

The Shroud copy in Campillo de Aragón, Spain

By Daniel Duque Torres

On a fresh morning in 2003, I was lucky enough to be able to visit the church of Saint John the Baptist in Campillo de Aragón. Parish priest Angel Luis Saldaña was going to show me “in situ” the copy of the Shroud that has been there since the 17th century.

The first surprise that awaited us was the place where the copy is kept. I have seen many copies over the years and I can confidently state that this is one of the most solemnly kept I have ever seen.

The linen cloth is fitted into a framework, or chest, a little smaller than the actual copy, between the fabulous altar-piece and the altar itself in the chapel of the Shroud. The chapel was originally built to house the copy and later joined on to the main church building. The cloth is behind two doors with a relief of the Shroud image, on which the wounds are painted red. There are then two purple curtains, which are undrawn to the left and right of the observer. Embroidered on each curtain is the letter S, standing for *Santa Síndone* or *Sábana Santa* (the name of the Shroud in Spanish).

As I pointed out, the frame is slightly smaller than the copy, and although we know the actual size to be 4.40 x 1.10 metres, only 4.15 x 0.93 is visible. When the copy was placed in the display case, it became clear that the measurements were wrong and so it had to be tucked in round the edges. Two vertical marks on the cloth show that at some point in its history, before it was definitively placed on the altar, it had been folded into three in a damp place. This led to fungus forming along the fold marks. The dark tone of the fungus can also be seen on the left hand side of the cloth (from the crease to the feet). On the upper left two portions of the cloth have been removed, measuring approximately 7 x 4 cm, leaving black coloured remains along the edges. A small amount of cloth has also been lost at the lower left, due to termites. The cloth is held to the wooden board on the right with drawing pins.

The actual copy probably dates from 1650, and has been in the church since 1 April 1675. The framework and chest it is kept in dates from 15 February 1703. The information about the copy's history comes from various different authors, from documents in the parish archive of Vilueña (Zaragoza) and above all from the late Pedro Gotor Calmarza, inhabitant of the town and author of a magnificent book about the copy. It was given to the town by another local, Lucas Bueno Nuño, who was born in 1599, became bishop of Malta and Archbishop of Thessaloniki and Rosano, not to mention Prior of the Order of Knights of Saint John in Jerusalem. The Shroud copy was a gift for his apostolic work in Malta, from Pablo Láscaris, born in Mallorca, a descendent of the Italian family of Ventimiglia, who in turn were descended from Emperors Theodore I and II of Nicea. He himself had received the copy from the house of Savoy shortly after 1650.

The Order of Saint John gave the copy to Antón Bueno, justice of the peace in Campillo and son of Pedro, the bishop's brother. The copy arrived in Campillo on 11 July 1653 and was initially kept at the hermitage of Santa María Magdalena (which no longer exists), and then in the hermitage of Santa Lucía (which is still standing and in use) before being taken to the parish church. It is reported that hail storms had been

damaging the village for fourteen years but miraculously stopped when the copy reached its resting place.

As for the image itself, the frontal part is on the right as one observes the cloth. The frontal and dorsal images are negatives and the wounds are in the same position as on the original Shroud (the left hand over the right and the side wound on the left). Time has almost erased the actual image although a curious detail is still visible, not seen on many copies – the carbon outline that the artist used for the hands can be clearly seen around the fingers in order to better imitate the original image in Turin. The difficulties involved in copying an image that had not outlines, as on the original Shroud, led to artists using little tricks such as this one. In this case the artist “forgot” to rub out the lines he had used to draw the edges after filling the insides of the hands with a highly liquefied substance, thus obtaining a result much closer to the original than if he had used a paintbrush. This technique was used on just about all known Shroud copies, with the only intention of making the copy as close as possible to the original.

Another object we were able to see in the church was the wooden case, lined on the inside with red silk, in which the copy came to Campillo. It was rolled around two wooden poles and placed inside the case, whose original lock still survives.

After the visit, we sat down at the entrance to the church and spoke about the different Shroud copies we have seen and others which we have not. It was clear that of all the copies we have seen in person, the one in Campillo is one of the best-known and venerated. It goes without saying that its presentation and location are the most beautiful of all the copies we know.

If anybody is visiting the area and would like to see the copy, it is shown in the church every Good Friday and on 14 September.