

THE ENIGMA OF MANOPPELLO FINALLY UNVEILED?

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“Truth is often eclipsed, but never extinguished”¹

Despite the fervor of which it is still the object, the Veil of Manoppello has raised many questions for decades. Based on the most recent historical ²and scientific studies³, Pierre de Riedmatten, who has already written on this subject for MNTV⁴, presents here the hypothesis according to which this astonishing image is in fact a painting, made "very probably" by Albrecht Dürer at the beginning of the 16th century. However, additional scientific expertise remains to be carried out.

1- What do we see on this Veil?

- In the Capuchin convent of Manoppello⁵, a very fine fabric, 24 x 17.5 cm (part visible in the frame⁶), light brown, shows the face, life-size, of a middle-aged man, having the eyes open, teeth showing in a half-open mouth, fine hair falling over the shoulders, a sparse beard and mustache, and a small lock at the top of the forehead (Fig.1 and 3rd cover of this Notebook). The top of the hair does not appear. The eyes show brown irises and his white corneas. The cheeks, which show brown and red spots, appear asymmetric, and the axis between the eyes and the mouth is not straight. On the



Fig. 1

¹Livy: “ *History of Rome* ”.

²made by Karlheinz Dietz [1], and by Roberto Falcinelli [3].

³see. articles by Giulio Fanti et al. [4, 5].

⁴see. *Cahiers MNTV* n° 35 and 47 [2].

⁵located 190 km from Rome, near Chieti, in the province of Pescara - Abruzzo (Italy).

⁶About half a centimeter is hidden by the edges.

recto⁷, a brown pocket (equally interpreted by some like the blood, even if the cells in front) is visible on the left side of the nose. This face is visible on the reverse side of the veil, which is transparent in daylight⁸.

- In front lighting, the image is almost identical on the front and on the back. But, by illuminating the fabric from the opposite side, the image on the front is a little different, and it may even disappear with a slight backlight (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2

- Fine longitudinal and transverse lines attest to numerous foldings of the fabric, having partially made the color of the fibers disappear.

- The Veil of Manoppello (said here VM⁹) is inserted between two glass plates, in a wooden frame covered with gilded silver enhanced with precious stones¹⁰.

- In the upper corners of the fabric, triangles of about 2.5 to 3 cm per side are missing, restored by grander material. At the bottom, the same material (1 cm wide) reinforces the fraying of the veil. On the front side, a small shard of glass, which does not adhere to the fabric, is visible at the bottom right.

2- Is the basic story reliable?

- The “brief *history*” available on site for pilgrims takes up most of the only source¹¹, established in the 17th century by the Capuchin friar Donato da Bomba. Karlheinz Dietz ¹²(later referred to as “KD”) summarizes [1, ch. 6 § 2] the main points of this “*Historical Relationship*” (then called RH):

“Around the year 1506, a pilgrim who had come to Manoppello invited the doctor Giacomo-Antonio Leonelli to enter the church of St Nicolas for a secret affair; he put an envelope object back into a packet. No sooner had he deployed it than he was disconcerted on seeing the Face of the Lord; he wanted to thank the donor, but there

⁷identified by the presence of the clous de la Passion at the top of the frame and by the cock at the bottom. The towards east identified by a crown of thorns at the top of the frame and the colonna of flagellation at the bottom.

⁸You can see an object and even read a newspaper, placed on the other side .

⁹so as not to confuse it with other veils said *sacred* , like *the Holy Face* of Lucca...

¹⁰This frame is itself enshrined in a large reliquary-monstrance, in solid silver.

¹¹ “*Historical report on a miraculous image of the face of Christ, our suffering Lord, which is now in the Capuchin convent of Manoppello...*” ; preserved in the Provincial Archives.

