The Name "*Iskarioth*" (Iscariot)

JOAN E. TAYLOR
joan.taylor@kcl.ac.uk
King's College London, Strand, London, WC2R 2LS, England

Given the recent discovery and publication of the Gnostic *Gospel of Judas*[1] and renewed interest in the historical figure of Judas Iscariot, it may be timely to analyze again the suggestions made concerning the epithet of the betrayer of Jesus. As William Klassen has noted, "the last word has not been said or written about the meaning of this word."[2] There is little scholarly agreement about what exactly the epithet means, despite the etymological explanations offered to account for it.[3] Bart D. Ehrman notes that "some of the best scholars have concluded that we simply don't know what Iscariot means."[4] It is then a little daunting to begin an assess-

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[1] *The Gospel of Judas* (ed. Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer and Gregor Wurst, with Bart D. Ehrman; 2nd ed.; Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2008); *The Gospel of Judas: Together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos: Critical Edition* (ed. Rudolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst; Washington DC: National Geographic Society, 2007); see also April D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* (London/New York: Continuum, 2007); Bart D. Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot: A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Simon Gathercole, "The Gospel of Judas," *ExpTim* 118, no. 5 (February 2007): 209–15; idem, *The Gospel of Judas: Rewriting Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Elaine Pagels and Karen L. King, *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity* (New York: Viking, 2007); Nicholas Perrin, *The Judas Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); Stanley E. Porter and Gordon L. Heath, *The Lost Gospel of Judas: Separating Fact from Fiction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); James M. Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and His Lost Gospel* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006); N. T. Wright, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus: Have We Missed the Truth about Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

[2] Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 34.

[3] See Raymond 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), 1413–17; William Klassen, "Judas Iscariot," *ABD* 3:1091–96; idem, *Judas*, 32–34.

[4] B. Ehrman, *Lost Gospel*, 146.

ment of the arguments thus far proposed. I offer here a suggestion only with considerable caution.

I. The Epithet in the New Testament

The name of Jesus' apostle and betrayer is found as Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώθ in Mark 3:19 (א, B, C, L, Δ, Θ, et al.); 14:10 (א*, B, C*vid); and Luke 6:16 (𝔭4, א*, B, L, 33, Marcion, it^d: Inscarioth); as a manuscript variant in Matt 10:4 (C and *l*150); and as an addition in Luke 22:47 (D, 0171vid, [*f*1] *pc* [l]). It appears as Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης in Matt 10:4 and John 12:4, and as a variant in Mark 3:19 (A, K, W, Π, 0134, *f*1, *f*13 et al.); 14:10 (A, C², K, W, X, Δ, Π, *f*1 et al.); 14:43; and Luke 6:16 (א^c, A, K, W, X, Δ, Θ, Π, Ψ, *f*1, *f*13 et al.). In Luke 22:3 it is written that Satan entered Ἰούδαν τὸν καλούμενον Ἰσκαριώτην, and in Matt 26:14 likewise Judas "is called" by this name: ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰούδας Ἰσκαριώτης.

In some versions of Mark 14:10—the basis of Matt 26:14 and Luke 22:3—there is a definite article, reading ὁ Ἰσκαριώθ (א^c, L, Θ, Ψ, 565, 892); if this reading is original, then it may be that the derivative developments are independent amplifications of this definite article.

John 6:71a has ἔλεγεν δὲ τὸν Ἰούδαν Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου, though the manuscript tradition that here has Ἰσκαριώτην (K, Δ, Π, *f*1, et al.) brings the epithet in line with John 12:4 as relating to Judas rather than his father, a designation also indicated in the reference to a "Judas not the Iscariot" in John 14:22 (οὐχ ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης). Elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel (John 13:2, 26) the name appears as Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτου, prompting clarification in some manuscripts (John 13:2: 𝔭66, א, B, W, X; John 13:26: 𝔭66, A, K, W, Δ, Π*, *f*1, *f*13 et al.).

Overall, this appears to indicate that Judas was designated by a Hebrew or Aramaic name transliterated as Ἰσκαριώθ and rendered in Greek form as Ἰσκαριώτης. The manuscripts show more of a tendency to standardize the epithet in Greek form rather than to retrieve or preserve the Hebrew or Aramaic form. The definite article appears as emphasis to distinguish this Judas from others called by the same name, hence the amplifications of Matt 26:14; Luke 22:3; and John 14:22.

II. The Epithet Ἰσκαριώθ/Ἰσκαριώτης:
Leading Proposals

Several proposals have been made to explain the epithet. The main suggestions that would account for Ἰσκαριώθ and Ἰσκαριώτης are the following:[5]

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[5] Minor or very unlikely suggestions are noted in passing by Brown, *Death*, 1413.

1.   The epithet translates Hebrew קְרִיּוֹת אִישׁ, *ʾîš qārîyôt*, meaning "a man from Qarioth", this place being attested in Eusebius, *Onom.* 120.1; cf. Jer 48:24, 41; Amos 2:2. The interpretation has been supported by Paul Billerbeck, Julius Wellhausen, Donatus Haugg, and Gustaf Dalman.[6] As a variant of this proposal, the epithet is taken to mean "a man of towns," a town-dweller—the town in question being Jerusalem (so Günther Schwartz).[7]

2.   The epithet is a Hebrew or Aramaic version of Latin *sicarius*, meaning "robber" or "assassin," from the word *sica*, meaning "dagger." This derivation was proposed by Friedrich Schulthess, using a suggestion of Wellhausen, and in particular by Oscar Cullmann.[8] This would indicate that Judas was an insurgent.

3.   The epithet should be read as meaning "the liar" or "the false one," perhaps אִשְׁקַרְיָא, from the Aramaic and Hebrew root שקר. This root derivation of the word was suggested by Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, who proposed an underlying Hebrew form אִישׁ־שְׁקָרִים, "man of lies,"[9] though C. C. Torrey argued for Aramaic.[10] This makes it a pejorative epithet applied to Judas by the disciples of Jesus after his betrayal.

