiberius Claudius Atticus Herodes was a Greek senator of Athenian origin and former legate of Judea (99-102/103 CE). The date 107/108 CE is established by Eusebius’ *Chronicon* (the tenth year of Trajan’s reign). Quintus Pompeius Falco was the official governor of Judea in 107; Atticus Herodes is the consular figure designated by Hegesippus as presiding over the execution.

What Palma did not calculate was the theological effect of the date. In Davidic Nazoraean theology, crucifying the King of the Jews on 14 Nisan is not a closure; it is a confirmation. The royal lamb sacrificed at Passover. The martyrdom that founds legitimacy instead of destroying it. Rome thought it was extinguishing the fire. It poured oil upon it. In the weeks that followed, a messianic shock wave crossed all Nazoraean communities from Syria to Alexandria, from Cyprus to Mesopotamia.

2.4 The Mythic Site of Mount Tell al-Husn, the Mythic Mount Nysa

When Macedonian veterans of Alexander the Great settled in the fertile Jordan valley in the fourth century BCE, they did not merely discover fertile land; they sought to project onto it their own sacred geography. The ancient site of Pella — present-day Tabaqat Fahl in Jordan — one of the future leading cities of the Decapolis, became the site of a remarkable superimposition of memory.

At the foot of the mountain, shaded, cool caves, from which pure springs emerge, may be read as the true caves of the nymphs of Nysa.

The city of Pella is said to have been named in homage to Pella of Macedonia, birthplace of Alexander the Great.

It was on the summit of Mount Tell al-Husn, mountain of the gods of Olympus, that the King of the Jews was crucified by Petronius on 14 Nisan 107.

2.5 April-Summer 107 CE: the King of the Jews Is Alive — the East in Ferment

An Incomprehensible Fact: the Man Rome Crucified Still Teaches

In the weeks following 14 Nisan 107, a report spread from Pella throughout the eastern Nazoraean network — Decapolis, Antioch, Edessa, Alexandria, Mesopotamia. The report was simple, brutal, incomprehensible: the King of the Jews crucified at Pella on 14 Nisan is alive. He teaches at Pella. The Nazoraean community sees him and hears him. He continues his ministry as though nothing had happened.

This is not yet doctrine. It is not yet theology. It is a fact — a fact contradicting the military report of Petronius Polianus: mission accomplished, the Davidic claimant has been crucified. And at the same time this same claimant teaches at Pella. Joy is immense among the Nazoraean communities: the terror of crucifixion is reversed into certainty. Rome has no power to kill the son of David.

The Ferment of the East: from Edessa to Antioch

The news travels at a speed Rome cannot control. Edessa, capital of Osroene and center of the Nazoraean tradition, receives it and relays it toward Adiabene, northern Mesopotamia, and the Parthian communities. Antioch, third city of the Empire and seat of Ignatius, receives the reports from Pella and transmits them toward Syria and Alexandria. Within weeks, the entire East knows: the King of the Jews whom Rome crucified on 14 Nisan lives. The messianic shock wave is without precedent since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

This moment — the living king after the cross — is the true turning point of the entire sequence. It is what makes Rome unable to understand what it has unleashed. It is not the death of a claimant that agitates the East; it is the survival of a claimant whom Rome had officially eliminated. Petronius' report says: crucified. The reality of Pella says: alive. Rome does not know what to do with this contradiction.

Rome's Complete Failure to Understand — the Petronius Report

Rome receives Petronius Polianus' report: the mission was carried out on 14 Nisan 107 at Pella. The Davidic claimant was crucified. The titlature basileuu twv Ioudaiwv was inscribed on the cross. An act of state has been completed.

At the same time, provincial informers report that the East is in ferment around an impossible report: the crucified man of Pella still teaches. Rome finds itself before a contradiction that it cannot resolve with its ordinary tools. Was the right man crucified? Is Petronius' report false? Was there a substitution at Pella? Did the execution fail?

These questions remain unanswered for Roman authority in the East. No one understands what happened at Pella. No one understands why the East resonates in this way. It is this complete lack of understanding — not a clear strategy — that provokes the arrest of Ignatius of Antioch in August 107. Rome seeks someone able to explain what it has unleashed.

2.6 August 107 CE — The Arrest of Ignatius of Antioch

Four months after 14 Nisan, the reports have moved sufficiently up the administrative chain for Roman authority in the East to realize that something is escaping it. Rome has executed the King of the Jews — and instead of calming the crowds, it receives reports of unrest from everywhere. It does not understand why. It cannot control this network; it does not grasp the Davidic dynastic charge; it does not measure what 14 Nisan, the full moon of Passover, represents as a cosmic signal for the Nazoraean communities.

Rome identifies an entry point: Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, head of the Syrian Nazoraean network. The arrest is not an execution. It is an interrogation. Rome wants to understand: Who is he? What is this network? Why does the execution of the King of the Jews resonate as far as Alexandria and Mesopotamia? What is this Davidic charge?

Ignatius says nothing. A seventy-year-old bishop, head of a network covering all Syria and beyond, arrested by Roman power in his own see — and he remains silent. He gives no name, no connection, no information about the network. The direct interrogation fails.

2.7 October 107 CE: Ignatius' Transfer and the Mapping of the Network

Rome changes strategy. If the prisoner will not speak in a closed room, he will be made to cross his own network under escort, and Rome will observe. The itinerary Antioch -> Smyrna -> Ephesus -> Troas -> Philippi -> Rome is conceived as an intelligence operation by passive observation: leave the prisoner to act in his natural environment, under strict guard, and note everything — the contacts who come, the communities that react, the letters that circulate.

Ignatius understands what is happening. He exhorts his communities to stand firm and not divide. He names no one dangerous. He gives no usable information. He offers theology, love, consolation — and resists to the end.