¹²professor of ancient history at the University of Würzburg (Germany).

was no longer any trace of the pilgrim, who was therefore an angel or a saint from paradise. Leonelli placed the sacred image in his home, in a forbidden cupboard elsewhere in his home, and no he kept the keys. For more than a hundred years, this situation persisted. But, in 1608, his heirs disputed the sacred veil. Pancrazio Petrucci, a soldier married to Marzia, one of the heirs, violently seized the relic, and kept it for several years in his own home with very little respect. Finally, Petrucci was imprisoned in Chieti. To pay his ransom, his wife sold the sacred veil in 1618, for four crowns, to Doctor Donato-Antonio de Fabritiis who immediately regretted his purchase in view of the deplorable state of the painting. The met Father Clemente who was directing the construction of the convent of Manoppello; the latter immediately grave in adoration before the image and took scissors to cut all the damaged parts around the image¹³, and reduce it to its current size. Friar Remigio da Rapino fixed it in a walnut wood frame between two crystal discs, and Antonio de Fabritiis preserved it thus at home; he donated it in 1638 to the Capuchins who presented the relic for the veneration of the faithful from 1646”.

Note: the dates mentioned here do not all appear explicitly in the RH, but in associated documents, dating from the same period.

- The supposed past of this fabric must already have been quite obscure¹⁴, since the brother Donato da Bomba took several years to write this RH¹⁵. He cites no source for the event, initially, located *at 1506*; and the rather verbose Dominican Serafino Razzi made no mention of it in his travelogue to Manoppello in 1577.

- The final text was read before a notary on April 6, 1646, 140 years after the presumed arrival of the Veil in 1506; this authentication¹⁶ was moreover in contradiction with the decree of 1563 of the Council of Trent which imposed the agreement of the bishop¹⁷, and with the recent directives of the pope Urban VIII on the relics and the worship of the images¹⁸ [1, ch. 6 § 3].

¹³“everything was frayed, torn, eaten away by moths and worms, completely corrupted, in tatters...”

¹⁴According to another document, also available on site, “in 1608, the Holy Veil was not taken by Petrucci from his father-in-law's house, but stolen from Rome” [2].

¹⁵ after they arrived in Manoppello in 1641; they established a first partial draft in 1643.

¹⁶ According to the medieval practice of authentication of miracles, the RH was signed by certain notables of Manoppello, including Antonio De Fabritiis who made a copy of it, visible at the convent.

¹⁷ The episcopal see of Chieti is vacant for this period.

¹⁸The Pope had in particular entrusted his brother, Cardinal Barberini, himself a Capuchin, with the destruction, from 1629, of all “unauthorized” copies of the Veronica of Rome.

- The initial manuscript kept at Manoppello ¹⁹, which contains more than 30 chapters, has numerous erasures and overwriting compared to the definitive version which was not printed until 1738, i.e. almost a hundred years later [1, ch . 6 § 1];
- A detailed RH report shows that Brother Donato da Bomba had as his only informant Baron Antonio de Fabritiis himself, who belonged to one of the notable families of Manoppello, strongly committed to the Church and linked more particularly to construction of the new convent. Donato da Bomba also cites no testimony from the Leonelli family, when Marzia was still alive at the beginning of 1643; and, even for the donation of 1638, he did not appeal to the still living Capuchins who had been in the new convent since 1626 (begun in 1616). On the other hand, it details Antonio de Fabritiis' disappointment with the state of the VM when it was *purchased* [1, ch. 6 § 4 and 5].
- According to KD, this RH includes many contradictions [1, ch. 6 § 7 and 8]:
 - * the family quarrels mentioned are only historically attested from 1619, ie 11 years after the supposed theft of the VM in 1608;
 - * Although he committed a robbery in the house of his parents-in-law for which there is no trace of a trial or complaint, *Private* Petrucci has been called "the magnificent"²⁰ in 1616; and, for 10 years (1608-1618), he would have treated the VM *very badly* , *when he had coveted it for a very long time* ;
 - * in the manuscript, the *purchase* of the VM is mentioned in 1623 and not in 1618; and the gold crowns of the Kingdom of Naples did not circulate in the region at that date;
 - * Antonio de Fabritiis is said to have taken the Holy Image *without seeing it or unrolling* it, then to have *unfolded it with joy* , then to have considered it useful *and worthless* and to have thought of *returning it to recover his money* ;
 - * although one of the Capuchin friars then cut up and cleaned the VM, Antonio de Fabritiis is said to have kept it in his home for 20 years before offering it to the convent (in 1638).

3- How did the devotion develop?

¹⁹" *True story, and account of a marvelous painting* " .

²⁰term for people occupant of important public functions.

- In the religious context of the time, the idea gradually spread that it was a miraculous image, “not made by human hands”. However, the VM, elevated to divine rank by oath on April 6, 1646, is not even mentioned the following day, during the solemn ceremonies for the return of the relics of St Stephen the Confessor²¹. It was not until 1686 that a first altar was built for the VM, in a modest chapel; and the processions will not begin until 1714, more than 200 years after his presumed arrival in 1506 [1, ch. 6 § 9].

- Like Brother Donato da Bomba, many people also “knew” afterwards, without any examination, that it was a miracle. In 1999, the Jesuit Father Heinrich Pfeiffer also “knew *immediately that it was the Veronica of Rome, which had disappeared since the sack in 1527 and was finally found in Manoppello* [1, ch. 8 § 1; 2]. But none of the images assumed to be *acheiropoietal* in the Middle Ages were transparent.

- Devotion (annual processions, etc.) has grown significantly since the visit of Pope Benoit XVI, invited in 2006 on the occasion of the 5th centenary of the presumed arrival of the VM in 1506²². Yet the Pope had made it clear that he was only making a short personal visit, and, although he knelt before the altar²³, he made no comment and did not mention the VM in his speeches to young people. Msgr. Forte, Archbishop of Chieti was cautious at first²⁴, then considered the VM as the “most *sacred relic of Christians*” [1, ch. 5 § 2].

4- Is the comparison with the Shroud of Turin relevant?

- In 1999, Sister Blandina Paschalis Schlömer, supported by Father Pfeiffer, thought she could show (by superposition) that the image of the VM was perfectly identical to the Face of the Man in the Shroud of Turin²⁵. From then on, this Veil (sometimes confused with the *Sudarium*), which would have been placed in the tomb above the Shroud, would allow us to see today the Face of the risen Christ²⁶. Sister Blandina even assumed that other fabrics (Cahors headdress, Oviedo shroud, etc.) were

²¹Nor is he mentioned at the annual ceremonies for St Pancras.

²² The church of the convent of Manoppello was then elevated to the rank of minor basilica.

²³see. special bulletin of the convent of Manoppello - dec. 2006.

²⁴ “ *A man of studies like Benoit XVI only decides if he has the material to do so* ” [2].

²⁵A permanent exhibition, in 27 paintings, was then present in the convent.

²⁶see. newsletter from the convent of Manoppello - June 2009; this hypothesis has recently been revived.

also “stacked” below the VM²⁷. But, the image impregnated on the Shroud **does not pass through the fabric**²⁸. This is **totally impossible** that the "initial radiation" coming from the body of the victim, which transmitted to us the majestic image of a corpse with closed eyes, passed through another superimposed fabric (or even several others), to impregnate there the face of a living man, with the eyes open and the teeth visible in an open mouth.

- For some [4, 5], the *miraculous* image could have been impregnated during the ascent to Calvary, because of the open eyes, even if it meant confusing the lock of hair - as seen in all Byzantine iconography - with the particular bloodstain of the Shroud . But the oldest image linked to the Veronica legend ²⁹shows Christ seated on a throne³⁰; and the 17th century image, currently kept in the Pillar of Veronica in the Vatican, shows a face with closed eyes and is also not transparent [2].

- Finally, the apparent three-dimensionality of the VM does not result from information orthogonal to the plane, as for the Shroud³¹, but from the interaction between light and the position of the observer [3, 5].

5- What does scientific research say?

- The Capuchins have always refused to have a fiber cut for examination. There has therefore been no scientific study deepened, neither chemical, nor for the supposed blood spots, nor by dating at C14.

- All examinations, including the textile study, were carried out without removing the protective glasses, which absorb a large part of infrared and ultraviolet radiation, which disturbed the results.

5-1 What is the nature of the fabric?

- It has often been said that it was “byssus” or “sea silk”, a very fine thread generated by a mussel (*pinna nobilis*). And that the image could not be a painting, because, in theory, it would be impossible to paint on byssus. After having seen the VM (in 2006), Mrs. Flury Lemberg, specialist in old fabrics, indicated however that it is rather a fabric of silk or fine wool " *to which the name byssus can be appropriate* ", because this term

²⁷see. Bulletin of the Convent of Manoppello - July 2007.

²⁸it is present only on about 30 microns (1 micron = 0.001 millimeter).

²⁹which really took shape in the 14th century .

³⁰Lateran icon, 6th c. - see " *The enigma of the Shroud*" - Ian Wilson - Ed. Albin Michel - 2010.

³¹variation of the intensity according to the distance from the body, the color being everywhere the same.

was “ *used in antiquity to designate a very fine fabric* ” [2]. KD specifies that in the 15th century a translation error called “ *byssus* ” the fibers of the pinna nobilis, whereas this term initially designated a very fine fabric, such as linen or silk [1, ch. 4 § 8].

- According to the analyses made by Giulio Fanti³², under an optical microscope and in polarized light [1, ch. 5 § 3; 5]: the fibers show birefringence, which is true for flax, jute and hemp, but not for sea/byssus silk; the presence of mites of the *Tyroborus lini* type , which feed on flax seeds and starch ³³, was detected (Fig. 3); and the fibers are "cemented" by a substance identifiable as starch, which reinforces the structure and makes the threads translucent to the passage of visible light ³⁴.

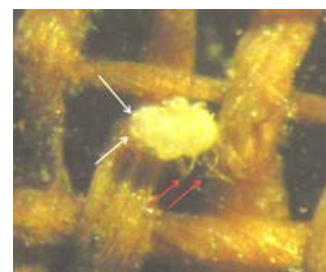


Fig. 3

- It is therefore a very fine linen fabric (only 26 to 27 weave threads and about 33 warp threads/cm²); the weaving, Z-twisted, orthogonal and made on a single heddle loom, is very irregular; the size of the wires (0.12 mm on average) can vary by more than 50% from one area to another; and the space between the wires is on average 0.25 mm, hence a void of about 42% of the surface, which explains the exceptional transparency of the fabric (Fig. 4).

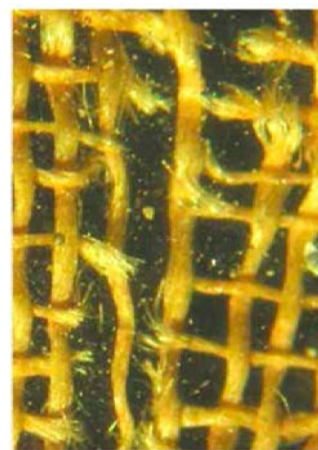


Fig. 4

- By varying the angular incidence of the lighting ³⁵, the image received by the eye is different depending on whether the light is simply reflected (source in front of the veil), or refracted by the veil (source on the other side). Certain details may even disappear or be amplified in grazing light [1, ch. 5 § 5; 5].

- The facial asymmetries observed (§ 1)) come from the deformation of the tissue over time³⁶, due to its fragile

³²professor of Mechanical and Thermal Measurements at the University of Padua.

³³ The marine byssus, soaked in salt, is indigestible for insects.

³⁴ Starch glue was widely used in watercolor painting on linen as early as the 1400s ; cellulose and starch have the same density (1.5 g/cm³) and always the same refractive index.

³⁵see. Zbigniew Treppa's experiments in 2009-2010, with lighting varying from 55 to 305° around the veil, which is placed in front of a camera.

³⁶The digital processing carried out by G. Fanti et al, on photo, restored the initial profile [5].

structure: the distortion of the fibers and the free spaces (Fig. 4) lead to the unusual optical behavior above.

5-2 What is the nature of the image?

- For Donato da Bomba (RH), “there *are no colors or dyes, no brush has touched them*” [1, ch. 5 § 1]. And, in 1999, Dr. Vittore, an Italian orthopaedist, concluded that painting was impossible: using a small high-resolution scanner, he did not see any residual traces of burrs between the threads [2].

- However, as early as the 1870s, the Capuchin Salvatore Taito, a recognized painter³⁷, had already “*noted that it is a watercolour... whose genre does not exist in Italy*” [1, ch. 7 § 1]. And, for Mme Flury-Lemberg, there is no doubt: the image of Manoppello's veil “*is a painting*”.