4.   The epithet is derived from an Aramaic word for "red color," on the basis of the root סקר, so that it means a "redhead" or "ruddy-colored," as in Arabic, where *šuqra* can mean "a ruddy complexion" (so Harald Ingholt),[11] or "red dyer," supposedly *saqqara*, as Albert Ehrman suggests.[12] The most careful argument has been provided by Yoel Arbeitman.[13] The reference is then simply to Judas's employment or appearance.

[6] Str-B 1:536–37; Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1903); Haugg, *Judas Iskarioth in den neutestamentlichen Berichten* (Freiburg: Herder, 1930); and Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels* (trans. Paul Levertoff; London: SPCK, 1929; German orig., 1922).

[7] Schwartz, *Jesus und Judas: Aramaistische Untersuchungen zur Jesus-Judas-Überlieferung der Evangelien und der Apostelgeschichte* (BWANT 123; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988), 6–12.

[8] Schulthess, *Das Problem der Sprache Jesus* (Zurich: Schulthess, 1917), 41, 55; idem, "Zur Sprache der Evangelien. D. Judas 'Iskariot,'" *ZNW* 21 (1922): 20–28; Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1956), 15; idem, "Der zwölfte Apostel," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze, 1925–1962* (ed. Karlfried Fröhlich; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Zurich: Zwingli, 1966), 214–22; idem, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (trans. Gareth Putnam; New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 21–23.

[9] Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1865), 368.

[10] Torrey, "The Name 'Iscariot,'" *HTR* 36 (1943): 51–62; see also Bertil E. Gärtner, "Judas Iskarioth," *SEÅ* 21 (1956): 50–81; idem, *Die rätselhaften Termini Nazoräer und Iskariot* (Horae Soederblomianae 4; Uppsala: Gleerup, 1957), 4; idem, *Iskariot* (trans. V. I. Gruhn; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971; German orig., 1957).

[11] Ingholt, "The Surname of Judas Iscariot," in *Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen Septuagenario* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1953), 152–62.

[12] A. Ehrman, "Judas Iscariot and Abba Saqqara," *JBL* 97 (1978): 572–73.

[13] Arbeitman, "The Suffix of Iscariot," *JBL* 99 (1980): 122–24.

5. The word comes from either of the Aramaic roots סכר or סגר, with a meaning of "to deliver," on the basis of the LXX translation of Isa 19:4a and targumic parallels (so J.-Alfred Morin).[14] The epithet therefore indicates that it was Judas who delivered Jesus to the authorities.

III. Analysis

The following assessment of suggestions is provided using a critical method in which it is considered necessary that the following criteria be satisfied:

a. The underlying root found within the Greek epithets is either Aramaic or Hebrew.
b. The transliterated forms are properly explained, including the initial "*i*" sound.
c. There is some resonance of the meaning in early Christian tradition.
d. There is no reliance on textual variants that are merely copyist's errors or rationalizations.

All the suggestions provided over the years satisfy the first criterion, but they tend to break down as other criteria are applied. Many theories founder on an explanation of an initial "*i*" sound, reflecting the use of a prosthetic *aleph* in (Mishnaic) Hebrew and Aramaic. They can also break down in some aspect of the letter order or vocalization. The criterion that there be some small resonance of the meaning of the epithet in early Christian texts seems important in order to avoid the assumption that, by the time the Gospels were composed, absolutely no one understood its meaning.[15] Since there was in the first century considerable interaction between Aramaic and Greek speakers, evidenced in the NT epistles and the Acts of the Apostles, this assumption simply cannot be right. The final criterion is a difficult one, as we shall see, given that it is hard to decide what textual variant might be an archaic form reflecting an interpretative tradition that was superseded and what might be an innovative rationalization on the part of a copyist. We will need to assess these variants as they appear.

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[14] Morin, "Les deux derniers des Douze: Simon le Zélote et Judas Iskariôth," *RB* 80 (1973): 332–58.

[15] Gustaf Dalman (*The Words of Jesus* [trans. D. M. Kay; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909], 52) concluded that it is "a very plausible conjecture that *Iskarioth* was already unintelligible to the evangelists." But, while they themselves may have been ignorant of Aramaic, it is hard to imagine that no one in their communities had any linguistic skills in regard to this language. Additionally, they were using material that—in terms of oral tradition—had Aramaic strata, as Dalman well knew and found highly interesting.

1. A Man from Qarioth

In favor of this suggestion is the fact that it may possibly be related to an early Western text manuscript tradition relating to the Gospel of John, which might satisfy the final criterion. So, for example, in John 6:71a the *f*13 family of manuscripts along with the uncorrected ℵ* (Sinaiticus, fourth century) and Θ (Koridethi, ninth century) have ἔλεγεν δὲ τὸν Ἰούδαν Σίμωνος ἀπὸ Καρυώτου. This occurs also in a Greek marginal reading of the Harclean Syriac version. In John 12:4, for Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, D (followed by its Latin part) has εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ Ἰούδας ἀπὸ Καρυώτου. For John 13:2, D has Ἰούδα Σίμωνος ἀπὸ Καρυώτου; for John 3:26, Ἰούδα Σίμωνος ἀπὸ Καρυώτου; and likewise for John 14:22, Ἰούδας οὐχ ὁ ἀπὸ Καρυώτου. With the original hand of Sinaiticus attesting this interpretation, it must be traced as far back as the fourth century, and this opens up at least the possibility that some ancient tradition is reflected in the copyist's choice, which would have Judas's epithet relating to his provenance. A possible reflection of the same interpretation appears to be found in a couple of Latin manuscripts of the Synoptic Gospels so that the name "Cariotha" appears in Mark 3:19 (italic e: Palatinus, fifth century), and "Carioth" in Matt 10:4 (italic aur: Aureus, seventh century), though here there is no preposition and an *upsilon* would be rendered as Latin *i*.

