

# MARY MAGDALENE IS NOW MISSING:

A CORRECTED READING OF OSSUARIES CJO 701 and CJO 108\*

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## SUMMARY POINTS OF DISCUSSION:

- \*The original transcription of the inscription was incorrect.*
- \*The inscription does not read “Mariamene the Master” nor does the name Mariamene or Mariamne appear on the ossuary at all.*
- \*The inscription reflects the writing of two distinct scribes who wrote in different forms of the Greek script.*
- \*The correct reading of the inscription is “Mariame and Mara,” based on parallels from contemporary inscriptions and documents.*
- \*The ossuary thus contained the bones of at least two different women, interred at two separate times, one named Mariame and the other Mara.*
- \*No support exists for ascribing the ossuary to Mary Magdalene.*

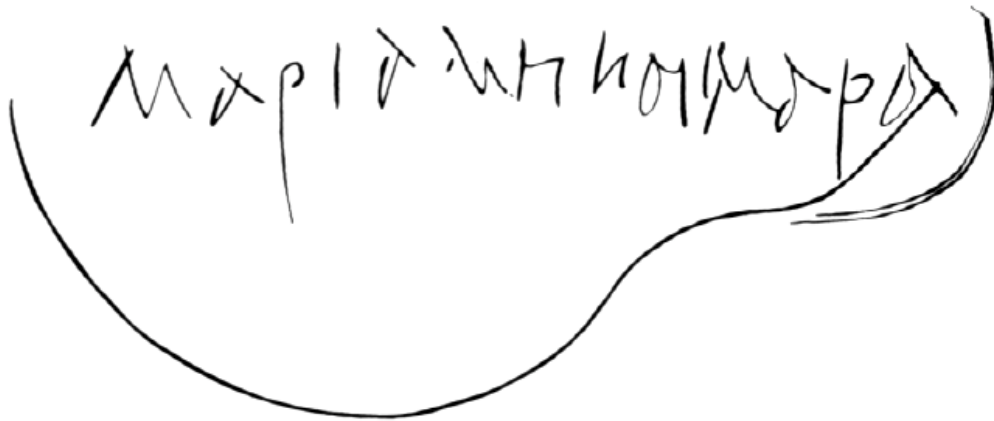
The name "Mariamene" is of central importance to the story line of the documentary *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* and its companion book. Since “Mariamene” is unique (and likewise, “Mariamne,” is rare) among the ossuaries, this name is also highly significant when creating statistics and probabilities concerning the uniqueness of the Talpiot cave and its inscribed ossuaries.

Following Prof. François Bovon of Harvard University, the filmmakers and their advisors have accepted Mary Magdalene's name in the apocryphal Acts of Philip as being "Mariamne" and that this was also the current and accurate name for the actual historical figure, Mary Magdalene of the first century. However, Prof. Bovon did not in any way state that the name "Mariamne" of the Acts of Philip should be linked to the historical figure of the first century. But rather he said that this character is presented as the sister of both Philip of Bethsaida and Martha of Bethany, whose persona evolved in time to become the fictitious Gnostic sage and evangelist, more closely linked to the Mary of Magdala in the Manichean Psalms, the Gospel of Mary, and the Pistis Sofia. Based upon apocryphal stories such as these, which speak of a close relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus, and which give a high prominence to her in the early church, the storywriters have surmised that Jesus and Mary were married and even produced a family. (Of these three assumptions—(1) that the name of Mary Magdalene was not Maria or Mariam, as recorded in the Gospels, but rather Mariamne; (2) that the Mariamne of the Acts of Philip is to be identified with Mary Magdalene, though the Acts of Philip never says so explicitly, and (3) that Jesus was married and fathered a child—none is supported by any of the earliest records dealing with these individuals, namely the canonical Gospels and Josephus).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> He published this clarification on the Society of Biblical Literature Forum for March 2007.

## Part 1: The original reading of Ossuary CJO 701



“MARIAMENOU MARA”; CJO 701.

The original publication of the ossuary by archaeologists L.Y. Rahmani (with L. Di Segni), followed by A. Kloner, interpreted this inscription as reading MARIAMENOU-MARA: "of Mariamene (a.k.a.) Mara." However, recent publications of Greek papyrus manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls have provided evidence to clarify the reading of the ossuary. The following evidence challenges the existence of the name "Mariamene/Mariamne" in this tomb at all.