- Studies by G. Fanti et al. showed ³⁸the probable presence of pigments, mainly red and brown, which do not fill the whole fabric (fiber spacing) and are only visible from a certain angle or against a screen [3; 4; 5]. The application of fine brushstrokes is recognizable in the delicate mustache and beard hair; as well as in the intensity of the color of the hair, which grows from brown to reddish-brown towards the bottom of the head [3; 5]. Some areas had to be retouched later, such as the hair, the lips, or the eyes (probably blue at the start but having turned green over time ³⁹, and retouched in brown) [4].

- The absence of fluorescence in UV gives the presence of oils, fats and waxes, which excludes a paint with oil. A Raman spectroscopy performed in 2007, with a red laser here traversing the glass ($\lambda = 633$ nm), to conclude in the absence of organic compounds (carbon containing)⁴⁰.

- It is the air, therefore the non-color, which determines the color visible to the observer according to the incidence and intensity of the light.

- Altogether, despite the discomfort brought by the outer glasses, it can be confirmed that it is a very fine watercolor painting, “*done in an unknown brilliant way*”, as Bruno said Sammaciccia⁴¹. Moreover, the painting of

³⁷ He notably decorated the Basilica of Saint Lawrence outside the walls in Rome.

³⁸ in optical microscope, in IR and UV spectrometry. Roberto Falcinelli, member of the Center for Sindonology in Rome, used his equipment photos and a portable microscope.

³⁹which causes the yellowing of the fabric, which preferentially absorbs the blue color.

⁴⁰ However many organic dyes do not give Raman spectra at this wavelength .

⁴¹ writer, theologian and psychiatrist (1926-2003).

transparent images did not become common until the end of the 18th century.

6- What do we know about Dürer's missing self-portrait?

- Like most of the great painters of his time, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) made self-portraits⁴². But the master of Nuremberg, whose very profuse spirituality pushed him to *imitatio Christi*, was the first, it seems, to dare to represent himself with christomorphic features, for example in the self-portrait called "in a cloak of fur" ⁴³ (Fig. 5 and cover of this Cahier); or on a *Véronique* with a head crowned with thorns ⁴⁴(Fig. 6).



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

- Last, here depicted the face of Christ more often than any other artist, indeed considered his painting to be in service to the Church and to the suffering of Christ. He even represented himself as a "Man of Sorrows"⁴⁵, the detail of which (Fig. 7) shows the upper teeth in a half-open mouth, as on the VM. His physiognomy is known to us from other tables, such as that of Fig. 8 ⁴⁶, where also the famous lock of hair.

6-1 Realization of an "unimaginable" self-portrait» - Itinerary to Mantua

⁴² Several are well known, such as the so-called self-portrait "with gloves" - 1498 - Madrid/Prado.

⁴³On this painting from 1500, preserved in the Pinacoteca of Munich, we can indeed notice the shape of the hands and the lock of hair at the top of the forehead, such as we see it in all the Byzantine iconography of Christ.

⁴⁴ pen drawing from 1513 - kept in the Albertina in Vienna.

⁴⁵pencil drawing from 1522 - kept in the Kunsthalle Bremen.

⁴⁶painting by Joachim von Sandrart (1606-1688), called the German Vasari from the 17th century; published in 1675 in the *Teutsche Akademie*.

- Several authors, such as Vasari⁴⁷, have mentioned a self-portrait of Dürer whose exceptional character captivated not only his contemporaries, but also all subsequent observers:

* “Albrecht Dürer... sent in homage to Raphaël a self-portrait limited to the head, which he had executed in watercolor on a byssus drape, the two sides of which showed equally and without lead white the transparent lights, while all the rest was tinted and stained with watercolor”⁴⁸; “...he used the white of the canvas and his extremely fine threads for the hairs of the beard, which was a thing impossible to imagine and to achieve. And in the light it was translucent on both sides”⁴⁹;

* “Albrecht Dürer sent Raphael his portrait inked by himself on a blank canvas, with recessed lights. This seemed very strange to Raphael...”⁵⁰;

* “Dürer sent Raphael his Imitation on an inked sheet without white...”⁵¹;

* “He sent Raphael his self-made portrait on canvas... Raphael looked at this strange work with admiration”⁵².

- This work appeared then as rare, magnificent, wonderful, even miraculous, and closer to a divine work than a human work, something that could not be manufactured or even imagined.

- It was made on a very fine, wide-mesh linen fabric, made in Reims: “... there was on a Reims canvas the natural portrait of Albrecht Dürer, by his own hand”⁵³. La toile de Reims, also say Rensa, Renso or even Rens, well used in Flanders⁵⁴, began to be marketed in northern Italy after the end of the 15th century.

- The Italian painters, who already knew the translucent veils and the techniques of Flemish watercolors, were surprised by Dürer's original techniques⁵⁵; but even more vividly in this very particular case:

⁴⁷ Giorgio Vasari d'Arezzo (1511-1574), painter of the Court of the Medici in Florence, considered as "father of the history of art, inventor of the Renaissance"; he notably wrote "Vitae" on the great artists known since the 1300s.

⁴⁸ Vasari « *Life* » de Raphaël - Ed. *Torrentiniana* de 1550.

⁴⁹ Vasari « *Life* » de Raphaël - Ed. *Giuntina* from 1568.

⁵⁰ Karel van Mander - 1604.

⁵¹ Joachim von Sandrart .

⁵² Isaac Bullart (1599-1672), historian - manuscript of 1666 published in 1682 and in 1740.

⁵³ Vasari, " *Life* " of Romano - Ed. *Giuntina* of 1568. In the " *Life* " of Raphael, of 1550, he uses the word " *byssus* " (see above).

⁵⁴very expensive canvas of Reims was then internationally renowned; linen was always "white as snow" and translucent, woven with very fine threads.

⁵⁵ who took, thanks in particular to his own chemical experiments, water-based painting on canvas to an unequalled level: preparing the fabric with pharmaceutical starch ; pigments

particularly fine threads (thinness) with a fairly wide ⁵⁶*spacing* ; no lead white ⁵⁷, the enhancements (light tones) being obtained solely by the action of light on the spaced fibers; extremely fine colors for the unimaginable interlacing of the *hairs* of the beard and the turn of the mouth [1, ch. 4].

- The lock of hair, at least suggested, is almost a trademark of Dürer's self-portraits. And showing the teeth is characteristic of the Renaissance⁵⁸. Martin Karrer, Protestant theologian considers the mouth open on the VM as a decisive criterion for the dating of the XVIth century.

- We know quite well the itinerary of this *unique painting* [1, ch. 2 and 3]:

* Dürer made it in 1506 in Venice, during his second stay in Italy (1505-1507): September 23, 1506, in the euphoria of the realization, in 5 days, of the "*Altar of the Rosary*", he wrote to W. Pirckheimer⁵⁹: *my painting* ("Christ among the scribes") *is finished, as well as another painting (quar)* ⁶⁰*of which I have never done the same*" [3];

* around 1512, Raphaël, whose reputation had rapidly increased ⁶¹, sent Dürer engravings by Raimondi ⁶²; Dürer thanks Raphael by sending him "*among many other sheets, his portrait*" ⁶³; and, in 1515, Raphael sent to Nuremberg *many sheets drawn by his own hand, which Albrecht greatly appreciated*⁶⁴ ;

* in 1524 Giulio Romano ⁶⁵, pupil and heir of Raphael, takes the painting to Mantua in his house (the Pippi House), where Vasari saw it in 1541 and in 1546: "*this portrait, which was extremely precious to Giulio, he himself showed it to me as a marvel, when I came to Mantua during his lifetime*" ⁶⁶;

reduced to dust (transparent) and *married* to the canvas (refractive index close to that of threads), which I allow a double refraction of the light, on the surface and in depth...

⁵⁶For canvases by Dürer reputed to be a little larger (preserved in Dresden and Berlin), the thickness of the threads is between 0.25 and 0.3 mm.

⁵⁷unlike his other canvases, such as those kept in the Louvre.

⁵⁸except for saints and high personages.

⁵⁹ famous German jurist and humanist, friend of Erasmus and Dürer.

⁶⁰ in Italian *quadro* , design a quadrangular canvas.