A Greek tradition that can be traced back to Sinaiticus needs careful consideration. It may be that there was a village named Καρυώθ or Καρυώτ even though there is no exact attestation of such a place in any extant literature. We do not know the names of the vast majority of villages in wider Judea (including Galilee and Perea) in the first century. Eusebius (*Onom.* 120.1) mentions a town named Καριώθ as being "in the land of Moab, according to Jeremiah," but he gives no precise location. Jerome's transliteration of this is "Carioth," exactly as we find in the Latin Aureus manuscript. The place called קְרִיּוֹת by Jeremiah (48:24, 41; LXX 31:24, 41: Καριώθ) may indicate Kiriathaim (Num 32:37; cf. Eusebius, *Onom.* 112.14) located in the vicinity of Madaba, known in Eusebius's time as Karaiatha (Jerome: Coraiatha), and now identified with Khirbet el-Qureiyat.[16] However, if the Moabite town mentioned by Jeremiah is the same as that mentioned in Amos 2:2, it is significant that the LXX translates this word as πόλεις, which indicates no knowledge of a named place. As Brown notes, "there is no evidence that cities mentioned 1,200 to 600 years before were still extant in Judas' time."[17]

This LXX translation is understandable since the Hebrew word קִרְיָה (*qiryâ*)

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[16] *Palestine in the Fourth Century A.D.: The Onomasticon of Eusebius of Caesarea* (ed. Joan E. Taylor; trans. Greville S. P. Freeman-Grenville; indexed by Rupert Chapman III; Jerusalem: Carta, 2003), 140.

[17] Brown, *Death*, 1414.

means "town" (pl. קְרִיּוֹת). In Hebrew the word is commonly used in construct form in compounds to mean "settlements of," or it can be translated simply as "towns" rather than a place-name. Joshua 15:25 makes mention of קְרִיּוֹת חֶצְרוֹן, but the LXX reads here a construct form so that there is no place called "*Qĕrîyot,*" but rather "the towns of Aseron."[18] There is another town mentioned by Eusebius (*Onom.* 114.7) as Kariath (Josh 18:28; Jerome: Cariath). This is identified as a village under the metropolis of Gaba(on), attested also in *Onom.* 48.22 as Kariathiareim (Tel Qiryat Yeʿarim, ten miles west of Jerusalem), which means that "Kariath" is actually an abbreviation of its full name. It too disappears in the LXX.

Dalman suggested that the name of Judas's hometown might be Askaroth or Askar, not far from Neapolis,[19] but a transliteration would be strained. This is actually the Samaritan town of Sychar, and Judas was not known as a Samaritan.

The attestation of an *upsilon* in the name of the place that Judas came from in the variant manuscript tradition of the Fourth Gospel might give some pause for thought. If Judas was defined as coming ἀπὸ Καρυώτου, was there a place known as Qaruot(h)? As is well known, in the spelling of Mishnaic Hebrew a weak vowel can be unstable and *yod* could at times be replaced by *waw*, possibly as a result of common pronunciation from the influence of Aramaic. While in Hebrew the word for "town" is קְרִיָה (*qiryâ*), one of the words for "town" in Aramaic is קִרְוָא (*qirwāʾ*).[20] Alternatively, there is a Hebrew word קֵרוּיוֹת (*qērûyôt*), "pumpkin shells," which might possibly have given rise to the name of a town, though such an odd name would be strange. However, it is probably more likely that the innovation comes entirely from Greek influence: for example, from the word for "nut" or "walnut," καρυῶν,[21] or "date palm," καρυοῦτος. In LXX Exod 38:16 (MT 37:19), the word καρυωτά describes part of the lamps on the tabernacle menorah. The Greek copyist may then have thought it appropriate to think of a place named Καρυῶτης, even if no such place existed.

While the manuscript tradition that has the epithet indicating Judas's provenance indicates a desire by a certain early Christian copyist to furnish a reason for the unusual epithet, it does not necessarily provide us with a solution. As Brown notes, it was probably "all part of an ancient guess that *Iskarioth* contained a geographical designation."[22]

There are various reasons why Brown's assessment is undoubtedly correct. To begin with, manuscripts alter the first two letters of Judas's epithet into a preposition in order to make the identification. Commentators who support the "man of Qarioth" interpretation, however, suggest that these two letters reflect Hebrew איש,

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Dalman, *Sacred Sites and Ways: Studies in the Topography of the Gospels* (trans. Paul Levertoff; London: SPCK, 1935), 213.

[20] Jastrow, 1412.

[21] Torrey, "Name," 55.

[22] Brown, *Death*, 1412.

citing the case of 2 Sam 10:6, 8, where "a man of Tob" (איש טוב) is rendered in the LXX as Ἰστωβ. However, the Hebrew was probably originally a personal name rather than a description, since it appears as such in the LXX, the Syriac translations, Josephus (*Ant*. 7.121), and the Vulgate, as well as in 4QSamᵃ (4Q51), where it appears as ישטוב[א],[23] making it not quite right as a descriptive analogy. In 2 Sam 2:8, 10; 3:8, 14; 4:8, 12, there is a son of Saul named איש בשת, originally איש בעל,[24] but his name is given in the Greek manuscripts as Ἰεβοσθέ or Εἰσβααλ (reflecting the original), in both cases with the long *i* represented by a Greek dipthong rather than a simple *iota*.

Also, Dalman noted numerous instances of the use of the "a man of" expression in rabbinic literature to indicate provenance,[25] but he did not address the issue of how these would be rendered into Greek. In Greek the expression would really be better rendered as a relative pronoun, as Brown observes,[26] as in the case of "Philip who was from Bethsaida": Φιλίππῳ τῷ ἀπὸ Βηθσαϊδά (John 12:21). This might support a case for the variant manuscript reading, but then how could something so straightforward have been forgotten? As an epithet, a simple Greek way of indicating a man from Qarioth would have been Καριώτης. A literal phrase that would designate a man from a particular town as "a man of X," reflecting Hebrew, is not found elsewhere in the NT. Moreover, even if it were, it would be peculiar if Hebrew איש were used rather than Aramaic גברא (*gabrā*ʾ) or אנש (*ʾĕnāš*), if the Aramaic-speaking disciples really were just referring to Judas as "man of Qaruoth/Qarioth." As Torrey noted, "If the epithet was merely a designation of the place from which this Judas came, the employment of a mystifying transliteration instead of the simple ὁ ἀπό (as e.g. in John 12.21 and 21. 2) would be very strange indeed!"[27] The variant manuscripts provide too simple an explanation, given the mystification. Furthermore, if the epithet were indicative of provenance, we might expect someone to rue the shame of the town from which Judas came.