### Summary of Inherent Problems in the original reading of CJO 701 by Rahmani and Di Segni: MARIAMENOU/MARA

- I. The first points have to do with the now familiar lexical problems. Based on my research:
  1. The name MARIAMNH is unattested before the third century CE (aside from CJO 108 and 701, which are in question here).
  2. MARIAMHNNH is nowhere else attested for MARIAMNH.
  3. The retrograde reading of *nu* is nowhere else attested in legible inscriptions of the late Second Temple Period.
  4. According to Rahmani, an unattested lexical form MARIAMHNNH is here expressed in a diminutive form MARIAMHNNON. He suggests that this would explain the otherwise unattested neuter genitive MARIAMHNOU. However the diminutive endings, as a rule, should be for masculine nouns *-iskos/iskou*; feminine *-iska/iskas* and neuter *-ion/iou* (Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §852). In this case, hypothetically, a neuter diminutive form in the genitive should produce MARIAMHNIU (not MARIAMHNOU). The problem here being that none of these irregular forms are attested elsewhere
  5. James Tabor quotes an email from Leah Di Segni in his blog: “I well remember that, while here and there I had some suggestions about interpretation of a particular form (for instance, Mariamenon being an hypochoristic (*sic*) form of Mariam), I could not but confirm all his readings. I have not changed my mind now.” If the name was actually a hypocorism of the name (i.e., MARIAMHNNH) there would be no need to change to the neuter endings.
  6. A ligature for OU, is epigraphically problematic since it begins to appear regionally (and only sparingly) during the early second century (and, even then, does not resemble this form at all, cf. P. Yadin mss).

II. The second points have to do with the suggested elements of the *signum* formula.

A *signum* is a term used for an added second personal name, like a middle name or alias. According to the experts (Schwabe and Lifshitz, Beth Shearim II, p. 64), if it is introduced by the formula H KAI or O KAI “who is also called” then the two personal names are typically foreign to one another, Jewish to Greek, Greek to Jewish, English to French or vice versa. (Schwabe also quotes SAULOS (DE) O KAI PAULOS: “Saul who is also called Paul” from Acts 13:9).

There are several immediate problems, however, in applying the above profile or definition of this term to the inscription of *CJO* (Rahmani) ossuary 701:

1. Mariamne and Mara are both Jewish names. This doesn't fit the profile for the suggested H KAI + *signum* formula in use here.
2. The two names must be in the same grammatical (especially inflectional case) form but are not. This doesn't fit the profile on a very basic level. (i.e., names in apposition to one another cannot be a mixture of genitive and nominative forms, as has been proposed for this inscription.)
3. If MARA is taken to be translated by the title “Master” (so Tabor and Pellegrino), then it is not a personal name. It really doesn't fit the profile for *signa* at all.
4. In Greek inscriptions of the Second Temple Period, no inadvertent scratch (and there are 47 in this area in and around the inscription), stroke or “clear diacritical mark” is ever substituted for a letter, a word or a phrase (including H or H KAI). The vertical stroke that Rahmani suggests “probably represents an *eta*,” is unattested elsewhere. In the parallel inscription suggested by Rahmani, Beth Shearim 101, SARA H MAXIMA, the *eta* is written in full. On the basis of Beth Shearim 101, Rahmani suggests that the presumed *eta* would represent the full formula, *h kai*.
5. The earliest inscriptional use of *signa* comes from the beginning of the second century (Schwabe) or from the end of the first century (Tabor as quoting Di Segni).

III. The problems with the basic grammatical rules for the *signum* and appositives create even more difficulties for this reading.

1. To accept the reading MARIAMHNOU [H] MARA, with the stroke/*eta* theoretically representing H KAI, one must overlook the improper use of Greek grammar with respect to the *signum* (and appositives in general) which, by definition, requires agreement in inflection and case endings, both as to the noun and its article.
2. Since the first name, according to Rahmani's reading, is in the genitive case, standard Greek grammar would dictate that both the noun MARIAMHNON and its appositive/*signum* H MARA should agree with respect to the inflectional form (Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §976ff). In this case, both should be in the genitive i.e., MARIAMHNOU THS KAI MARAS (cf. Schwabe, Beth Shearim II, p. 85, no. 199: TOPOS THEODOSIAS THS KAI SARAS TUROU). Or, if a relative pronoun were used (e.g., Abel, 1913, 276, no. 13) then MARIAMHNOU OU KAI MARAS, would be the expected reading, with the relative pronoun agreeing with the preceding noun in both inflection and the neuter gender.
3. The example provided from *CJO* 868 ALEXAS MARA MHTHR IOUDAS SIMON UIOS AUTHS does not provide a parallel. There, the anarthrous MARA, rather than carrying the genitive inflection of ALEXAS which precedes it, is grammatically bound to agree with the nominative inflection of MHTHR (this parenthetical string of nominatives ultimately gain their inflections from UIOS AUTHS, which presents a type of *casus pendens* at the end of the inscription).

