

The history of the International Centre of Sindonology

The **first photograph of the Shroud** taken by **Secondo Pia in 1898**, marked a **turning point** for the precious cloth preserved in Turin since 1578. On one hand, **it changed the way the image of the Shroud was shown to the world**. As a matter of fact, people's devotion and knowledge of the Shroud, relying only on the manual arts in the past, was significantly increased by photography. On the other hand, but not less important, the **image on the photographic negative raised the interest of the scientific world**.

Over the first decades of the **20th century** the attention of the scholars focused mainly on the **process leading to the imprint of the image on the cloth** as shown by the photograph. **The details of the photograph taken by Giuseppe Enrie in 1931** encouraged this interest even more: publications and contributions of scholars from different scientific fields appeared throughout Europe. Those **studies were very often independent** one from the other. Therefore, **the Holy Shroud Brotherhood, very concerned about the events involving the Shroud**, understood the need for coordination. So it founded its "**Cultores Sanctae Sindonis**" association. The "**Cultores Sanctae Sindonis**" immediately received the **Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Maurilio Fossati's approval**.

The association was governed by a **Central Council** based in the Fraternity seat. **Groups of scholars soon spread throughout Europe and the United States** and joined the association as **delegations of the Cultores of Turin**. Since its foundation the main aims of the association were: **coordinating the studies on the Shroud**, spreading knowledge and collecting and preserving anything that concerns the Shroud. To do so, **the Association arranged a documentary exhibition (the first nucleus of the Museum of the Shroud) and a library**, collecting interesting publications such as those dating back to the end of the **16th century**. Also, the association organized **conferences, seminars and promoted publications**.

In 1939, the association organized in Turin the **first National Conference of Shroud Studies** publishing the relevant acts. However, the Second World War interrupted the relations among scholars and delegations, reducing the activities. The **activities restarted in 1950** - the **Holy Year** – when the Association organized in Rome and Turin the **First International Congress of Shroud Studies**, with the publication of relevant documents. The Congress fostered the studies, as evidenced in the publications by **P. Barbet and G. Judica-Cordiglia** in the medical-legal field, and by **P. Savio** in the field of history.

In **1959**, Bernardo Bellardo, president of the Cultores since its very foundation, resigned. The Fraternity analyzed carefully the activity of the Cultores, which had become very important and could not be abandoned, and studied a new organization. At **Cardinal Maurilio Fossati's** suggestion, this responsibility was given to **Prof. G. Judica-Cordiglia**, a member of the **Executive Council** of the **Brotherhood** and former influential member of the Cultores association. On **23rd December 1959**, the **Executive Council of the Brotherhood** approved the foundation of the **International Centre of Sindonology**. The Centre, whose statute had been approved by **Cardinal Maurilio Fossati** on 18th December of the same year, relied both for its operational aspect and for its administration, on the Council of the **Brotherhood**. Therefore the President of the **Brotherhood** would be at the same time the President of the Centre. The director would be nominated by the **Council of the Brotherhood** and assisted by a committee of experts appointed by the director himself.

The aims of the Centre were the same pursued by the Cultores. **Prof. Giovanni Judica-Cordiglia** was nominated as the **director of the new Centre**. At the same time the **Brotherhood** founded the **scientific journal "Sindon,"** whose promoters were **Judica-Cordiglia himself , Dr. Giovanni Donna d' Oldenigo , Monsignor Adolfo Barberis and Prof. Stefano Vigna**. The **journal had four sections: medicine, history, exegesis and art and was published every six months**. The need for a scientific journal had been already deeply felt by the Cultores , but, for the lack of funds, it had not been possible before then. The journal was meant to serve different purposes: publishing coordinated scientific contributions, connecting scholars, facilitating deeper and wider knowledge of the Shroud. The **first issue was published in November 1959. "Sindon" published 34 issues until 1985**. After a short break, **it returned in 1989, with a new series** renewed in its editorial project.