The tradition that has ἀπὸ Καρυώτου for Ἰσκαριώτου is not difficult to understand as a mere copyist's error, combined with an impulse to read the epithet as something comprehensible. Given the nature of uncial manuscripts, with no gaps between words and the breaking of words for columns: ΑΠΟΚΑΡΥΩΤΟΥ for ΙΣΚΑΡΙΩΤΟΥ could be read from faded letters of an old manuscript, in which the *alpha* and parts of *pi* and *omicron* have disappeared. Therefore, while it looks as if we have a resonance of meaning in early Christian tradition, the textual variant does not indicate more than an attempt to read the epithet in a way that made sense, when it was not actually understood at the time the variant first appeared.

[23] See John Zhu-En Wee, "Maacah and Ish-Tob," *JSOT* 30 (2005): 191–99.

[24] On the basis of 1 Chr 8:33; 9:39: אֶשְׁבַּעַל and the El Amarna letter 256, where the name is Mutbaal, "man of Baal." The Peshitta here conflates the name into *Ishbashoul*.

[25] Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua,* 25–26.

[26] Brown, *Death*, 1414.

[27] Torrey, "Name," 53.

Günther Schwartz's argument that the Aramaic word קְרִיתָא or equivalent refers to the city of Jerusalem in the Targums has been dismissed by Brown as relying on evidence that is too late.[28] But since contemporary first-century Palestinian Jewish Aramaic evidence is scarce, and since language can remain reasonably consistent over several centuries, we are justified in looking to somewhat later or earlier periods for our evidence, and to dialects other than Palestinian Jewish Aramaic, as well as to Mishnaic Hebrew, in which Aramaic influence was strong. The synchronicity of the evidence is not significant in this case, but rather it is a combination of Hebrew איש and Aramaic קריתא that does not seem highly probable.

The point about the Aramaic language of Jesus' disciples is also one that needs to be stressed. While Mishnaic Hebrew is useful as a pointer to the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of Jesus' day, it is not very likely that the Galilean disciples of Jesus themselves spoke Hebrew. Hebrew is associated with the traditional, small territory of Judea and the city of Jerusalem, where the preservation of the national tongue was possibly linked with a desire to maintain religious and cultural identity.[29] While Hebrew probably did remain a spoken language in the first century,[30] it was not the language of Galilee or the surrounding regions and most likely had a special religious and nationalistic significance in terms of the south (Judea of old).[31] This is not to say that the epithet of Judas could on no account be Hebrew, but that, if it were Hebrew, that would have a special significance in terms of how Judas is imagined; he would be the only known "southerner," from Judea, apart

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[28] G. Schwartz, *Jesus und Judas*, 6–12; Brown, *Death*, 1414.

[29] Seth Schwartz, "Language, Power and Identity," *Past and Present* 148 (1995): 21–31.

[30] So Moses H. Segal, "Mishnaic Hebrew and Its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and to Aramaic," *JQR* 20 (1908): 647–737; William Chomsky, "What Was the Jewish Vernacular during the Second Commonwealth?" *JQR* 42 (1951): 193–212; Jehoshua M. Grintz, "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple Period," *JBL* 79 (1960): 32–47; cf. Chaim Rabin, "The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew," in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin; ScrHier 4; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1958), 144–61; idem, "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century," in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; 2 vols.; CRINT 1; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976), 2:1007–39; James Barr, "Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in the Hellenistic Age," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism,* vol. 2, *The Hellenistic Age* (ed. W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), 79–114.

[31] The fact that the overwhelming majority of nonbiblical manuscripts found in or near Qumran are written in Hebrew reflects an ideology in which Hebrew was to be employed as an eschatological ideal, since the Qumran fragment 4Q464 frg. 8 refers to the "holy tongue" that will be restored in the eschaton, when the people become again "pure of speech" (line 9). This is linked with the *Testament of Judah* (25:1–3), where likewise the one people of the Lord will speak one language. In *Jub.* 12:25–27, Hebrew is the "language of the creation"; see Michael Stone and Esther Eshel, "The Holy Language at the End of Days in Light of a Qumran Fragment" (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 62 (1993–94): 169–77; Steve Weitzman, "Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?" *JAOS* 119 (1999): 35–45.

from Jesus himself, whose family origins were in Bethlehem of Judea (Matt 1:18–2:23). Rather, the language of Galilee—and Jesus himself—appears to have been Aramaic.[32]

2. *Sicarius*

Latin *sicarius* is found as a loanword in Greek as σικάριος, which is amply attested in Josephus (*J. W.* 2.254, 452; 4.400, 516; 7.253, 254, 262, 275, 297, 311, 410, 412, 415, 437, 444; *Ant.* 20.186, 204, 208, 210; cf. Acts 21:38), indicating a murderer who used a dagger known as a *sica*. The term is found also in rabbinic literature in Aramaic as סִיקָרִין (*sîqārîn*, "assassins," masc. pl.).[33] However, in the case of Ἰσκαριώθ, the transliteration indicates that an initial *aleph* would have to be placed at the beginning of the word. When there were two consonants sounded together (sk-, st-, etc.) it was not uncommon in Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew for there to be an insertion of a prosthetic *aleph*, especially in the case of loanwords, for example, אִסְקוּתְלָא for σκοῦτλον, *scutella* (L.), a type of salver, or אִסְקְפָא for σκάφη, *scapha* (L.), a kind of light boat,[34] but in סִיקָרִין there is a long *i*-vowel (*yod*) between the *samek* and the *qoph,* so there is no need for a prosthetic *aleph*.[35] In addition, the Aramaic word is masculine, but the transliteration Ἰσκαριώθ would appear to reflect a Hebrew feminine plural ending, *-ôt,* or else an Aramaic nominal feminine form *-ûtā;* there is no way to get to these from the masculine loanword.