4. One might suggest an alternative reading for MARIAMHNOU MARA as "Mara, (daughter) of Mariamhnos", however, reversed syntax of this type would be unusual among the ossuaries. (N.B., not to forget the morphological problems mentioned above.)

IV. Finally, epigraphic observations concerning the two parts of the inscription must be taken into consideration.

1. The inscription bears two writing styles, documentary and cursive, each being characteristically clear, distinct and consistent for each of the two parts of the inscription (bringing into question the proposed unity of the inscription). Both of the scribal hands preserved on the ossuary betray writers who are both practiced and comfortable in writing Greek.

2. The second part of the inscription KAI MARA was written with an instrument similar to that of the first, but with a comparably sharper point.

V. It has been assumed that irregularities on ossuaries are commonplace. However, the frequency of variants and errors among the corpus of ossuaries is quantifiable. On the corpus of ossuaries from Beth Shearim a certain number of orthographic variants are relatively common, especially iotacisms (about 1 in every 5 inscriptions). Actual spelling errors are few (about 1 in 25 inscriptions). Grammatical/syntactic errors are relatively rare among these inscriptions (no more than 1 in every 45 inscriptions). The count of variants and errors are somewhat less among the published ossuaries of the Second Temple Period. Odds that ten or more anomalies should be found in an inscription on a single ossuary is highly suspicious, and indicate that it is not an acceptable reading of the inscription.<sup>2</sup>

*It is difficult to imagine that an apparently literate Hellenistic Jew of first century Jerusalem could produce such an extraordinary list of anomalies, lapses in basic Greek grammar and writing errors, all within the space of two words.*

In the light of this, we really need to look for a better alternative for the transcription. According to normal methodology, the reading to be preferred is the one that accounts for the greatest amount of elements with the least number of difficulties.

## **Part 2: A new reading of CJO 701.**

**In place of this problematic reading, the following reading presents no such problems: MARIAMH KAI MARA.**

1) MAPIAMH is the preferred Greek word used among the ossuaries for "Mary" (in Rahmani, *CJO*: MAPIAMH 5x, MAPAIAMH 1x, MAPIEAMH 1x, MAPIAM 1x, MAPIA 1x; from Dominus Flevit MAPIAMH 1x, MAPA 1x).

### **The first name and the first scribe:**

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<sup>2</sup> It doesn't take an epigrapher to see the inherent problems here. Sadly, the errors are basic enough that any one who has had even a very basic education in Greek, and has done their homework, should have been able to avoid these pitfalls. It is unfortunate that such sloppy homework by the film's advisers has led to such a waste of time for some and needless aggravation or grief for others.



The first name on the ossuary was written in the contemporary Greek documentary style of the first century. Four letters of the first name are clear and erect: M, A, R, I. The next two letters are written a bit more askew (apparently due to the scribe's avoidance of a scratch or imperfection between the two letters) but are certainly recognizable, and in the same style: A, M. This is followed by a proper, documentary H of this period, in the same style as the previous letters. So far, the word as it stands forms 'MARIAMH,' which is the normal Greek form of the Hebrew name "Mariam." ("Mariame" appears seven times in the *Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries*.)

Of particular note, are the "M" *mu*, the "A" *alpha* and the "P" *rho* of the inscription. The lines on both parts of the inscription were inscribed, not deeply, with a dull pointed metal object. This instrument may have been a metal stylus which was commonly used for taking notes on portable wax tablets and which makes similar marks.

The *mu* "M" is formed by a number of separate but intersecting strokes. The separate strokes are indicated by the nonalignment, scissor-like appearance of the ends of the various strokes where they intersect.

The *alpha* "A" is formed by two strokes instead of three, comprising a right-tilted "V" followed by a left-tilted diagonal line. This reflects a semi-cursive tendency in this letter that appears in non-literary documents as well on ostraca and *tituli picti* in the first century CE at Masada and elsewhere. (*Tituli picti* are inscriptions on wine jars.)

The *rho* "P" (= R) is inscribed with two strokes. The vertical stroke descends well below the baseline. This feature is common among the ossuaries and is also typical of non-literary documents of the period as well as on the ostraca and *tituli picti* of Masada.

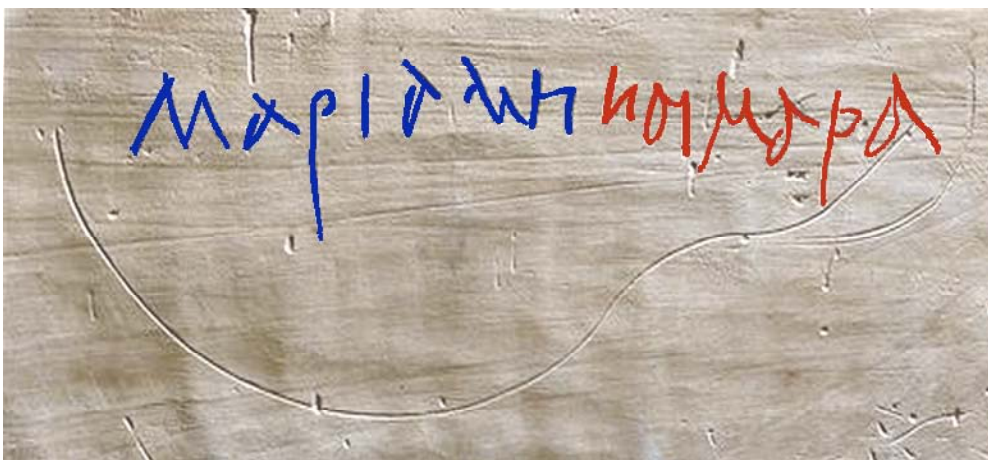
The *eta* "H" (=long E) is formed with two strokes in the semi-cursive tradition. This letter preserves the squared appearance of the "H" of the formal script but reduces the number of times the pen lifts from the writing surface from three to two. This form stands in stark contrast to the form of the contemporary cursive *eta* which is formed in a single looping stroke, without lifting the pen from the writing surface which stands behind the formation of the lower case "h" (as can be seen in the ossuary *CJO* 108 below).



The "H" (*eta*): 1) Formal, 2) Semiformal, 3) Semicursive, 4) Cursive  
Masada Inscriptions, First Century CE

This name is followed by a gap that is sufficiently wide to signify a space between distinct words.

After this series of letters, the irregularities begin. Rahmani suggested that the next letter was an "N." However, it can only be read so if it is taken to be retrograde (i.e., written backwards.) The suggestion that it should be read as a retrograde "N" raises the question of whether it is truly an "N" at all. Among all of the ossuaries inscribed in Greek listed in Rahmani's Catalogue and the numerous ossuaries from Dominus Flevit (on the west slope of the Mt. of Olives), there are no other cases in which it has been suggested that an "N" has been written in this way. Furthermore, the following two letters do not resemble the combination "OU," as proposed in Rahmani's original publication. This combination would form a ligature which does not exist on the ossuaries or at Masada. An OU ligature does appear later in early second century manuscripts from Nahal Hever and Wadi Murraba'at but the resulting ligature, in all cases, combines the O with a true Y or V shaped *upsilon* which in no way resembles the combination on this ossuary.



As we shall see, this is not because the scribe suddenly introduced anomalous letterforms, nor even changed his handwriting style in mid-sentence. Rather, it is because a second scribe had subsequently added the last two words of the inscription in a different handwriting style. Upon closer examination, it appears that the three letters Rahmani read as "NOU" are almost certainly to be translated by the common word "KAI" *and*, written in the Greek cursive form of the word.

#### **Cursive tendencies and the second scribe:**

Cursive tendencies among the various scribal hands led to varying degrees of cursive letter forms. These cursive forms often appeared in official documents which normally would be written in the formal Greek documentary script. These forms may be termed as cursive or semi-cursive depending upon the extent to which these tendencies were exhibited. The most common cursive tendency was to execute individual letterforms without lifting the tip of the pen from the writing surface. Another tendency was to connect consecutive letters without lifting the pen to form ligatures. This tendency is known as "connected writing" when the interconnection of letters is more prevalent. The overall appearance of cursive writing is that there is a graceful sequence of looping strokes as can be seen in KAI MARA. This stands in contrast to the triangular, squared and rather jagged succession of strokes in the more formal script used by the first scribe while inscribing MARIAME. Also, from the standpoint of horizontal line space, although each scribes inscribed a total of seven letters, the cursive style of the second scribe allowed him to write his seven letters in  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the space of the first.