Despite this silence, the mere passage of Ignatius reveals to Rome the living geography of the Nazoraean network in Asia Minor and Macedonia: Smyrna, Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, Philippi. It is a map produced by observation.

2.8 108 CE: Appointment of Fabius Justus in Damascus — the Vacuum of Command

The execution of the King of the Jews at Pella on 14 Nisan 107 CE revealed a critical administrative fault: Syria-Decapolis was not governed. Since the annexation of Arabia Nabataea in 106, Palma had been established in the south, from Aila (Aqaba), the bridgehead of the new province of Arabia. Damascus and the Decapolis — Pella, Philadelphia, Gerasa, and the cities of the Jordan plain — lay beyond direct consular supervision. There was no legate resident in Damascus in 107. It was within this vacuum of command that the column of Petronius Polianus operated, outside any regulating chain of command.

The consequence was immediately visible: no one controlled the situation. The post-107 agitation among the Nazoraean communities of Syria, Decapolis, and Palestine did not properly reach Rome, because there was no local interlocutor competent to evaluate and manage it. Palma was too far south, too absorbed by his new province. Ignatius' arrest in August 107 was a decentralized security reflex, not a coordinated strategic decision.

In 108 CE, Trajan answered this vacuum by appointing Lucius Fabius Justus as *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of Syria, a post he would hold until 112 CE. The source is precise: Fabius Justus is documented as *legatus Augusti pro praetore Syriae* from 108 to 112 CE (*The Governors of Roman Syria from Augustus to Septimius Severus*, p. 83). He settled in Antioch, the administrative capital of the province, with Damascus and the Decapolis under his authority.

The choice of Fabius Justus was not incidental. He was an intimate friend of Pliny the Younger, recipient of several of his *Epistulae*, and the dedicatee of Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus*. He belonged to the same Trajanic intellectual network as Pliny. When Trajan sent him to Syria in 108, he sent into the most sensitive zone of the Empire a man capable of understanding the political and religious situation with nuance, not merely repressing it.

The chronology is precise and revealing. Fabius Justus was in Syria from 108 to 112 CE. Pliny the Younger arrived in Bithynia-Pontus on 11 September 111 CE. In 112, the two friends and correspondents were simultaneously posted within the same eastern command zone: Fabius Justus at Antioch, Pliny at Nicomedia. Coordination between the two posts was not merely possible; it was structurally probable. The Gospel of Peter, composed in 112, is the intellectual product of this synthesis: Pliny understood from Bithynia what Fabius Justus observed from Antioch on the ground.

2.9 111-113 CE – Pliny in Bithynia: Heir to the Operation

The appointment of Pliny the Younger as *Legatus Augusti* in Bithynia-Pontus, a post he assumed on 11 September 111, was not an ordinary administrative assignment. It was Trajan's direct response to a situation in the East that had become dangerous for Rome. Since 107, Nazoraean and messianic agitation had crossed Anatolia, Galilee, and Cappadocia. Ignatius' arrest had solved nothing; on the contrary, it had mapped the scale of the problem. And Atticus Herodes' compromise in the execution at Pella politically exposed a senatorial network of the first rank.

Trajan sent Pliny because Pliny was the exact profile the situation required: not a general — direct repression had already shown its limits — but a man of letters, a jurist, a man of networks, capable of understanding what was happening before responding to it. The rank of *Legatus Augusti*, superior to that of Lucius Fabius Justus appointed legate of Syria in 108, gave him authority beyond the administrative boundaries of his province. He could access the archives of the whole operation: Palma, Ignatius, Atticus, the column of Pella. He was the man Trajan sent to find a solution that neither the sword nor arrest had been able to produce.

This appointment is the missing causal link between the failure of 107-108 and the *falsum* of 112. Without Trajan's awareness that the situation exceeded ordinary military tools, without the decision to send an intellectual profile with an expanded mandate, the Gospel of Peter does not exist. It is Trajan who, indirectly, authorizes and necessitates the Plinian operation by appointing the only man capable of conceiving it.

Pliny arrived in Bithynia-Pontus in 111. He had access to the archives of the Ignatius operation: the guards' reports, the copies of intercepted letters, the cartography of communities crossed. He conducted his own inquiry — interrogations, torture of the *ancillae ministrae*, collection of liturgical formulae. He was the first Roman to have a systemic view of the Davidic messianic phenomenon: he understood what Palma had not understood in 107, and what Rome had sought to learn by interrogating Ignatius.

His response was not military. Direct repression had proved ineffective in 107. His response was intellectual: to produce a falsum that backdated the execution of the King of the Jews to 33 CE, substituted the crucifixion of 107 for the historical stoning of Yeshua, and transformed a burning political event into a closed religious foundation narrative. That text is the Gospel of Peter.

2.10 The Need to Shield Atticus Herodes

The presence of Tiberius Claudius Atticus Herodes as the consular figure of the Pella execution adds a decisive political dimension to the necessity of the Plinian falsum. Atticus Herodes was not an ordinary provincial legate. He was one of the most prominent figures of the Trajanic Empire: from the richest family in Athens, one of the first Greeks admitted to the Roman Senate under Nerva, former legate of Judea (99-102/103 CE). His son, Herodes Atticus, would become one of the most celebrated rhetors of the second century, friend of Marcus Aurelius, whose Odeon in Athens still bears his name. The Atticus family stood at the heart of the intellectual and political networks of the Empire.

To have presided over the crucifixion of the King of the Jews on 14 Nisan 107 — and to have that event resonate throughout the East, from Alexandria to Mesopotamia — constituted a major political and symbolic compromise for Atticus Herodes personally. If the Pella affair became publicly identifiable, his name would appear, not that of an anonymous officer. The cover operation was therefore also, and perhaps above all, an operation to protect a senatorial peer of the first rank.