3. *Liar*

In Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, the word "liar" appears as שַׁקָּארָא and שַׁקְרָא,[36] while in Syriac *shaqqaraᵓ* has the same meaning, and *shaqqarouthaᵓ* is the condition of "falsehood, perjury."[37] In Torrey's proposal for an Aramaic form meaning

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[32] See Esther Eshel and Douglas R. Edwards, "Language and Writing in Early Roman Galilee: Social Location of Potter's Abecedary from Khirbet Qana," in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine: Old Questions, New Approaches* (ed. Douglas R. Edwards; New York/London: Routledge, 2004), 49–55. See also Mark A. Chancey's discussions about Aramaic as the lingua franca of first-century Galilee, against a view that stresses the prevalence of Greek: Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (SNTSMS 134; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. 122–59; idem, "The Epigraphic Habit of Hellenistic and Roman Galilee," in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition* (ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin; WUNT 210; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 83–98.

[33] Jastrow, 986.

[34] Ibid., 97.

[35] Brown, *Death*, 1415.

[36] Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (2nd ed.; Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1177.

[37] Jessie Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), 568, 595.

"liar" he adds an *aleph* at the beginning of the word to make the form אִשְׁקַרְיָא (ʾišqaryāʾ).[38] This form not attested in the lexica, nor is it necessary to attach a prosthetic *aleph* to the word, since there is no consonantal clash with the doubling of the *qoph* following a short *i*-vowel. The proposed word might be transliterated into Greek as Ἰσκάρια, but this does not give us an exact correspondence with Ἰσκαριώθ. Torrey notes that, while ώθ was indeed the usual Greek transliteration for the Hebrew feminine plural endng וֹת- (-ôt), "in the oldest versions, the Syriac and the Latin, the name in the two passages in Mark, and in Luke 6:16 as well, is found to end in -ot, not -oth!"[39] Torrey argues that the final -ώθ of the Greek transliteration is a corruption, while the form Ἰσκαριώτης is created by adding -ώτης to a substantive ending in *-iâ*. For example, one can from Σικελία (Sicily) derive the word Σικελιώτης, a Sicilian Greek, someone associated with Sicily (not a Sicilian, which is just Σικελός), and so on. But in order to create a *iota* before the ending in a Greek transliteration Torrey has to propose that the Aramaic word is a masculine singular noun in its absolute form, when the Greek words ending in -ώτης are associated with a larger entity, showing a linked relationship with that larger entity, often to a place. Thus, for the analogy to work, a Greek word would need to be created from the Aramaic for "falseness, deceit," thereby "a false one." From the closest Aramaic parallel, the best we can get is σικραώτης in accordance with this principle of grammar, avoiding an unnecessary prosthetic *aleph*. This is not "Iskarioth." Torrey's point probably has more relevance in terms of the explanation of Judas's epithet as indicating provenance.

It is suggested by Torrey that the epithet was not a name used of Judas during his lifetime but rather was a designation made by the early Aramaic-speaking church. But it seems odd that the word was not clearly translated into Greek if it was important to refer to Judas as "the liar." After all, Greek speakers sought to understand Aramaic expressions used by Jesus and his disciples and noted these (e.g., Mark 3:17; 5:41; 7:34; 14:36; 15:34; Luke 16:9–13; cf. Matt 6:24; John 1:42; 20:16; Acts 9:36). Moreover, as Brown notes, "one may wonder about a sobriquet that had little resemblance to what Judas did—no New Testament account has Judas lie about Jesus."[40] The word based on Aramaic שְׁקַר ("to lie") has the sense of betrayal in Samaritan Aramaic,[41] though this is not attested in the extant material of other regional dialects. Relevant or not, the forgetting of the meaning of an epithet with such negative import as "false man" or "liar" would be remarkable; we would surely expect to find it alluded to in the Fourth Gospel, where the dichotomy of truth and falsehood is a major theme.

[38] Torrey, "Name," 55.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Brown, *Death*, 1416.

[41] Abraham Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* (Handbook of Oriental Studies 1: The Near and Middle East 50; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 929.

4. Red-haired or Red-hued

Arbeitman suggests that the form Ἰσκαριώτης gives the best indication of an underlying Aramaic original and argues that the -της ending was added to an Aramaic word to create a hybrid already in the bilingual (Greek-Aramaic) Palestinian church, a hybrid that could be truncated only to a -τ, which was then written down as -θ in the Gospels because it was followed by words with rough breathing that aspirated the sound.[42] The central ιω is accounted for because "representations of the phonetics of a donor language in a recipient language are not always either consistent or exact," and therefore the -*a* in Aramaic was simply rendered inaccurately. The prosthetic *aleph* was added to a stem because the "inordinate length of the hybrid word with four syllables gave rise to elision of the vowel farthest from the accent," thereby creating a clash of syllables which necessitated its addition.

Arbeitman's ingenious argumentation may well account for an Aramaic word being made into a hybrid Greek word, but it rests fundamentally on a reading of Abba Saqqara's name being derived from the word "red"—as A. Ehrman suggests—even though the root סקר is not attested in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic in rabbinic sources.[43] It is attested in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, where there is a form meaning "red dye/paint," סְקַרְתָּא.[44] In fact, one needs to make this a little more specific because the red coloration is not a general one but is related specifically to rock lichen, סִיקְרָא, which is attested in Palestinian sources as a dye.[45] Arbeitman's grammatical explanations are difficult to fault, except that to have the Aramaic ending of *aleph* (-*a*) transliterated as ιω is too loose. It is not impossible that a designation of Judas according to color was made, given the parallel of Acts 13:1, Συμεὼν ὁ καλούμενος Νίγερ, but ultimately there seems no reason for such a designation to have been forgotten or misunderstood. If the epithet represented Judas's red hair or ruddy complexion, the symbolism of this could have been drawn out in early Christian literature, and this is a relatively late inconographical convention.