As usual for both the semi-cursive and cursive "K," its left vertical stroke ascends above the rest of the letter (cf. P. Yadin (*olim* 5/6Hev)12 and P. Yadin (*olim* 5/6Hev)16 below). A *kappa* that is written with only two separate strokes rather than three might be termed "semi-cursive" (as in the case of P. Yadin (*olim* 5/6Hev)12 below). The *kappa* on this ossuary exhibits the full cursive form of this letter, which requires that the letter's three strokes be executed without lifting the tip of the pen (cf. Masada *tituli picti* 858 and P. Yadin (*olim* 5/6Hev)16 below).



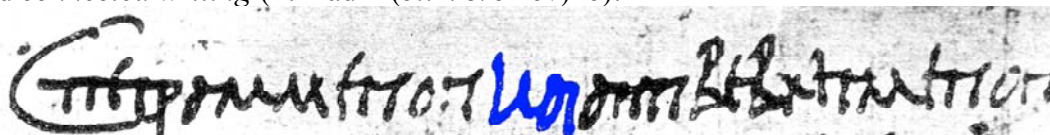
"KALON KERAMION" Masada *tp* 858

This is also true concerning the cursive form of the remaining letters A and I which, as in this case, were commonly written together as a ligature, i.e., without lifting the tip of the pen (cf. both P. Yadin (*olim* 5/6Hev)12 and P. Yadin (*olim* 5/6Hev)16 below). At times the entire word is written without lifting the pen as is clearest in P. Hever (*olim* XHever/Seiyal)63 and 69 and P. Yadin (*olim* 5/6Hev)16. (The cursive form of the "A" appears also in the second name "MARA").

Document exhibiting KAI with a semi-cursive *kappa* followed by the cursive ligature AI (5/6 Hev12):



Another document parroting the same text containing KAI but with cursive *kappa*, ligature AI and *connected writing* (P. Yadin (*olim* 5/6Hev)16):



Following normal scribal practice of the period, the scribe engraved the words of his inscription in *scripta continua*: with no space between the words, writing KAIMARA. He, or someone else, subsequently provided a stroke, a word divider, to separate the KAI from the name, apparently to distinguish the two words, resulting in KAI'MARA. (On the other hand, the stroke might defensibly be judged to be a mere accidental scratch since this area of the ossuary's surface is plagued with other superfluous and accidental scratches both among the letters of this inscription as well as on the uninscribed surfaces.) The proposal that the scratch serves as a so-called *signum* (representing "that is" or "also called ..." according to J. Tabor) is untenable since it does not resemble such a stroke and such punctuation is not used in contexts where cursive scripts are used.

The scribe also continued in the cursive style with respect to the word MARA.



The *mu* "M" of the second name Mara, is written with two strokes, including one continuous looping gesture. The first leg of the letter is initiated below the base line upon which the body of each letter sits, with the center of the letter sitting higher and formed like the letter "U", and the right leg curving toward the next letter. This is typical of Greek cursive and miniscule forms of the letter (e.g., see Masada *tp858* and both P. Yadin (*olim 5/6Hev*)<sup>12</sup> and P. Yadin (*olim 5/6Hev*)<sup>16</sup> above). This stands in contrast to the practice illustrated in the first name of this inscription, where the entire letter "M" remains above the base line and the middle forms a pronounced "V").

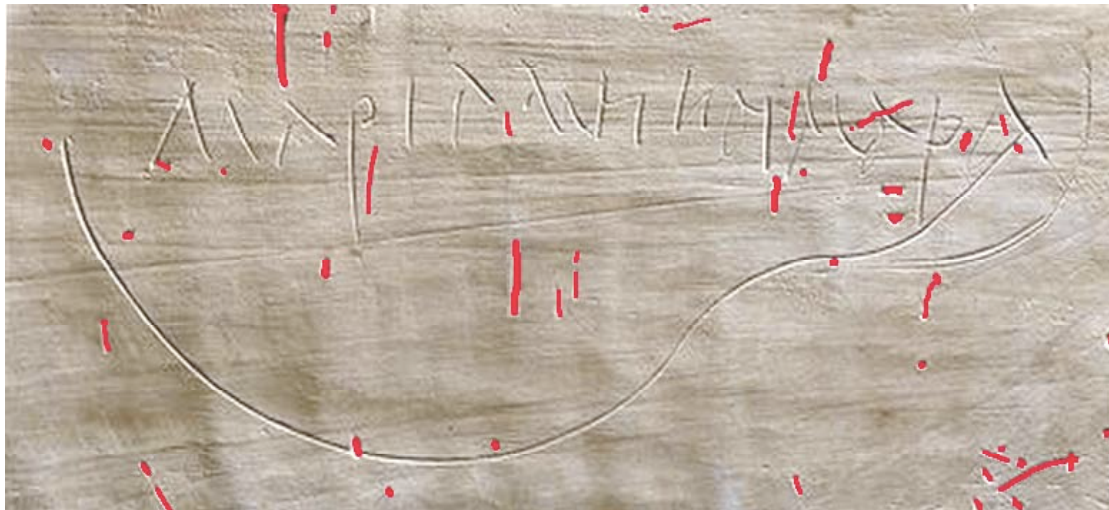
The *alpha* "A," in both cases, appears to have been written with one continuous looping stroke. The first form exhibits a counterclockwise rotation with its final stroke finishing high near the letter's ceiling line. This is common among medial forms of the letter (i.e., a letter appearing before another letter in the same word) where the letter ends in a place near to where the initial stroke of next letter *rho* will begin (not dissimilar to the formation of the *alpha* of the ligature "AI" in the previous word KAI). The second example is a typical final form of the *alpha* (being the last letter of a word or line) where the final diagonal stroke of the enlarged letter descends and ends, almost emphatically, at its baseline.