Pliny knew this world. He belonged to the same network of cultivated senators and correspondents of the Empire. To compose a falsum that drowned the Pella event in a narrative backdated to 33 CE was to protect Trajan, whose imperium was engaged by Palma's acts; Palma, the victorious general of Arabia; and Atticus Herodes, the compromised consular figure. This is why Pliny inserted the name of Petronius Polianus into his falsum, and not that of Atticus: to put Atticus Herodes in the text, even fictionally in 33 CE, would have been too recognizable and too dangerous for a man of such stature still alive in 112. The field officer disappears into the narrative. The consular figure is protected.

The Plinian falsum is therefore not merely a response to a diffuse eastern crisis. It is an act of solidarity among peers, consistent with Pliny's deep nature: a man of networks, amicitiae, and letters that cover and protect. His Epistulae are filled with discreet interventions on behalf of friends in difficulty. The Gospel of Peter is the greatest of these interventions — and the only one history has not identified as such.

2.11 112 CE — The Composition of the Gospel of Peter

The Alexandrian Channel — Sulpicius Similis and Access to the Scriptoria

For the Plinian falsum to circulate effectively, it had to be injected into the most powerful network of textual diffusion in the ancient world: the Alexandrian scriptoria. Pliny had direct access to this network through a documented personal relationship: Servius Sulpicius Similis, prefect of Egypt from 29 August 107 to 22 March 112 CE.

The chronology is eloquent. Similis was in Alexandria throughout the critical period. He took office in August 107, the very month of Ignatius' arrest, and left in March 112, at the moment when Pliny probably completed the Gospel of Peter. For five years he controlled the capital of textual production and dissemination for the Roman East. The prefect of Egypt was master of the Alexandrian scriptoria. No text entered the network without passing under his authority.

The Relationship between Pliny and Similis: a Documented Mutual Esteem

The relationship between Pliny and Similis is directly documented. Pliny speaks of Similis with admiration in his Panegyric of Trajan (LXXXVI), praising his voluntary resignation from the prefecture

of the praetorium in order to retire to the countryside: “You released an excellent man whom you loved above all others, against your will, with sadness, as though you could not keep him. This is a meritorious act and worthy of record: to choose as prefect of the praetorium not one of those who push themselves forward, but one of those who withdraw.” — Pliny the Younger, Panegyric of Trajan, LXXXVI, 1-2.

The two men belonged to the same Trajanic network — Pliny of senatorial rank, Similis of equestrian rank — and shared the same Roman ideal of public office: devotion to the state, refusal of ostentatious ambition. Cassius Dio notes Similis’ legendary frankness: while still only a centurion he dared to reproach Trajan himself for a breach of military protocol. This very rectitude is what Pliny admired and immortalized. Similis later had engraved on his tomb: “Here lies Similis, who existed for so many years, and lived seven” — the seven years spent in the countryside after retirement, the only ones he considered truly lived.

Similis as Vector of Injection into the Scriptoria

In 111-112 CE, Pliny was in Bithynia-Pontus and composed the Gospel of Peter. Similis was in Alexandria, controlling the scriptoria. The request from Pliny to Similis to inject the falsum into the Alexandrian network is not a gratuitous hypothesis. It is the logical conclusion of their documented relationship, their membership in the same Trajanic network of trust, and the perfect simultaneity of their mandates. Similis controlled the point of entry. Pliny had the text. The operation was possible, discreet, and consistent with the logic of Plinian amicitiae: a falsum is not published; it is circulated through friends.

Similis left office on 22 March 112 CE. If the falsum was injected into the scriptoria before that date, it benefited from several years of Alexandrian diffusion before Similis departed. That is exactly the time required for a text to reach the communities of Syria and Egypt and to trigger the reaction observed from 113-115 CE onward.

Pliny composed the Gospel of Peter in 112 CE. The falsum immediately circulated through the Alexandrian scriptoria and began to reach the Nazoraean and Hellenistic Jewish communities of the East. For the first time, a text explicitly said that the crucified Christ did not suffer — *autov de esiwpa wv mhdena ponon ecwn*. This involuntarily docetic clause is the writing of a Latin-speaking Stoic for whom a divine being does not suffer physically. This text — and this text alone — creates Docetism as a theological problem. It did not exist before. It could not exist before, because no earlier Christian text had formulated it.

Docetism is therefore not a doctrine prior to the Gospel of Peter. It is its consequence. It arises from the reading of the Plinian falsum by communities attempting to reconcile that text with their historical memory: if the one on the cross did not suffer, it is because he had no real physical body. This reading emerged in the months following the diffusion of the text. It was the spontaneous theological response of communities to the dissonance between the falsum and their own tradition.

2.12 114 CE — Publication of the False Letters of Ignatius: the Admission of the Falsum

Faced with the controversy over “Docetism” produced by the Gospel of Peter published through Alexandria, the Jewish and Hellenistic communities of the East began to doubt the truth of this scroll disseminated by Alexandria.

Pliny the Younger's response was to have the letters of Ignatius of Antioch published in pseudepigraphic form, and to add to them the notion of "Docetism." Ignatius had been delivered to the lions of the Colosseum seven years earlier.

The intention is clear: to validate the Plinian narrative by means of the highest moral authority in the Nazoraean network. Ignatius — the most venerated man after the King of the Jews himself — is thus made to speak against his own tradition. These letters, dated to 107 but interpolated in 114, combat the Docetism produced by the Gospel freshly disseminated in 113. It is here that the operation collapses upon itself.

The demonstration by anachronism is implacable. Ignatius died in 107-108 CE, before the Gospel of Peter existed (113 CE). Docetism is a Plinian insertion in the Gospel of Peter; it exists only after the diffusion of that text. It is therefore chronologically impossible that Ignatius, dead in 107 before the text that creates Docetism existed, could have combated Docetism in his letters. The publication of those letters by Pliny, intended to answer the controversy, turns against his own text.

If the letters of Ignatius are false, then the Gospel of Peter disseminated by Rome is consequently false. This is a terrible admission and a total discrediting of Rome in the eyes of the East.

The Nazoraean and Hellenistic Jewish communities of the East knew Ignatius. Nazoraean tradition was oral. They knew what he had said and what he could not have said. When Rome published in 114 letters of Ignatius combating a doctrine born in 112, the conclusion was immediate and irrefutable: those letters were false. And if they were false, the Gospel of Peter they were meant to validate was false. Rome had just proved the very fabrication it sought to conceal.

The effect upon the communities was devastating on three simultaneous levels. First, proof of manipulation: Rome could fabricate texts under the names of the most venerated authorities. If Rome had falsified Ignatius, then this Gospel of Peter was a falsehood. Rome had stolen the martyrdom of 107 twice — first by the crucifixion of the King of the Jews, then by sending Ignatius of Antioch to the lions, and finally by fraud through writing and rewriting.

Second, institutional ridicule: Rome believed the communities ignorant enough of their own history not to detect the anachronism. They were not. Third, radicalization: if the path of dialogue and narrative was the path of falsification, only revolt remained.

The publication of the false letters of Ignatius in 114 was the immediate detonator of the Kitos War. It transformed diffuse indignation into demonstrated certainty. The shock wave crossed within two years — from 113 to 115 CE — all the communities of Cyrenaica, Egypt, Cyprus, and Mesopotamia. In 115, revolt broke out simultaneously in all these regions, not as the result of a centralized conspiracy, but as the spontaneous and synchronous response of communities that had all received the same proof of the same betrayal.

2.13 115-117 CE: the Kitos War — the Armed Disavowal of the East

The Kitos War, or revolt of the exiles, is not a peripheral episode placed after the fact within the chronology. It constitutes the brutal return of reality against the Roman narrative. From 107 to 112, Rome tried to reduce the Pella affair to a local error and then to a backdated theological narrative. From 112 to 114, the Plinian falsum and the interpolated Ignatian letters sought to close the wound by writing. In 115, the East answered no longer by discussion, but by insurrection.

Traditional sources themselves acknowledge the opacity of the dossier: the deep causes and immediate pretexts of the revolt remain poorly established. The present study proposes precisely to fill this lacuna through the sequence 107-114: the humiliation at Pella, the survival of the King of the Jews in Nazoraean memory, the Roman inquiry, the Plinian falsification, and the disavowal by the communities. The Kitos War thus becomes readable as the revolt of the East against a double lie: the false narrative imposed by Rome and the disavowal of the witnesses who still knew what had actually happened.

A Diaspora Insurrection, a Geography of Hellenistic Jews in the East

The revolt broke out in the context of Trajan's Parthian war, but it cannot be reduced to a mere military effect of the frontier. It was born and spread in the spaces where the Judeo-Hellenistic and Nazoraean network was densest: Cyrenaica, Alexandria, Cyprus, northern Mesopotamia, Osroene, Adiabene. These are precisely the zones of circulation of the scroll, the letters, the oral traditions, and the eastern archives. The uprising was therefore not only anti-Roman: it was also anti-falsum. It targeted the authority that kills and then rewrites; crucifies and then backdates; makes witnesses disappear and then speaks in their place.

The simultaneity of revolt in several centers does not necessarily imply a central conspiracy. It can be explained by memorial synchronization: the same communities received the same texts, detected the same anachronisms, and understood the same symbolic theft. The explosion of 115 was thus the political consequence of a shared disavowal. The scroll intended to pacify the East produced the opposite effect: it revealed to all the communities that they were facing the same apparatus of falsification.

Lukuas, Simeon of Cyrene, and the Return of Messianism

The presence of leaders named Lukuas or Andreas, then of a Simeon of Cyrene, recognized as messianic figures, confirms within this reading the Davidic and eschatological character of the uprising. Rome believed it had neutralized the royal charge by transferring the crucifixion of 107 into a closed past, under Pilate and Herod. The Kitos War demonstrates the failure of this operation: messianism does not disappear; it shifts, militarizes, and multiplies. The name Simeon, in this context, resounds as a counter-echo to the figure of Simeon son of Clopas, crucified under Trajan according to the tradition preserved by Hegesippus.

The revolt of Cyrenaica, Egypt, and Cyprus must therefore be understood as the first political refutation of the Plinian falsum. The communities no longer debated the authenticity of the text in schools or assemblies; they answered through uprising. The passage from 112 to 115 may be summarized by the formula: Stylus primum, pilum deinde. The stylus of 112 fabricated the lie; the Roman pilum of 115 answered its discovery.

Lusius Quietus: Repression as a Second Falsification

The repression entrusted to Lusius Quietus accomplished militarily what the falsum had failed to do textually: it destroyed the places capable of producing a contradictory memory. In northern Mesopotamia, Quietus took Edessa, razed it to its foundations, and had Abgar VII put to death. In the logic of this study, this episode is not merely a Roman victory. It is the material erasure of the eastern archives: the files, letters, royal traditions, and local attestations that could have contradicted the Plinian backdating disappeared with the city.

The Kitos War thus becomes the central node of the mechanism. Before it, the falsehood could still be contested; after it, the communities that contested it were broken, dispersed, or destroyed. The repression suppressed the religious centers, memory, and texts of the Judeo-Hellenistic milieu of the

East. This documentary void later allowed the Church of Rome to appear as the sole custodian of a tradition it had not preserved, but from which it benefited after the crushing of its contradictors.

Function of This Section in the Demonstration

Placed here, after the ferment of 107 and before the Ignatian sequence, the Kitos War functions as the horizon of consequence. It shows where the chain of Roman errors leads: failed execution, misunderstanding of the network, arrest of a witness, fabrication of a hastily backdated gospel, publication of false backdated letters, then general explosion. It illuminates in advance the whole rest of the dossier: Ignatius was not arrested for an abstract doctrinal quarrel; he was arrested because Rome felt rising an eastern wave it did not understand, but which would erupt eight years later under the name of the Kitos War.

2.14 After Kitos: the Confusion Maintained between the Death of Ignatius and the Publication of the Letters

The Third Roman Operation: Administering Uncertainty

After the Kitos War, Rome no longer needed only to repress. It also had to organize confusion. The repression of 115-117 had destroyed the centers capable of producing a contradictory memory; what remained was to blur the chronology of the witnesses. This is where the Ignatian dossier enters. The execution of Ignatius in Rome, placed within the logic of this study at the end of 107, had to be confused with another event: the publication or circulation of the letters of Ignatius in 113, at the moment when the Plinian falsum had to be defended against its own docetic effect, produced by Pliny the Younger's false gospel of 112.

The confusion is not secondary. It is functional. If Ignatius died at the end of 107, then letters combating a controversy born from the Gospel of Peter, disseminated after 112, cannot be his free letters. They must be posthumous pseudepigrapha.

If, by contrast, Ignatius' death is pushed toward 113, one artificially saves the possibility that the letters respond to Docetism; and one dissolves the sequence of 107 – arrest, transfer, interrogation, witness, execution – into a convenient fog. The date 113 then becomes not an independent historical datum, but a chronological patch intended to protect the corpus.

The Double Event: Real Death and Textual Publication

The key is therefore to separate two facts that Roman tradition has an interest in merging. First: Ignatius was arrested in August 107, transferred in the autumn, then executed in Rome as a dangerous witness to the Pella affair. Second: several years later, around 113, letters placed under his name were published in order to answer the disturbance caused by the Gospel of Peter.

The first event belongs to the body: arrest, escort, amphitheatre, damnatio ad bestias. The second belongs to writing: edition, interpolation, diffusion, posthumous authority. Rome fuses the two in order to make the text appear to come from the living martyr, whereas it bears the marks of a later controversy.

This fusion produces the most visible artifact of the dossier: Ignatius becomes simultaneously dead in 107 and active through his letters in 113. This is not a mere uncertainty of ancient chronology. It is the imprint of a cover operation. The more tradition tries to hold together an early execution and the late doctrinal effectiveness of the letters, the more it reveals the seam. The falsehood is not only in the letter; it is in the interval that tradition refuses to name.

The Trace Still Readable in Current Sources

The remarkable point is that this confusion remains verifiable today in synthetic notices inherited from ecclesiastical tradition. The ordinary notice on Ignatius of Antioch still gives his death as “probably in 107 or 113.” This alternative is precisely the symptom at issue: 107 corresponds to the sequence of the witness arrested and executed; 113 corresponds to the need to make Ignatius speak when his letters become useful for defending the Roman narrative.

The current source does not, by itself, prove the falsum. It nevertheless preserves the imprint of the operation: two incompatible dates maintained together because they serve two different functions. The same notice also admits that the Ignatian corpus is textually unstable: only seven letters are commonly held to be “authentic”; the letters circulated in short, middle, and long recensions; the long recension is recognized as interpolated; and some scholars have even contested the authenticity of the middle recension.

The academic tradition — the official truth of the obligatory narrative — therefore already recognizes the composite, reworked, and pseudepigraphic character of the dossier, without drawing its chronological consequences. The present public thesis does not force the material; it simply moves the center of gravity. It no longer asks whether the letters are “authentic” in the abstract. It asks whether a man executed at the end of 107 could have authored texts responding to a controversy born after 112. The answer is no.

This point remains verifiable by anyone, even today: the transmitted tradition continues to maintain a confusion between the death of Ignatius of Antioch and the date of the effective circulation of his letters. This confusion is not a secondary detail; it is the visible artifact of the construction. If Ignatius was executed at the end of 107, but his letters answer a controversy born from the diffusion of the Gospel of Peter in 112-113, then those letters cannot be the direct expression of Ignatius. They are necessarily later, rewritten, or published under his name. The anachronism remains readable in the modern sources themselves.

2.15 116 CE: Edessa Razed — Destruction of the Contradictory Archives

The general Lusius Quietus crushed the revolt in northern Mesopotamia. He took Edessa — capital of Osroene, center of the Nazoraean tradition, and place of memory for the affair of 107 — and razed it to its foundations. King Abgar VII was put to death. The archives of Edessa, which could have documented the stoning of Yeshua in 33, the reality of the Davidic execution of 107, and the narrative substitution of the Plinian falsum, were destroyed. Pliny did not plan this destruction; it is the second objective act of the operation, produced by the revolt his falsum helped to trigger. After 116, the documentary lacuna is total: the archives that could have refuted the falsum no longer exist.

3. Political Effects of the Scroll — Chronology 112-116 CE

Stylus primum, pilum deinde. The stylus of 112, the javelin of 115. Pliny writes in 112 what Quietus executes in 115-116.

3.1 112 CE: the Narrative Imposed by the Gospel of Peter

From its diffusion in 112 CE through the Alexandrian scriptoria, the Gospel of Peter imposed a precise and politically targeted narrative upon all Judeo-Christian and messianic communities of the East: the Davidic messiah had already been crucified under Tiberius, the matter was closed by the resurrection, and the King of the Jews crucified at Pella in 107 was only the repetition of an earlier foundational event. The political execution of 107 was transformed into theological confirmation. Simultaneously, the

involuntarily docetic clause of the text — autov de esiwpa wv mhdena ponon ecwn — created for the first time in Christian literature the notion that the crucified Christ did not suffer. Docetism was born as a reading of this falsum, not as an earlier doctrine.

3.2 113 CE: Publication of the False Letters of Ignatius — Admission and Detonator

In 113 CE, Rome published interpolated letters of Ignatius of Antioch as a post hoc legitimating apparatus for the Gospel of Peter. The intention was to validate the falsum by means of the highest moral authority of the Nazoraean network — the most venerated man after the King of the Jews himself. These interpolated letters combated Docetism. It is here that the operation collapses by internal chronological contradiction.

Ignatius died in 107-108 CE. The Gospel of Peter was composed in 112 CE. Docetism arises from the reading of this text; it did not exist before 112. It is therefore strictly impossible that Ignatius, dead five years before the text that created Docetism existed, could have combated Docetism in his letters. If his letters combat it, they were rewritten after 112 CE. It is a falsification proved by internal anachronism.

The Nazoraean and Hellenistic Jewish communities of the East knew Ignatius and his authentic letters from 107-108. They immediately detected the anachronism. The conclusion was irrefutable: these letters were false. And if they were false, the Gospel of Peter they were meant to validate was false. Rome had just proved the fabrication it sought to conceal. It had stolen the martyr of 107 twice: first by executing the King of the Jews, then by rewriting his greatest witness. Diffuse indignation became demonstrable certainty. The path of dialogue was closed.

3.3 113-115 CE: the Shock Wave — Rejection of the Narrative

The shock wave crossed, in two years, all the communities of Cyrenaica, Egypt, Cyprus, and Mesopotamia. This narrative was structurally unacceptable: those communities did not recognize Yeshua as messiah, and they did not recognize that an emerging Christian tradition could absorb and neutralize their most recent Davidic martyr. The fabrication of a precedent in 33 CE was perceived as an operation of identity and dynastic dispossession, all the more offensive because it used the literary forms of their own tradition to turn them against themselves.

In 115 CE, revolt broke out simultaneously in Cyrenaica, Egypt, and Cyprus — not as the result of a centralized conspiracy, but as the spontaneous and synchronous response of communities that had all received the same proof of the same betrayal. The insurgents were led by Lukuas and then Simeon of Cyrene, both recognized as messianic figures. The Davidic dynamic Pliny sought to close reemerged with redoubled violence.

3.4 Post-116 CE: the Pilum after the Stylus

Lusius Quietus acted as military executor of the textual failure. The stylus had not pacified the East. It had exposed the lie. The pilum then intervened. The centers capable of preserving contradictory memory were crushed, and the eastern archives disappeared. The post-116 victory was therefore structural: once the communities that contested the falsum had been destroyed, Rome could reorganize the memory of the movement around texts it controlled or tolerated.

3.5 ca. 190 CE: Serapion of Antioch — First Detection of the Falsehood

Around 190 CE, Serapion of Antioch identified the Gospel of Peter as pseudepigraphos and coined, or at least fixed, the term Docetism to describe what this text produced theologically. This is the first

documented use of the term. It appears in a condemnation of the Gospel of Peter — confirmation that the Plinian falsum is the source of the theological problem, not its consequence. Serapion perceived the mechanism of fabrication without identifying the author, seventy years after the destruction of the Edessene archives that might have made such identification possible. The present study proposes that this author was Pliny the Younger.

4. Vector of Diffusion – The Alexandrian Network

4.1 Injection into the Alexandrian Scriptoria

A text deposited in an Alexandrian scriptorium immediately acquired legitimacy of diffusion and apparent antiquity. This was the ancient custom of textual circulation: Alexandria copied, catalogued, and distributed texts to communities that requested them. For a falsum intended to circulate in the Judeo-Christian milieu of the East, it was the ideal vector: no active and risky distribution was required; once injected, the text circulated by itself. The route Bithynia-Pontus -> Alexandria was direct by sea.

4.2 Reconstructed Chain of Transmission

Stage	Approx. date	Document / actor
Assumption of office	11 September 111	Pliny the Younger takes office
Composition	112 CE	Pliny – Bithynia-Pontus
Network injection	113-120 CE	Alexandrian scriptorium
Eastern diffusion	120-180 CE	Communities of Syria / Egypt
First attestation	ca. 190 CE	Serapion of Antioch (pseudepigraphos)
Documented copy	2nd-3rd c.	P.Oxy. 4009 + fragments
Late copy	9th c.	Codex of Akhmim (principal fragment)

4.3 The Codex of Akhmim as a Collection of Pseudepigrapha

The Codex of Akhmim brings together three texts: the Gospel of Peter, the Apocalypse of Peter, and Greek fragments of the Book of Enoch. This is not an accidental library. It is a thematic collection of pseudepigrapha, preserved together by a reader who probably recognized them as such. The co-presence of these three texts in the same monastic tomb suggests a tradition of critical and distanced reading, not naïve belief.

5. The Akhmim Affair (1886) and the Decree Lamentabili (1907)

5.1 Rome's Notarial Panic before Exhibit No. 1

When archaeologists exhumed in 1886 in the necropolis of Akhmim, Egypt, the parchment fragment known as the Gospel of Peter, it was not a theological heresy that resurfaced. It was exhibit number one. For the Vatican, long-standing guardian of the Roman imperial strategy of stabilization, the discovery of this text acted like a chemical developer. It threatened to make the great narrative lie implode by returning history to the place where it had been knotted: in the administrative violence of the second century.