5. Betrayer/One who Hands Over

In Mark 14:44 and Matt 26:48, Judas is referred to explicitly as "the betrayer," or more literally "the one who gives over," ὁ παραδιδούς, and it would be a neat

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[42] Arbeitman, "Suffix of Iscariot," 122–24; A. Ehrman, "Judas," 572–73

[43] See Sokoloff, *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*. A dictionary of Qumran Aramaic is yet to appear, and it must be said that there remains much that is unknown in terms of the Aramaic forms of language common in wider Judea in the first century.

[44] Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 829.

[45] For which, see Jastrow, 986.

equation if this meaning represented the Semitic word rendered *Iskarioth*. It is therefore intriguing that Morin finds a method whereby this equation might hold.[46] His argument is based on the LXX translation of Isa 19:4a. The MT reads: וְסִכַּרְתִּי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּיַד אֲדֹנִים קָשֶׁה, which is given in the LXX as: Καὶ παραδώσω τὴν Αἴγυπτον εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων, κυρίων σκληρῶν, "And I will deliver Egypt into the hands of men, of cruel lords." The problem is that the root סכר in the *piʿel* is found in this form only in Isa 19:4a, with the metaphorical sense of "deliver." Elsewhere סכר in the *qal* consistently means "to dam, stop, choke," a meaning found also in the cognate Aramaic form סְכַר. In Aramaic, the intensive form *paʿel,* which corresponds to Hebrew *piʿel*, has exactly the same meaning as the Hebrew *qal*.[47]

In the Hebrew text of Isa 19:4a, it seems that there is imagery at work that entails Egypt being choked by the power/hand of a harsh king—hence the metaphorical sense of being "delivered" into his hand and then strangled. Nevertheless, the LXX has not retained this imagery but rather explains it. In other words, the LXX may not alert us to a distinctive meaning of סכרתי at all, but may offer an interpretation of it.

There are other words that could have been used if it was important to call Judas "the one who handed over" or "the betrayer" in this way. For example, in Hebrew the verb מסר can be used specifically of surrendering someone to the authorities.[48] In the Syriac version, the word translating ὁ παραδιδούς is ܡܫܠܡܢܐ (*mashlᵉmānāʾ*) from the root שלם.[49]

Furthermore, even if the *piʿel* form סִכַּרְתִּי really might mean "hand over," the active participle that would create a possible meaning "the one handing over" would be מְסַכֵּר. This does not get us to *Iskarioth*. To make the case stronger, the emphasis is placed on a Hebrew root that has some similarities, namely, סגר, which in the *hipʿil* form הִסְגִּיר can mean "deliver, hand over," as in *Sifre* Deut. 323. However, Brown notes that "while *g* in Semitic can be rendered by a *k* in Greek, a rendering by *g* would be more normal. Moreover, one would have to assume that no New Testament author recognized that *Iskarioth* rendered the idea of giving Jesus over."[50] Indeed, why is it never mentioned in any early Christian writing that *Iskarioth* simply means "the betrayer," given that this would make such good sense? Furthermore, finding a possible root is one thing, but we are still left with difficulties of the initial *iota* (indicating an *aleph*) and the ending.

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[46] Morin, "Les deux derniers," 340–58.

[47] Jastrow, 992–93.

[48] This resonance is found without the pejorative connotations in numerous cases illustrated in Jastrow, 810–11.

[49] Jastrow, 1586.

[50] Brown, *Death*, 1415.

IV. A New (Old) Proposal

Let us remember now that, among Greek speakers, Ἰούδας [ὁ] Ἰσκαριώθ/Ἰσκαριώτης could be designated simply by the epithet alone, as ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης (Matt 10:4; John 12:4; 14:22), without the forename, that might lead to confusion. Judas was "called" Ἰσκαριώτης (Matt 26:14; Luke 22:3), but no translation of the epithet is offered anywhere in the Gospels and Acts. It seems to mean something that distinguished him from any other Judas.

Building on Morin, it may be that a better way to account for the Hebrew or Aramaic root סכר in the epithet of Judas is to consider its primary meaning, with the implication of "to choke," "to stop up." This has the huge benefit of ancient accreditation: Origen was apparently familiar with an interpretation of the epithet in "Hebrew" (by which he meant Mishnaic Hebrew or Palestinian Jewish Aramaic) that indicated that the root סכר lay behind the epithet forms in Greek (*Comm. Matt.* 35).[51] It is to be remembered that Origen (185–254 c.e.) was extremely interested in Hebrew and lived in Caesarea Maritima after 231, learning much about local things. Origen's words, preserved only in Latin translation, are as follows:

> Audivi quemdam exponentem patriam proditoris Judae secundum interpretationem Hebraicam exsuffocatum vocari.

> I have heard a certain native [Palestinian] proposal following a Hebrew interpretation —the betrayer Judas (is) to be named "suffocated."

The "*ex*" attached to the Latin word *suffocatus* (a perfect passive participle, masculine singular) intensifies the basic meaning of *suffoco*, "throttle, choke, stifle, strangle, suffocate." Interestingly, long ago John Lightfoot pointed to the Hebrew word אִסְכְּרָא, "choking," as "Iscara," the term lying behind *Iskarioth*.[52] Jastrow cites numerous instances, and has recorded that this word is found also in Mishnaic Hebrew/Aramaic (fem.) as אִסְכַּרְיָא, with the inclusion of an important *yod* prior to the final *aleph*.[53] The prosthetic *aleph*—vocalized with an "*i*" sound—here attaches itself rightly to a basic form with the consonants "sk" sounded together, so this satisfies the grammatical requirement for its appearance. Of course, it is not absolutely necessary that it appear in all cases where the word is used, since it is essentially an

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[51]Ibid., 1413, though no reference is cited. The Latin version of the text may be found at *PG* 13:895, p. 1727.