The letter *rho* "R" (resembles a "P" but is pronounced like "R") is drawn with two strokes as is generally the case in most contemporary, locally inscribed papyrus documents, with the crescent shaped head written first, followed by the down stroke which descends well below the baseline.

### **Natural and Inadvertant Scratches on the inscription's Surface**

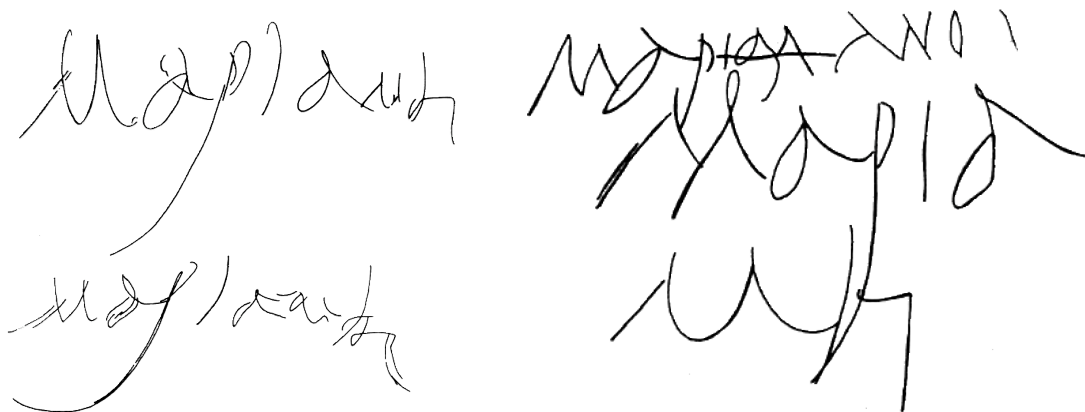
Ossuaries are notorious for the knicks, scratches and tool marks which may occur anywhere on the object's surface.

In the photographs there appears to be a small line surviving between the last two letters of MARA. Upon close examination, it is clearly a small natural pit that must have preceded the inscription. This is similar to natural pitting found in various places elsewhere on the ossuary.



**Part 3: Another MARIAMH/not MARIAMNOU inscription? Ossuary CJO 108.**

This ossuary contained the remains of a single, named individual. The name MARIAMH was initially written on the top and bottom of the ossuary's lid. Both original inscriptions were likely inscribed in lowly lit to unlit circumstances, since many of the strokes of the inscription were missaligned, providing illegible results. On the top of the lid (below left), the name was reinscribed above the original inscription. On the bottom of the lid (below right), the name was reinscribed below the original inscription, which had been cancelled with a line cut through the middle letters.



Ossuary CJO 108 top and bottom of lid

It seems likely that the first line on the lid's bottom did not read MARIAMNOU, but rather MARIAMH, as it does in the other three occurrences on this lid. The line to the left of the *eta* (here in red) appears to be an accidental scratch. See the restoration of the *eta* below (in blue).



Ossuary CJO 108 lid bottom with *eta* in former name restored

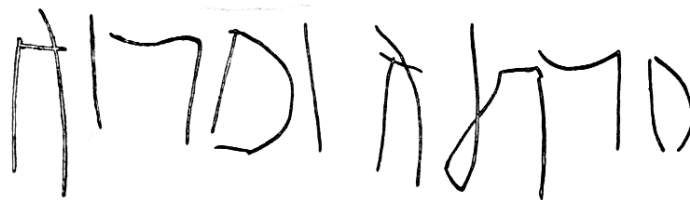
If this reconstruction is correct then there is no certifiable example of the name "Mariamne" until the third century CE.