⁶¹ Raffaello Sanzio (1483-1520), called *the painter of Urbino*, had decorated the Vatican in 1508.

⁶² Marcantonio Raimondi (1480-1534), later called the Dürer of the southern Alps.

⁶³ Vasari, "*Life*" of Raphael - Ed. *Giuntina* of 1568.

⁶⁴d

⁶⁵ Giulio di Pietro, called Giulio Pippi, then Giulio Romano (1492-1546).

⁶⁶ Vasari, "*Life*" of Raphael - Ed. *Giuntina* of 1568.

* in 1573, a notarized inventory of Casa Pippi mentions (with a subject error) the only painting by *Albrecht Dürer* owned by Giulio Romano; his collections are dispersed by his heirs who are in particular in relation with the court of Mantua;

* in 1596, in Colorno - near Parma, in the collection of Countess Barbara Sanseverino (closely linked to the court of Mantua), figures "*a head by Albrecht Dürer, the best of all his works ... executed with great finesse and uniquely beautiful*";

* after 1597 and before 1612⁶⁷, the Duke of Mantua, Vincenzo I Gonzaga, probably bought it from the Countess Sanseverino, for his *Cabinet of Curiosities*: "*it was then placed in the room of the arts of Mantua, among the objects which had belonged to Giulio Romano*"⁶⁸; "*it has been preserved and shown for a long time in the room of the arts of Mantua, like a strange Italian piece*"⁶⁹.

- This unique art cabinet, called the *Celestial Gallery*, where watercolor paintings by famous painters were collected, was one of the 500 rooms in the Ducal Palace of Mantua, cultural center of the Italian Renaissance, where 1,200 people lived around a huge artistic treasure⁷⁰.

- There are no reproductions of this extraordinary work, mentioned in almost all the great articles devoted to Dürer as having disappeared mysteriously ⁷¹, and which was not sold before the sack of the city of Mantua ⁷². For Wolfram Prinz (1929-2011)⁷³, "*the importance that Dürer gave to self-portraits as an expression of his own personality is also proven by the numerous testimonies on the portrait which has disappeared*".

6-2 Disappearance of the board during the bag of Mantua

- Due to the financial inconsistency of the last dukes, and especially the quarrels of succession (1626-1630), the very rapid decline of this

⁶⁷disgrace and execution of the Countess Sanseverino.

⁶⁸Mander, 1604 - Sandrart, 1675 - Bullart, 1682.

⁶⁹ Georg Wolfgang Knorr, *Historical Entertainment of Artists* - 1738.

⁷⁰Since 1491, countless works had been acquired, ranging from books, paintings, tapestries, silks, gems, marbles, vases, precious metals... to very heterogeneous objects such as a hippopotamus, a mummy, and *all sorts of petrified things* ... Many artists (Mantegna, Romano, Rubens...) worked in this cultural center of the Renaissance, which reached its peak at the beginning of the 17th century .

⁷¹see. in particular "*Conversations-Lexicon for the plastic arts*" - F. Faber - 1846.

⁷² In 1627, the Duke of Mantua did not give it up during his discreet transactions with King Charles I of England.

⁷³ professor of art history in Frankfurt, author of "*Dürer, Europe of painters*" - 1997.

stronghold of the Holy Roman Empire is at the heart of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). In the fall of 1629, the Lutherans and Calvinists of the Habsburg army, imposing with them the plague and the terror, made a first siege of Mantua. In May 1630, following the epidemic ⁷⁴and the flight of the starving population, the city was in agony.

- On July 18, 1630, for three days, the total looting of the city and its priceless cultural riches took place, partly by *adventurers in the service of the emperor* (vagabonds recruited in all nations) who surpassed in greed and violence regular troops. The troops did not leave Mantua definitively until September 1631, leaving the ducal palace like an empty shell. The stolen goods, cut up as soon as they cannot be taken away in their entirety, have been resold almost everywhere, especially in northern Italy [1, ch. 1].

- After 1630, Dürer's *miraculous painting* is not mentioned in the inventories of what still remains in Mantua, nor elsewhere. Like most paintings, it therefore seems to have fallen into the hands of a looter who did not really know how to appreciate its value.