[52] See *b. Ber.* 8a; *b. Taʿan.* 27b, translated by Lightfoot as "estrangulament" or "angina" ("Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon the Gospel of St. Matthew," in *The Whole Works of the Rev. John Lightfoot, Master of Catharine Hall, Cambridge* [ed. John R. Pitman; 13 vols.; London: J. F. Dove, 1822–25], 11:172). This is noted by Brown (*Death*, 1413).

[53] Jastrow, 94, without citations.

aid to pronunciation, which probably had regional variants.[54] For example, in the Aramaic dialect of Syriac the prosthetic *aleph* is not found in derivatives of this root, while in Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic it is found.

Origen himself did not employ the initial "*i*" sound of the epithet in his commentary on Matthew. The Latin text here reads *Scariota*. This is an important variant, as it reflects a form that sits well not only with Mishnaic Hebrew and Aramaic, but also with Syriac. The Peshitta has ܣܟܪܝܘܛܐ (*sᵉkaryouta*ʾ) consistently as the epithet for Judas, for both forms as found in Greek. This Syriac spelling of the epithet is reflected also in the fifth-century Bezae (D) manuscript of the Synoptics along with a swathe of early Latin versions (as well as others), which lose the initial *iota* of *Iskarioth* in Mark 3:19 to have Σκαριώθ (Latin *Scarioth, Scariothen, Scariotha*); in Mark 14:10 to read Σκαριώτης (Latin *Scarioth, Schariothe, Scariotha*); in Luke 6:16 to read Σκαριώθ (Latin *Scarioth;* Armenian *Scariota;* Georgian *Skarioten*); or in Matt 10:4, Σκαριώτης (Latin *Scarioth, Scariota*). However, the Peshitta chooses not to make the connection with *sᵉkar*, "stop up" (in Syriac) explicit, since in Matt 27:5 the verb used is *ḥᵉnaq*, "strangle," which clarifies the means of Judas's death in accordance with the standard understanding of the early church.

One must ask, though, whether this tradition, which drops the Greek *iota* in line with the Syriac, may have come about as the result of manuscript error. There are several other mistakes in the wider manuscript tradition of Judas's epithet, for example Ἰσκαιώθ in the version of the tenth-century Lectionary 150 for Mark 3:19, or *Inscarioth* for the Latin part of the Bezae for Luke 6:16. The Marcan fragment of the Freer Gospels from the fifth century loses the middle *iota* in having Ἰσκαρώτης in the variant tradition of Mark 3:19 and loses a final *sigma* of the epithet in John 13:2. None of these can really be a basis for an explanation of the meaning of the epithet; they are isolated instances.

The loss of a preliminary *iota* is an easy slip in both Greek and Latin, and also in Syriac Serta script in the case of *aleph*, where the initial vowel is represented by a single stroke. Yet, while this may account for a single mistake here and there, the standardization of the Syriac epithet for Judas and its repeated appearance as a variant make it count as much more than a simple error. If it was a rationalization it is curious that in itself it is not explicable; it is explicable only with Origen's alternative etymology and to Syriac speakers, who could distinguish within this form the obvious root.

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[54] For example, Latin *scortea* is found in rabbinic writings as both אִיסְקוֹרְטְיָא, and סְקוֹרְטְיָא (Jastrow, 1019). This word was also proposed by Lightfoot as a possible basis for Iskarioth ("Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations," 172). The plural would be אִיסְקוֹרְטִיוֹת, *isqortyoth*. The *scortea* was a kind of leather coat or apron, and Lightfoot speculated that perhaps it was worn by Judas if he had a purse sewn in where communal money was deposited (cf. John 12:6; 13:29). However, the transliteration into Greek of the plural form would have been Ἰσκορτιώθ, which is just too different a form from the word we need.

The Syriac root *skr* can be found in various nominal forms, so that *s^ekiroutha^ᵓ* (fem.) is, for example, a "stopping" of the ears.[55] Given the evidence of Mishnaic Hebrew, Syriac, and Jewish Aramaic, an Aramaic form סְכָרְיוּתָא or אִסְכָּרְיוּתָא would be possible, a feminine noun applying to a state or condition. But in terms of the form of Judas's epithet, the Peshitta pointedly uses a *teth* rather than a *tau* as the second to last letter, so that we do not have a feminine ending *-outha.* Rather, this is a masculine that looks like an accommodation to Greek-speaking Christian norms, since in Syriac the *teth* invariably transliterates Greek *tau* in words ending in -της. What the Christian Aramaic dialect of Syriac gives at the beginning—the root verb lying behind the epithet "Iskarioth"—it takes away at the end, accommodating itself to Greek. Conversely, Greek could transliterate Hebrew and Aramaic (soft) *tau* with a *teth*. Gennesareth (cf. Hebrew כנרת) in the Gospels is rendered with a final Greek *tau* rather than a *theta* for Hebrew *taw*: Γεννησαρέτ (Matt 14:34; Mark 6:53; Luke 5:1), and by Eusebius in declinable form: πρὸς τῇ Γεννησαρίτιδι λίμνῃ (*Onom.* 58.11) and τὴν Γεννησαρίτην λίμνη (*Onom.* 120.28). As Arbeitman has rightly noted, we are in some fashion dealing with a Greek-Aramaic hybrid.

However, it seems to me that Arbeitman drops far too much of the original ending in removing the *tau* or *teth* and creating an *aleph* out of two vowels. That the word "Iskarioth" originally designated a noun with a feminine ending *-outha* seems likely given the transliterated form. This kind of feminine noun ending *-outha* would apply to a state or condition, among other things: meaning "chokiness," "blockage," "constriction" (thus also implying "suffocation").