**Part 4: Yet another Mary and Martha?**

This revised reading of the inscription on Ossuary CJO 701, based on contemporary inscriptions and documents, would leave the words MARIAME KAI MARA "Mariam and Mara." Mara, as noted by Tal Ilan among other scholars, was a common shortened form of the Aramaic name "Martha."

Due to the fact that (1) an ossuary would often contain the bones of more than one individual and (2) these two names are among the most common female personal names of the first century, the combination of these two names together on an ossuary is not unique.

In fact an ossuary was discovered at Dominus Flevit on the west slope of the Mt. of Olives that has the Hebrew equivalent of the two names as a pair written three times on the same ossuary (however, with the order reversed: "Martha and Maria"; Dominus Flevit, Ossuary 7):



Dominus Flevit, Ossuary 7

**Multiple burial and DNA**

The fact that two individuals were named on the side of an ossuary does not limit the remains within to be only from those two individuals. There may have been others inside whose names were not inscribed. To give us an idea as to how many individuals might have been interred a single ossuary, one should consider Ossuary 37, also from the Dominus Flevit tomb complex, which bears the names of five individuals, indicating that the ossuary contained at least five distinct burials. The named individuals buried in the ossuary were Zacharias, Mariame, El'azar, Simon, and Sheniit(?). The variety of scripts and character of the cuts indicate that the inscriptions were written by different individuals with distinct instruments. There may be the skeletal and DNA remains from at least five individuals in this box (and perhaps more from others whose names were not inscribed on the ossuary).

Dominus Flevit, Ossuary 37

In addition to numerous other ossuaries that name more than one individual, there are others in which names are connected by KAI "and", which more often than not indicates family relationships. This latter type includes several which were apparently written on a single occasion by a single scribe (which may indicate that the bones of those individuals were interred simultaneously; e.g., *CJO* 560, 800, and 139, representing two brothers, a mother and her two sons, and apparently a husband and wife, respectively).

However, on inscribed ossuary *CJO* 490, KAI is used to connect two individuals. Two distinct scribal hands, and thus two different inscribers, are evident in the two parts of the inscription. The initial name FASAHLOU "of Pasael", was deeply inscribed in a rounded lapidary script. This is followed by a squared lapidary hand whose inscribed letters had been merely draft-outlined and left unfinished: KAIEIFIGENEIAS "and of Iphigenia".

*CJO* Ossuary 490

## CONCLUSION

The so-called "Mariamene" ossuary contained the names and remains of two distinct individuals. The first name on the ossuary, "MARIAME" was written in the common Greek documentary script of the period on the occasion of the interment of the bones of this woman. The second and third words "KAI MARA" were added sometime later by a second scribe, when the bones of the second woman Mara were added to the ossuary. This scribe's handwriting includes numerous cursive elements not exhibited by the first scribe who wrote "Mariame." In view of the above, there is no longer any reason to be tempted to link this ossuary (nor the ambiguous traces of DNA inside) to Mary Magdalene or any other person in Biblical, non-Biblical or church tradition.

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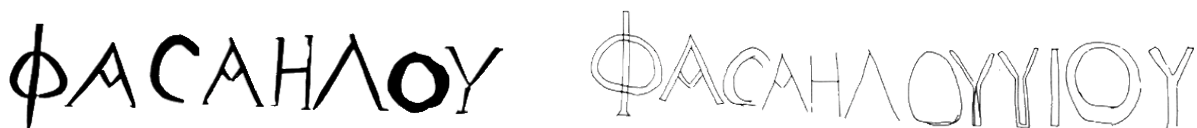
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## APPENDIX 1