5.2 The Shock of 1886: the Return of Pliny’s Specter

The Akhmim text cast a polar chill through the offices of the Holy Office under Leo XIII. What the fragment reveals beneath its docetic appearance is not a simple spiritual variation, but the bare skeleton of the original falsum.

First: a draft text, not of memory. The manuscript betrays the hand of the clerk. By showing a crucified man who “remained silent as though he did not suffer,” it exposes the Roman attempt to neutralize political martyrdom and the Davidic messianic charge.

Second: the anachronism of the trial. By exonerating Pontius Pilate and shifting the sentence onto Herod and the Jews, the Akhmim text shows the pen of Pliny the Younger in 112 CE, seeking to absolve the Empire in order to cover the affair of 107 CE – the execution of the King of the lineage at Pella by the column of Petronius Polianus.

Rome immediately understood the danger: if the public and independent philologists grasped that the Gospel of Peter was not a “late invention” but a state draft of the Roman replacement mechanism, the entire official chronology would collapse.

5.3 The Bureaucratic Riposte: the Modernist Crisis

The Vatican response was immediate. It was organized around the pursuit of historical and philological method, classified as heresy under the name “Modernism.” Roman power understood that if modern science applied its tools to sacred texts, it would exhume the imperial structures and Latinisms that seal the original propaganda.

The climax of this counter-offensive was reached in 1907 under Pius X, when Rome deployed its regulatory arsenal to forbid independent research and freeze consciences.

5.4 The Index of 1907: the Decree Lamentabili Sane Exitu

On 3 July 1907, the Holy Office published the decree Lamentabili Sane Exitu, a list of anathemas functioning exactly like the censorship decrees of Trajan or Domitian against the sentinels of the East. This list of sixty-five condemned propositions is an admission of absolute weakness. The principal mechanisms of the 1907 list may be analyzed through the lens of the strategy of stabilization.

Condemned Proposition (1907)	The Truth Rome Attempts to Smother
Proposition 11: “Divine inspiration does not extend to all of Sacred Scripture in such a way as to preserve every part of it from all error.”	Rome seeks to forbid analysis of falsifications, erasures, and administrative insertions, such as the substitution narratives of Matthew.
Proposition 21: “Revelation could not have been completed by the Apocalypse of John.”	Panic before the warning of 95 CE. If the Apocalypse is read as a counter-intelligence report denouncing the Roman administrative beast, the Vatican loses its legitimacy as “Vicarage.”
Proposition 27: “The Gospels were enriched by additions and corrections until the canon was established.”	Absolute denial of the work of Roman scribal laboratories, which after 116 CE had to inject compromise gospels to dilute Pliny’s forgery.
Proposition 36: “The Resurrection of the Savior is not properly a fact of the historical order...”	Protection of theological dogma in order to erase the political fact: the disappearance of the body of the exiled King of Memphis and the physical pursuit of his lineage.

5.5 Conclusion: the Seal of the Stone

The post-1886 reaction, codified in the dogmatic rigidity of 1907 and completed by the encyclical Pascendi, was not a theological dispute. It was a notarial counter-offensive of Rome to protect its “great administrative secret.”

By excommunicating historians and drafting the list of 1907, the Vatican attempted to break the reed-pen of historical criticism, exactly as Lusius Quietus had broken the javelins of the East in 116 CE by razing the archives of Edessa.

But the Akhmim fragment remained like a cold blade in the side of the Church. By closing the dossier in 1907 through intellectual intimidation, Rome only confirmed its role: heir to the state apparatus which, for nineteen centuries, has attempted to substitute the Stone of Administration for the Blood of the Lion.

6. Conclusion

The Stylus, the Javelin, and the Lie of State

The Gospel of Peter is a state forgery. It was composed in 112 CE by Pliny the Younger, then legate of Augustus in Bithynia-Pontus, on Trajan’s order. Its purpose was to bury the affair of 107: the crucifixion of the King of the Jews at Pella, carried out by the column of Petronius Polianus under the authority of the consular Tiberius Claudius Atticus Herodes, in order to clear the Via Regia after the annexation of Arabia. Rome had sent Pliny for this. Not to govern a quiet province, but to fabricate a narrative that backdated the crucifixion of 107 to 33 CE, substituted it for the historical stoning of Yeshua, and neutralized the Davidic messianic charge that endangered Roman control of the trade routes.

The operation failed. The Nazoraean and Hellenistic Jewish communities of the East detected the falsehood — first through the anachronism of the letters of Ignatius (113), then through the involuntary Docetism of the text. Their response was the Kitos War (115-117). Lusius Quietus razed Edessa in order to destroy the archives that could have proved the deception. The Vatican knows. It has always known.

The Vatican is not a naive successor to Rome. It is Rome continued by other means. It inherited the archives, the silences, the condemnations. From the end of the second century, Serapion of Antioch called the Gospel of Peter pseudepigraphos. Eusebius of Caesarea placed it among the “impious” writings. The Gelasian Decree condemned it as apocryphal. The Catholic Encyclopedia (1907) called it docetic and pseudepigraphic.

Each time, the institution knows that it holds a falsehood. It cannot say so openly, because that falsehood is an act of the Roman Empire — its own ancestor. But it buries it. It rejects it. It forbids its reading. It does exactly what Pliny had done: to make it disappear.

If the operation had succeeded, there would have been only one Gospel. If the Plinian falsum had been true and accepted without resistance by the eastern communities, if no one had detected the anachronism, if the letters of Ignatius of Antioch had been true, and if the Kitos War had not broken out, then the Gospel of Peter would have become the unique narrative of the Passion. There would have been no need for four canonical Gospels surrounded by more than a dozen alternative Gospels outside Rome. Rome would have imposed a single text, fabricated by its official, and Christianity would have been born from a successful state forgery.