7- Can Dürer's self-portrait be identified with the VM? How would he have arrived at Manoppello?

- In 1988, Father Pfeiffer pointed out Dürer's painting to his colleague Werner Bulst, who called this analogy "very *IMPORTANT*". But, sure of his own "discovery" (§ 3), he went no further.

- Like the VM, the self-portrait only showed, on a wide-mesh linen fabric much finer than those of the watercolors common in the 17th century, a bearded man's face, visible from both sides, with hair of a unimaginable finesse [1, ch. 9].

- Like the VM, the self-portrait has fascinated observers to the point of considering it a work impossible to reproduce, *closer to a divine work than a human work*. Other paintings in a comparable technique are not known to date.

- After the sack of Mantua, the authorities of the major cities publicly proclaimed that no person of any rank whatsoever should not buy the stolen items. According to KD [1, ch. 6 § 8], the VM could have been sold very discreetly in 1638 to a notable of Manoppello: designated as the thief (§ 2), the *soldier* Pancrazio Petrucci, prisoner in Chieti, but who had

⁷⁴ 11,000 deaths in January alone.

perhaps had an honorable military career ⁷⁵, would have enlisted as a mercenary in the service of the Habsburgs during the Thirty Years War ⁷⁶. During the looting of 1630, he would have *recovered* the painting and easily taken it out of its frame for camouflage, folding it greatly. Fleeing the plague that was raging in northern Italy, he would have brought him back to Manoppello a little later.

- In one of the upper corners of the painting, Dürer was able to inscribe, as very often, his famous monogram "AD"⁷⁷, and put the date of 1506, which is probably not due to chance in the RH on the VM. These two essential indications could have been obscured (perhaps voluntarily) by the patching of the VM. G. Fanti's IR examinations (in 2007) did not find any signature [1, ch. 5 § 5]; but the RH (§ 2) mentions that the VM, reformed into a rectangle, was originally square ("quar", cf. supra); and that its poor condition (frayed) required significant parts of it to be trimmed, even at the top of the hair⁷⁸. Obviously torn from its frame, it was transported awkwardly folded.

8-Conclusions

- The Veil of Manoppello (VM) is a very surprising watercolour, painted on particularly fine linen, but by no means a miraculous image, *not made by the hand of man*. The face of a living man, with open eyes and visible teeth, cannot be compared to the face of the Shroud of Turin (eyes closed in death). This veil cannot show the features of Christ, neither during his ascent to Calvary (late legend of Veronica), nor during the Resurrection, as some studies have supposed [4, 5].

- The probability is very high that it is the *unique, marvelous self-portrait* made by Albrecht Dürer in 1506 and which disappeared during the sack of Mantua in 1630. We should salute here the work of Roberto Falcinelli [3], who seems to have been the first to have had this intuition⁷⁹, as well as those of the German historian Karlheinz Dietz [1].

⁷⁵ According to Donato da Bomba's HR, *this man-at-arms kept his sword and armor spotless to use in wars with his lord*.

⁷⁶The imperial armies were in great need of recruits, which brought glory and wealth to the Italian nobility. The Petruccis were then part of the regimental noble families.

⁷⁷known from 1498 throughout Europe, by the publication of his *Apocalypse according to St John*.

⁷⁸ between 2 and 7 cm were removed at the top and bottom, and between 9 and 16 cm on the right and left.

⁷⁹During the IVth Symposium of CIELT in 2002, he presented " *The testimonies of the Shroud in the works of Albrecht Dürer*" - cf. MNTV *Notebook* No. 26.

- To complete the scientific analyzes (UV, IR, Raman, etc.), it would be necessary to access the fabric directly without protective glasses.

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Remarque MNTV

One wonders how an artist as talented as Albrecht Dürer could represent himself in a form as... unattractive as the Veil of Manoppello. To this remark, Pierre de Riedmatten replied: “This self-portrait is similar to that of the Man of Sorrows (fig. 7) which is not particularly beautiful. And 8 years passed (according to KD's hypothesis) between the looting of Mantua and the possible arrival of the veil in Manoppello, during which time the fabric remained “greatly folded” and kept in very bad conditions. »