In **1969**, the **director of the Center, Prof. G. Judica Cordiglia** was asked to be part of the **Committee of experts appointed by Card. Pellegrino** in order to supervise the state of preservation of the Shroud. **Prof. Judica-Cordiglia was called into the Commission** "almost as a guide for those experts who had never been interested in the Shroud " as stated by **Monsignor Jose Cottino , Vice- President of the Commission**, in the introduction to the book "**Observations on the technical officers on the Holy Shroud 1969-1976**," published in 1977 by the Centre.

In **1978** the **Shroud was publicly exhibited to commemorate the 400th anniversary of its arrival in Turin**. The **Centre** contributed to this exhibition, setting up a documentary display about the Shroud in its headquarter and organizing the **Second International Congress of Sindonology**. Further national conferences followed: **Bologna in 1981 , Trani in 1984 , Syracuse in 1987 , Cagliari in 1990**, along with the **Third International Congress in 1998**. The local delegations of the Centre contributed largely to the organization of the conferences and to the publication of their relevant acts.

In **1987** an interesting **volume** entitled "**Science, History, Faith**" was published. It was a compendium of studies on the Shroud created thanks to **several interdisciplinary contributions**. Conceived and **supported by Don Piero Coero-Borga**, **rector of the Brotherhood**, and very important member of the Centre, it was published posthumously in his memory, after his **sudden death in 1986**. In **1998 Card. Saldarini** approved the **new statute** proposed by the **Brotherhood** for the Center.

The **new Statute** confirmed the structure of the center and the roles of the President and Director. However, it defined their office term and stated that **all the scientific, technical and organizational supports for sindonology had to be endorsed by the Papal Custodian of the Shroud, the pro tempore Archbishop of Turin**. Since **1992** in fact, some **members of the Centre were part of the Commission of experts appointed by Card. Saldarini** to examine the state of preservation of the Shroud. This operation, started with the Commission appointed by Card. Pellegrino in 1969, ended in **July 2002**, with the **removal of the Holland cloth and the patches sewn by the Clarisse nuns of Chambéry in 1534**. Then, **Prof. Pierluigi Baima Bollone** succeeded **Prof. Judica-Cordiglia** as director.

In the same year, **the Centre gave support** to a new initiative of the Brotherhood: "**Lent with the Shroud.**" This initiative was addressed to **all the parishes of the diocese where scientific conferences promoted the knowledge of the Shroud in all its aspects**. The initiative was more and more successful, so that **it was provided for the whole length of the two Public Exhibitions**, trying to meet all the requests (even from outside the Diocese).

During the **two latest exhibitions in 1998 and 2000**, the activities of the Centre grew very intense: some of its **members joined the Commission for the Public Exhibition of the Shroud** and made a significant contribution..

In collaboration with the Brotherhood, the **Centre built the new seat of the Museum of the Holy Shroud into the crypt of the eighteenth-century church of the Holy Shroud**. The new Museum was **inaugurated on April 15, 1998** on the occasion of the opening of the Public Exhibition. To celebrate the centenary of the **first photograph of the Shroud**, the Centre organized the exhibition "**The Revealed Image**," providing many unpublished **documents and images** belonging to the **Secondo Pia Historical Archive**. Members of the Center contributed to many of the publications about the Shroud. During the **Public Exhibition in 1998** the Centre also organized the **Third International Congress of Sindonology in Turin**.



In the following Public **Exhibition in 2000 the Centre was in charge** of the organization of the **International Scientific Symposium at Villa Gualino, where 40 experts from all around the world were invited** to debate. The documents of the Symposium are published in a special issue of the journal Sindon entitled "**The Turin Shroud : Past , Present and Future.**"

In 2002, the Executive Council of the Brotherhood elected **Professor Bruno Barberis as the new director of the Centre**. In 2017 the new **Confraternita del S. Sudario** proposed as director of the **International Center of Sindonology Prof. Gian Maria Zaccone, former Scientific Director of Museo della Sindone**. In the meanwhile, the **Center coordinated and actively participated in three Conventions of Shroud Studies held respectively in Paris, Vienna and Sao Paulo in Brazil**.

Autore:

Data: