

THE SOUVENIR ENGRAVING OF THE  
1578 EXPOSITION

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In 1978, on the occasion of the Holy Shroud Exposition, the Italian Post office issued a commemorative stamp (Fig. 1) described thus in the Bolaffi Catalogue: \*

1978 September 8 IV Centennial of the Transfer of the Holy Shroud Photogravure in sheets of 50  
Perforations 13 x 13¼  
Lire 220 Polychrome  
Subject: The Holy Shroud held by a group of Lombard bishops during a pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup>  
Engraver: Tullio Mele

The stamp is essentially a reproduction of the engraving of Giovanni Testa (Fig. 2) commemorating the transfer of the Holy Shroud from Chambéry to Turin in 1578 by the Duke of Savoy, Emanuele Filiberto, and the solemn exposition presided by the Cardinal (St.) Charles Borromeo, who had come on foot from Milan to venerate the Relic.

The issuance of the stamp was published as philatelic news. Aside from that, there were no comments about the original engraving, which nevertheless deserves to be remembered even if only for its report, in a very empirical manner, of some of the measurements of the Shroud. Very summary measurements, if you will, but which have a certain value in the intention of transmitting data as well as it was possible.

The stamp carries very few words:

1578—The Holy Shroud of Turin-1978  
ITALY £220

The original engraving, however, has several inscriptions which we will refer to in an orderly fashion so as not to overlook anything the author intended to transmit to history.

In the souvenir book of the 1931 Exposition and Exhibit, the engraving is listed thus:

Engraving made in Turin by Giovanni Testa; surrounded by emblems and episodes of the Passion and the words: The Most True Portrait of the Most Holy Shroud of Our Savior Jesus Christ  
0.21 x 0.54 Plate XXII  
The copy on exhibit is in the collection of His Royal Highness; the original copper-plate belongs to the lawyer Edgardo Rodina of Turin.<sup>2</sup>

In the midst of an array of crosiers, processional crosses and tapers,

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\* In the Scott Catalogue Vol. III, 1985, a description is found on p. 451. The colors are given as yellow, red and black. (Ed.)



Fig. 1: The commemorative stamp of 1978. Enlarged 130%.

eleven Prelates, wearing copes and mitres, hold up the Shroud for the public to see. Above the head of each Prelate is written the locality of his residence or his name. In a row behind the Prelates, conveniently visible between their heads, eleven ecclesiastics are represented, wearing liturgical garments and holding the crosiers, crosses and candles.

From Left to Right, these are the dioceses; the names of the titularies are added in parentheses:

- Bishop of Aosta (Mons. Cesare Gromis)
- Bishop of Asti (Mons. Domenico Della Rovere)
- Bishop of Saluzzo (Mons. Gian Maria Tapparelli)
- Archbishop of Turin (Mons. Gerolamo Della Rovere)
- Cardinal Ferrari
- Cardinal of St. Praxedis, Archbishop of Milan (Card. Carlo Borromeo)
- Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop of Genova
- Archbishop of Tarantasia (Mons. Giuseppe Parpaglia)
- Bishop of Pavia (Mons. Ippolito Rossi)
- Bishop of Vercelli (Mons. Giovanni Francesco Bonomi)
- Bishop of Savona (Mons. Cesare Camillo Ferrero)

More ample information about each Prelate is given by Giuseppe Pugno,<sup>3</sup> who reports that: "The engraving, perhaps prepared some days before the Exposition, carries an inaccuracy; in fact, because something probably came up unexpectedly, the Bishop of Asti, Domenico Della Rovere, was not able to attend and at the last moment Mons. Grimaldi, Bishop of Venice, took his place."

The principle representation, i.e., the Prelates holding the Linen, is flanked by panels depicting four symbols of the Passion: at the left are shown the seamless tunic and the column of flagellation, and at the right, the pitcher and basin and the flagellum. In the center of the left panel, a drawing of Christ carrying the Cross and, on the right side, the Ecce Homo, crowned with thorns, wearing the chlamys and holding the reed in his hand.

The principle inscription, in Roman characters, reads:  
(above)

IL VERISSIMO RITRATTO DEL SANTISS.° SVDARIO

(and below)

DEL NOSTRO SALVATORE GIESU CHRISTO



Under "Christo", in cursive: By privilege of His Royal Highness—Giovanni Testa of Turin.<sup>4</sup>

Two other writings, in cursive, are placed outside the upper and lower borders of the engraving. The writing outside the upper border is very important, as it reports some measurements of the sacred Cloth and the Imprint. However, no reference is given as to the unit of measure employed.

It is to be known that from this **A** to **B** there is the distance from head to head; from **A** to **C** the width of the shoulders; from **A** to **C** three times is the width of the Holy Linen; **B** from **A** to **C** four times is the length of the image of Our Lord Jesus Christ; from **A** to **C** nine times, is about the length of the Cloth **C**.

**A,B,C** are the three points of reference inserted in the inscription in slightly heavier and larger print. The indicated measurements are not quite as precise as one might wish; for an easier understanding, we give them in centimetres:

Distance between the heads, A-B: about 24cm  
 Width of the shoulders, A-C: about 48cm  
 Width of the Holy Linen, A-C x 3: about 144cm  
 Length of the image of Our Lord, A-C x 4: about 192cm  
 Length of the Holy Cloth, A-C x 9: about 432cm

Underneath the lower border is written:

The Year of the Lord 1578 on the 12th and 14th of the month of October in honor of His Grace Carlo who came with his retinue in pilgrim's habit from Milan to Turin. The Most Holy Shroud was exhibited publicly for him and he was received by His Royal Highness with great joy. And there were in attendance the above-named Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Prelates.

We conclude this brief documentation by pointing out some of the features of the drawing of the Holy Shroud. The two imprints of the body are delineated with precise outlines. The body imprint is framed by the patches and scorch lines from the Chambéry fire. The patches are shown in perfect symmetry and regularity; all more or less the same size and shape, whereas we know they are not like that. Thus they give a decorative effect rather than a realistic representation. And there are four more patches than there are on the Shroud; two at the level of the crossed hands and two in corresponding level beside the dorsal imprint.

In the center, between the front and back of the head, there are two ornaments, in the form of a cross, which resemble petals of two little flowers.

The hair is long and full. The crown of thorns is drawn meticulously, even though on the Shroud only bloodstains mark the place of the thorns.

The lance wound is shown on the right side of the body. The arms are crossed with the right hand over the left, while on the Shroud it is the left which covers the right. Contrary to what we see on the Linen, the artist has drawn five fingers on each hand; but the location of the

wound would seem to be located in the forearm rather than in the palm of the hand as was commonly done by artists.

There is a very obvious perizoma going around the body. The legs are parallel, with the feet slightly divergent and the nail wounds indicated both in the insteps and on the soles.

It is difficult to determine which model served as the artist's inspiration for this engraving.<sup>5</sup> But we are grateful to him for all the many things he was able to compress in his drawing.

#### NOTES:

1. In fact, the bishops were not all from Lombardy but from various dioceses, as will be seen in a moment.
2. Cfr. *L'Ostensione della S. Sindone*, Turin 1931, p. 53.
3. *La Santa Sindone the si venera a Torino*, Turin 1961, pp. 211 & ff.
4. Undoubtedly this engraving was the inspiration for Giovanni Battista Fantino (to not say that he copied it) when he made the copy on linen, signed by him, which is now preserved at Badalatos, Spain [see *Spectrum* #13, p. 24. Ed.]. The inscription is exactly the same, even in the disposition of the words. The symbols and the signs of the Passion, to R & L of the image, are slightly modified but, on the whole, they are the same.
5. It must be remembered that the custom of making copies in natural size and printed reproductions was a long-standing tradition. We recall the copies dated at Lierre (1516), Navarrete (1568) and Alcoy (1571) [see Don Fossati's article in *Spectrum* #12 & #13]. It is unfortunate that, due to the fragility of the material, we do not have adequate documentation.