That an Aramaic feminine noun is used as an epithet for one of Jesus' disciples is of course not a problem, since Simon was known by the epithet כֵּפָא, "rock," which is likewise a feminine noun.[56] These are descriptive terms that are not dependent on the masculine subject to which they relate. Jesus apparently designated a number of his disciples by epithets. The other Simon is [ὁ] Καναναῖος (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19), "called the Zealot" (Luke 6:15; cf. Acts 1:12), indicating קַנְאָן, "zealous one").[57] For the sons of Zebedee, called Boanerges, Βοανηργής (Mark 3:17), the epithet probably transliterates Aramaic "sons of noise," בְּנֵי רְגַשָׁא. Jesus' other apostle named Judas (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15) was called "the twin" (John 11:16; 14:22; 20:24; 21:2) in Aramaic תְּאוֹמָא, hence Thomas. Differentiating the two disciples named Judas would have been very important. Judas "Iskarioth" would also be distinguished from Jesus' brother (Matt 13:55 and par.). The Judas who betrayed Jesus was not defined as such by his epithet; he was distinguished by it. He was "Judas, the [one called] Iskarioth," as opposed to any other.

What then remains of any reflection on the meaning of Judas's epithet in the tradition of the early church, in terms of stories, puns, or memory? It appears that

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[55] Payne Smith, *Dictionary,* 377.

[56] Jastrow, 634–35.

[57] Cf. Jastrow, 1388, 1390–91. In Hebrew a similar word, קַנָּאי, in the plural came to refer to "the zealots, the terrorists during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans" (Jastrow, 1388).

if Judas was known in some way as "chokiness" or "constriction," there would be a correlation extremely early in the tradition in terms of speculation about the means of his death. It is not my purpose here to reconcile what appear to be two contradictory accounts of Judas's death, a contradiction that has been much discussed. Rather, I want to note that both written versions could derive from a story focusing on Judas choking, each one modifying (and vastly abbreviating) the story in different ways. Matthew 27:5 has ἀπελθὼν ἀπήγξατο: "[Judas] went out and choked/strangled (himself)." The translation "choked" is an appropriate alternative given the middle form of the of the verb ἀπάγχω used here, ἀπήγξατο, though "strangled/hanged himself" is the usual understanding. In Acts 1:18, Peter tells the assembly of disciples: πρηνὴς γενόμενος ἐλάκησεν μέσος, καὶ ἐξεχύθη πάντα τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ, "Falling flat on his face, he made a violent noise in the middle, and all his insides poured out." The word λάσκω does not really mean "burst open," despite the usualness of this translation, but rather it ordinarily indicates making a sharp sound, like a clanging bell, a crash when something is hit, a howl or a shriek,[58] hence my translation here of "made a violent noise." This description could also represent a loud, noisy cough or choke, or the belching sound preceding a vomit. The extremely horrible image may depict Judas as having a coughing, choking, and vomiting fit in which he coughs up all his insides, though the traditional view is that he split open—and clearly the text allows, if not promotes, this understanding.

In other words, both canonical stories of Judas's death can be read as developed reflections on the idea of Judas choking, which would indicate early speculations on an epithet that in some way meant "chokiness" or "constriction": אִסְכַּרְיוּתָא, *Iskarioutha*. In the case of Acts, it is as if everything Judas is stopped up with pours out.

It seems very unlikely that the epithet in fact derives from the manner of his death, so that it was applied only afterwards. The epithets of the apostles are strongly linked with the time of Jesus' ministry, so the reason for Judas being designated in this way would be derivative of something in his character or physical state, as in the case of the other disciples named by Jesus with fitting epithets. He was distinguished from other men named Judas by this means. From the epithet then came the stories of death, not the other way around.

Moreover, there was another version of Judas's death recorded by the second-century bishop Papias of Hierapolis that required Judas to live somewhat longer, and here—though it is not explicitly stated—he also appears "stopped up" in a way that leads him to bulge hugely, while succumbing to various diseases.[59] "He became

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[58] LSJ, 1031.

[59] The original opinion of Papias is distinguished by Arie W. Zwiep (*Judas and the Choice of Matthias: A Study on Context and Concern of Acts 1:15–26* [WUNT 2/187; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 110–25) from a careful analysis of the citations of Papias in Apollinaris of Laodicea, *Catena in Evangelium S. Matthiae* and *Catena in Acta SS Apostolorum*.

so bloated in the flesh that he could not pass through a place that was easily made wide enough for a wagon, his body being engorged with foulness" (Papias, *Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord* 3).[60] All these stories would derive from the earliest Aramaic-speaking Christians' speculations based on the epithet: a man called "chokiness" or "constriction" would have to have a death appropriate to his name. The Syriac form of Judas's epithet still retains a clue to the original Aramaic of Jesus' time, but, as time went on, for most of the church the meaning was lost. The final attestation of this ancient understanding of the epithet is found in the writings of Origen, who notes a "Hebrew" definition meaning *exsuffocatus*, סְכַרְיוּתָא. It was the keen eye of Lightfoot who noticed the significance of this.

In conclusion, by the criteria outlined above, perhaps there is a solution to the problem of this epithet "Iskarioth." As has long been recognized, there is no simple, attested word in the current lexica that will explain it, and we must create one out of the relics of lost language. While absolute exactitude may elude us, it is possible to define the root lying within this Aramaic term, by reference to the later Syriac form. The whole form of the transliterated word may be explained, including the initial "*i*", and the ending requiring the feminine *-outha* that relates to a state or condition. There is a resonance of the meaning in very early Christian tradition in the variant stories that describe the manner of Judas's death as indicating that he choked/strangled, or spewed/burst, or bulged to a great degree, all notions that could derive from a word with the root סכר and encompassing this range of meanings. In addition, in this proposal there is no reliance on textual variants that are likely to be only copyist's errors or rationalizations, but a focus rather on textual variants that reflect the impact of a Syriac version of the epithet or even the influence of those who knew "Hebrew," such as the Palestinian Christians who discussed the matter with Origen.

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[60] Bart Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers,* vol. 2, *Letter of Barnabas. Papias and Quadratus. Epistle to Diognetus. The Shepherd of Hermas* (LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 2003), 103–6.