

# THE SHROUD SENT TO LOUIS IX OF FRANCE BY BALDWIN II, THE LATIN EMPEROR AT CONSTANTOPLE

César Barta

The presence in Constantinople of funeral linens in the chapel of the imperial palace of the Boucoleon has been interpreted as that of the same shroud that today is venerated in Turin. Between 1239 and 1242 the Latin emperor Baldwin II sent to his relative Louis IX of France a group of 22 relics from Constantinople that included a piece of these funeral cloths. At least two pieces of the Shroud of Turin are missing. Many authors have believed that one of the missing pieces was the one sent to Louis IX. Soon after a part of this cloth was sent to Toledo in Spain. After gaining access to this cloth, we compared it to the Shroud of Turin.

Many Shroud investigators think the Shroud of Turin was present in Constantinople from the middle of the 10<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The documents mentioned in the bibliography<sup>1</sup> enable us to make up quite a precise scenario of the time when Robert de Clari arrived in Constantinople with the IV Crusade.

The Imperial Palace in Constantinople was to the south of the town. Inside this Imperial complex was the Pharos chapel. At that time, the chapel kept the most famous collection of relics of Christ<sup>2</sup>. In the middle, there were two vessels of gold, hung on thick silver chains. One of the vessels contained a tile and the other one a piece of cloth called the Mandyllion. Both of them had the face of Christ impressed on them. This could have been the Mandyllion that was in Edessa and that was taken to Constantinople in 944 AD, as is stated in the anonymous text attributed to Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos wrote<sup>3</sup>. In this same report, the author transmits the tradition about the tile, known as the *Keramion*, which accompanied the Mandyllion in the chapel. According to the legend this tile received its image miraculously from the Mandyllion itself. The tile was taken to Constantinople in 966 (or 968<sup>4</sup>) by Nicephoros of Hierapolis<sup>5</sup>. Mesarites and Robert de Clari both testify to the presence of a Face of Christ on a cloth in the same chapel in 1201 and 1203 respectively. Both testimonies coincide in the key points about an image not made by human hands and about the above-mentioned tile<sup>6</sup>.

At the same time, a collection of relics of Christ was kept in the same chapel. Amongst them we can enumerate: the cross, the nails, the lance, the sponge, the cane, the crown of thorns, the shroud of the tomb, the sandals, the towel with which He dried the apostles' feet, the tunic, the stone from the tomb and the sudarium<sup>7</sup>. In 1203, Robert de Clari<sup>8</sup> points out not only the presence of the Mandyllion and many of the aforementioned relics, but he also mentions separately two more not belonging to Christ: the Virgin's veil and John the Baptist's head.

The other church concerned with the Shroud, Blachernae, was at the other side of the town, to the north. It was Pulcheria who shortly after the year 450 had this venerable church built. It was burned down in 1434<sup>9</sup>. It was in this church where Robert de Clari saw the weekly exhibition of a shroud with the figure of Christ raising itself upright.

## Analysis of the funeral linens

The clothes from the tomb (shrouds) and the sudarium are mentioned in the inventories in a list with other relics, most of them related to the Passion. They systematically had no leading role and no image on them is mentioned. On the contrary

the Mandylion had a place of honour. In our opinion in this chapel there was a Mandylion (*manutergium*) with an image and cloths from the tomb without any image (parts of a shroud, sudarium and perhaps bandages). None of texts that speak of the funeral linens in the Boucoleon mention an image on them. This is inconceivable for the Shroud of Turin.

It is a key clue. When I asked some Shroud investigators to write only a few lines about the Shroud of Turin as if they were describing a visit to the city of Turin, they all mentioned the image without exception. Through this experience we can be confident that references to the true Shroud of Turin should speak about its image. This is confirmed by the oldest references to the Shroud of Lirey-Chambery. Therefore this is the first reason to think that the “cloth of the tomb” in Pharos Chapel was not the Shroud of Turin. Furthermore, several texts describe these cloths still in the Imperial Complex as “part of” the shroud, not as the whole shroud. This leads us to conclude that the reference to the cloths of the tomb of Christ kept in Pharos must not be taken as a proof of the presence of the Shroud of Turin in Constantinople. This chapel where the collection was stored was not public and was preserved during the attack in 1204.