### Greek Paleography of Jewish Ossuaries

#### Lapidary Scripts



Lapidary script (deeply engraved)  
CJO Ossuary 490

Κ ΜΑΡΙΑΜ ΜΑΡΙΑ

Pseudo-Lapidary script  
*CJO Ossuaries 64 and 405*

Formal Scripts

ΘΕΟΔΟΤΟΥ ΑΤΕΛΕΥ<  
ΘΕΡΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΝΩΗΣ<  
ΑΓΡΙ ΠΤΕΙΝΗΣ< ΟΡΟΣ

Formal Script (in ink)  
*CJO Ossuary 789*

Semi-formal Scripts

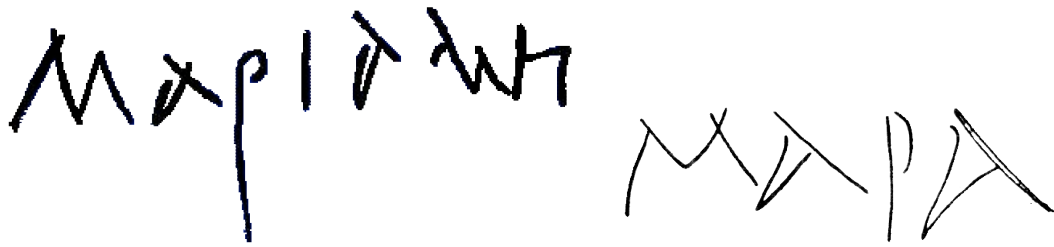
ΜΑΡΙΑΝΗ ΜΑΡΙΑ

Semi-formal script  
*CJO Ossuaries 333 and 868*

ΜΑΡΙΑΝΗ

Semi-formal script (with semi-cursive tendencies)  
*Dominus Flevit 37 (tomb 437; ossuary 115)*

Semi-cursive Scripts

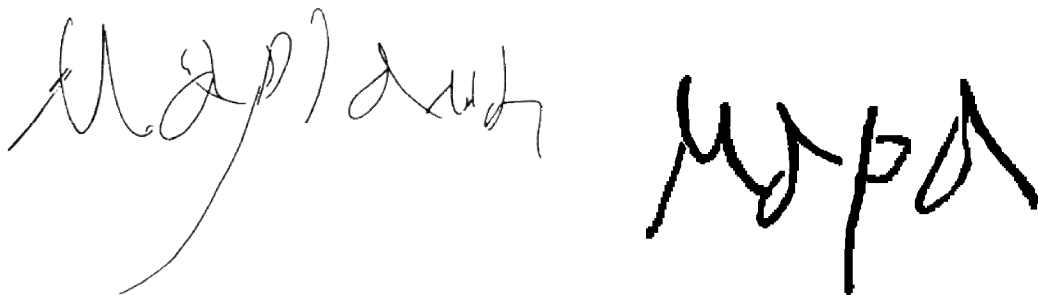


Semi-cursive script  
*CJO* Ossuary 701 and Dominus Flevit 41 (tomb 452; ossuary 61)



Semi-cursive script (with cursive tendencies)  
*CJO* Ossuary 782

#### Cursive Scripts



Cursive script  
*CJO* Ossuaries 108 and 701

#### APPENDIX 2

##### An Alternative Reading?

Several scholars have suggested reading the Ossuary *CJO* #701 as: MARIAM H KAI MARA "Mariam who is also Mara", as an alternative reading to MARIAMH KAI MARA "Mariame and Mara". I did consider this possible transcription already when I was writing the paper published on our website and the SBL website. However, in light of the change of scribal hands between MARIAMH and KAI, I rejected this possible reading. In my opinion, the clear change of scribal hands precluded even the need to provide this reading as an option in the article.

It now seems incumbent upon me that I should address this suggested transcription in the body of the article since a few have raised the question. Allow me to do so by presenting

several hypothetical, graphic examples. Each is generated using the letter forms of either the first or second scribe. The first example (in blue, below) is the complete transcription generated in the scribal hand of the first scribe who wrote the original MARIAMH.\* The transcription would appear as follows, if the entire inscription had been written by the first scribe:

If all words of the inscription were in the standard Greek documentary script (as above) then the inscription could be read either as:



ΜΑΡΙΑΜΗ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΑ: "Mariame and Mara"

OR, alternatively

2) ΜΑΡΙΑΜ Η ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΑ: "Mariam who is also Mara"

The second graphic example (in red, below), is how the transcription would appear had the second scribe (who originally wrote KAI MARA) written the entire inscription.



Likewise, if all words were in the Greek cursive script (as above) then the inscription could be read either:

1) ΜΑΡΙΑΜΗ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΑ: "Mariame and Mara"

OR, alternatively

2) ΜΑΡΙΑΜ Η ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΑ: "Mariam who is also Mara"



The image shows a handwritten Greek inscription. The first part, 'Μαρία', is written in a blue, standard Greek documentary script. The second part, 'και Μαρα', is written in a red, Greek cursive script. The two parts are written on the same line but with distinct styles and colors.

However, this inscription clearly was written in two distinct script styles (standard Greek documentary script and Greek cursive script). This being the case, then two scribes were involved in the writing process and we can assume on separate occasions. In my judgment, in order not to do violence to the epigraphic evidence, the inscription should only be read as:

ΜΑΡΙΑΜΗ ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΑ: "Mariame and Mara"