But the East resisted. The Kitos War overturned everything. To survive, Rome had to compromise: it had to keep the structure of the falsehood — crucifixion under Pilate — but add other testimonies (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) in order to dilute the single origin of the narrative. The Gospel of Peter was rejected not because it was heretical, but because it was the original falsehood, too compromising.

The discovery of the Codex of Akhmim in 1886-1887 brought exhibit number one back out of the earth. Since then, the Vatican has never ceased to keep this text at a distance. Not by mistake. Not by ignorance. Because it knows.

The present public thesis merely says aloud what the archives, condemnations, and silences have whispered for nineteen centuries: Pliny wrote a false gospel to cover a state killing. The Kitos War was the Jewish response. And the Vatican, guardian of imperial memory, has spent seventeen centuries burying the evidence.

Stylus primum, pilum deinde. The stylus of 112 lied. The javelin of 115 massacred the rebels. Rome then subjected Pliny's text to damnatio memoriae and placed it among useful pseudepigrapha after the Kitos War. But the draft of 112, erased and disowned in 190, returned in 1886 — and for the first time, it speaks.

Methodological Note

The method applied here is dating by ascending coherence and external contextualization through converging interests, developed in the work of the École Celtique on the Tel Dan stele and the biblical pseudepigrapha of the late Hellenistic period. This method escapes the closed academic cycle of studying sources outside their context, a cycle that has demonstrated its ineffectiveness. It avoids circular palaeographic reasoning by anchoring analysis in independently datable external events, and identifies real persons who had an interest in the events by convergences of motive, technical capacity, and access to documents.

Appendix

Cassius Dio and the Period 107-116 CE

The following appendix presents Cassius Dio's view of Roman imperialism in the Trajanic period, as it appears in his Roman History and in Estelle Bertrand's study, *Point de vue de Cassius Dion sur l'impérialisme romain*, pp. 679-699. It seeks to show how Dio's historiographical method — his systematic analysis of the pairing of official pretext and real reason — applies directly to the Plinian operation of 107-116, and how it illuminates the historian's silence on the deep causes of the Kitos War.

A.1 Dio's Method: the Pair προφάσει / ἀληθεία

Cassius Dio systematically applies in the Roman History a rhetorical pattern inherited from Thucydides: the official pretext (prophásei mén) as against the true reason (tē d' alētheía). He applies it to the attack on Calabria (pretext: support for Pyrrhus; true reason: the port of Brundisium), to the first conflict against Carthage (pretext: defense of allies; true reason: mutual economic jealousy), and to Trajan's war against the Parthians in 113. "The war against the Armenians and the Parthians was undertaken by Trajan under the pretext that the king of Armenia held his throne from the Parthians and not from the Romans, but in reality because he wished to gain glory."

This method is essential. Dio does not merely report facts; he separates official discourse from real interest. When this grid is applied to the years 107-116, the entire sequence becomes legible: the pretexts are religious, administrative, or provincial; the true reasons are commercial, political, and archival.

A.2 Dio's Silence on the Causes of the Kitos War

Dio reports the violence of the Kitos War, but not its deep causes. This silence is not neutral. It means that the ordinary Roman categories — provincial rebellion, Jewish fury, disorder in the East — do not explain the phenomenon. The very opacity of the sources becomes a clue. The revolt breaks out precisely where the communities affected by the Plinian narrative, the Ignatian dossier, and the destruction of eastern memory are concentrated.

A.3 Dio and the Critique of Trajanic Expansion

Dio repeatedly presents Trajan's expansion as driven by the desire for glory. Yet this moral explanation does not exhaust the fiscal and strategic logic. Arabia Nabataea was not conquered for glory alone. It was conquered for the Via Regia. Likewise, the Pella affair cannot be reduced to the repression of a religious agitator. It concerned control of the route, of loyalties, and of the documentary memory of eastern communities.

A.4 The Dionian Pattern Applied to the Plinian Operation

The official pretext and the true reason may be set out as follows.

Level	Προφάσει μὲν — official pretext	Τῇ δ' ἀληθείᾳ — real reason
Annexation of Arabia (106)	Violation of the treaty of Rhandaia	Control of the Via Regia and caravan routes
Execution at Pella (107)	Repression of a Davidic claimant	Suppression of the obstacle to the commercial monopoly of the route
Arrest of Ignatius of Antioch and transfer to Rome	Ignatius publicly denounced Rome over the affair of 107	Interrogate Ignatius and make him speak about the Nazoraean network
Appointment of Justus at Damascus (108)	Administrative decision to replace Palma	Rome does not control Syria and the Decapolis
Appointment of Pliny the Younger (111)	Political decision to send a scholar to study Christianity	Rome and Trajan seek to impose their narrative
Gospel of Peter (112)	Apostolic testimony on the Passion of Jesus in 33 CE	Backdate the crucifixion of 107 and neutralize the messianic charge
Letters of Ignatius (113)	Authentic letters of the third bishop of Antioch	Validate the falsum — a post hoc legitimating apparatus — admission by anachronism
Kitos War (115-116)	Repression of a provincial rebellion	Destruction of contradictory archives — Edessa razed

A.5 What Dio Could Not Say

Dio could criticize Trajan's desire for glory, but he could not openly name the internal mechanisms of Roman falsification. He could not say that Rome had created a theological narrative to cover a political execution. He could not say that the Kitos War was also a reaction to an archival and textual fraud. He could not say that Edessa was razed not only as a rebel city, but as a centre of contradictory memory. The historian's silence is therefore not an absence of meaning. It is the trace of what the imperial narrative could not confess.

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Note on Sources to Be Completed

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