Moreover, Baldwin II sent a group of 22 relics from Constantinople to his relative Louis IX of France between 1239 and 1242:

1. - The crown of thorns as the most valuable
2. - A piece of the cross
3. - Blood of Christ
4. - The nappies of the infant Jesus
5. - Another piece of the cross
6. - Blood from a picture of Christ
7. - The chain
8. - Sacred cloth inserted in a picture (Mandylion)
9. - Stone from the tomb
10. - Milk of the Virgin Mary
11. - The spear
12. - A victorious cross
13. - The purple mantle
14. - The reed
15. - The sponge
16. - **A part of the shroud (sudarii) in which Christ's body was wrapped in the sepulchre**
17. - The towel used to dry the Apostles' feet
18. - Moses' rod
19. - A part of John the Baptist's head
20. - St. Blas' head
21. - St. Clement's head
22. - St. Simeon's head.

Except for the milk of the Virgin, the other 21 were mentioned in the Pharos collection. The king of France was interested in collecting the relics from the Passion, and sent trustworthy people to the Byzantine capital to purchase them. He had the Sainte Chapelle of Paris built to house these relics. Inside a huge reliquary known as the “Grande Châsse” he kept all of them. Everything seems to point to Baldwin's taking them in their Byzantine reliquaries that he had in the chapel of Pharos in the Great Imperial Palace of Boucoleon, and sending them to Louis.

One or all of the funeral linens of the Boucoleon arrived in Paris in 1242. Among the 22 relics there was “*a part of the shroud in which Christ's body was*

*wrapped in the sepulchre*"<sup>10</sup>. The expression is usually related to the linen cloth that Joseph of Arimathea used for Christ's burial, namely the Shroud. But the Latin word used in the authentication letter signed by Baldwin was "sudari". And the French word used years after in inventories was "suaire". It could have been a part of the "Sindon" as well as a part of the sudarium. In any case, its size is well known according to representations and inventories of the "Grande Châsse". The shroud was kept in a gothic reliquary dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was a box of 25 x 35 cm with a cover made of several crystal plates held by a golden grid with jewels. It was possible to see the content through the cover. The back was made of gold or gilt with a scene of Christ's life.

Two pieces of cloth from the corners of the Shroud of Turin are missing. Very often the piece of funeral cloth obtained by Louis IX has been thought to belong to the Shroud today kept in Turin as one of its missing corners<sup>11</sup>. The two fabrics have not been compared until now because the Sainte Chapelle of Paris was plundered in 1789 during the French Revolution and almost all its contents were destroyed. But Louis sent samples of his relic collection to several famous churches. Small parcels of these linens sent by Louis as a gift are preserved in different places and the one that arrived in Toledo (Spain) in 1248<sup>12</sup> is the best documented. Together with the relics Louis sent a letter with a list of the collection<sup>13</sup>. It consisted of:

1. - A piece of the cross (*de ligno crucis Domini*)
2. - A thorn of the crown (*spinis sacrosantae*)
2. - Milk of the Virgin Mary (*de lacte gloriosae Virginis Beatae Mariae*)
4. - The purple mantle (*de tunica Domini*)
5. - The towel used to dry the apostles' feet (*de linteo quo precinxit se Dominus*)
6. - **A part of the shroud (syndone) in which His body lay in the tomb** (*de sindone, qua corpus ipsius sepultum iacuit in sepulchro*)
7. - A part of the Saviour's nappies (*de pannis infantiae Salvatoris*)

In the same letter he specifies the origin of the relics: all of them come from the imperial treasure of Constantinople (*de thesauro imperii constantinopolitani*).

We can therefore believe that parts of the relics, which were first in Constantinople and then in the Sainte Chapelle of Paris, arrived in Toledo. Among them there was a part of the *Shroud* (Syndone) with which Jesus Christ's body was wrapped in the tomb. It is almost the same expression used by Baldwin in the authentication letter but with the substitution of Sudarii for Sindone. Daniel Duque, César Barta, José Sancho and Felipe Montero, members of the Centro Español de Sindonología (CES), studied all these relics in June 1998<sup>14</sup>.

Three of the relics sent to Toledo were in their own specific reliquary and the rest were in the reliquary identified in several inventories as the Saint Louis reliquary. In this latter one was the sample of the Sindon. It is a taffeta of 26 threads/cm weft and 33 threads/cm warp and S spin, made of linen. It could not be a piece of the Italian Shroud, which is a herringbone 3:1, 26x39 threads and Z spin<sup>15</sup>. It does not come from the Shroud kept today in Turin. The fabric found in the reliquary of Toledo, which came from Constantinople, does not belong to the cloth of Turin. Emperor Baldwin had a linen cloth that had been woven in the simplest way in taffeta, incompatible with the one in Turin. Because of this finding there is now no reason to suppose that Baldwin II had the Shroud of Turin still in Constantinople in 1238. We do not know when the missing rectangles from the Shroud of Turin's corners were cut off. It is just as possible that they were cut before 1238 as more recently.

The most detailed description of the funeral cloth of the Great Imperial Palace includes the qualifying adjective of cheap (Mesarites 19), which fits what has been

found in Toledo much better than the Shroud of Turin. The one from Toledo is a taffeta apparently without any treatment, while the one in Turin is a serge, of a much more complex manufacture.

We therefore think that Baldwin used the Pharos collection, which did not contain the Shroud of Turin.

### **Analysis of the Blachernae shroud**

The first funeral linens were kept in the imperial chapel of Pharos, but the shroud with the whole figure of Christ was very much related to the church of Saint Mary of Blachernae. The French soldier, Robert de Clari, wrote that in this church was the shroud in which Our Lord had been wrapped, which every Friday raised itself upright, so that one could see the figure of Our Lord on it. No one, either Greek or French, ever knew what became of this shroud when the city was taken. There are very few previous references to this cloth and its arrival in Constantinople. There is a reference by Antoine de Novgorod who, in the year 1200, wrote about the image of the face in the Boucoleon Palace and about the Image of the Saviour in Blachernae that a Christian Theodore pawned to a Jew called Abraham (*imago Salvatoris, quam christianus quidam Theodorus Abrahae Judeo oppignorauerat*).

The word used by Clari, *sydoine*, and the description of the use of the shroud leaves no doubt about what the cloth of Blachernae was. It was the funeral shroud and it had an image. In the two references, Clari and Novgorod, the image seems to be of the whole body. It makes us think of the Shroud of Turin.

This cloth was missing after the city was taken. Robert de Clari testifies to its disappearance. The publicity that surrounded the weekly exhibition made it a perfect target of the sacking that the Crusaders carried out in 1204. However, the other cloths, the relics that were kept in the Great Palace, were protected from the sacking and stayed under Latin power.

In 1205, a year after the Crusader sacking, Theodore Angelus wrote to Pope Innocent III complaining of the looting: The Venetians partitioned the treasures of gold, silver and ivory while the French did the same with the relics and the most sacred of all, the linen in which our Lord Jesus Christ was wrapped after his death and before his resurrection...the sacred linen [is] in Athens. It could be the same cloth as the Blachernae one that was considered to have been stolen. The others funeral cloths of the Boucoleon were preserved, as we have shown. The shroud of Athens is also claimed as the most sacred relic among them all. The fame of this Shroud is sudden and surprising but by the time of Robert de Clari the Blachernae shroud became famous because of its public exhibition every Friday.

This shroud probably never went back to Constantinople and so we think that Baldwin II, the Latin emperor of Constantinople, did not have the distinguished relic of Blachernae in 1238.

If the Shroud of Turin was in Constantinople, as certain pollen seem to show, it should rather be identified with the Sindon with an image in Saint Mary of Blachernae and that must be the one taken by the French Crusaders and brought in 1205 to Athens where Otho de la Roche was in charge.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. In the Pharos chapel inside the Great Imperial Palace in Constantinople there was a collection of relics protected from the sacking. Baldwin took some fragments to send them to Louis IX. Among them were the funeral cloths of Christ with no image.

2. Louis IX received his collection from the treasure of the Pharos chapel, where there was a high coincidence with the Sainte Chapelle collection, in which a shroud without image was included.

3. In the “Ochavo” of Toledo Cathedral there is a reliquary with relics of Jesus Christ sent by Louis IX. Among them there is one mentioned as “*de Sindone dni*”.

4. The portion of Shroud of Louis IX does not belong to the original Shroud located nowadays in Turin.

5. The Crusaders must have taken the shroud with an image from Saint Mary of Blachernae while the other funeral cloths stayed in the Boucoleon palace. We think they are two different relics.

6. The Shroud of Turin could in any case correspond to the Blachernae shroud, which was taken to Athens where Otho de la Roche was ruler.

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