

A significant new example of the Lirey pilgrim badge

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New discoveries pertaining to the Shroud's history are relatively rare, and as we sadly saw in the case of Dr Barbara Frale's Templar claims, sometimes they are not always all that is claimed for them. In this instance, however, I am pleased to be able to announce a recent discovery that seems to be both significant and genuine, though as will become clear, there is one disappointing sting in its tail.



Figure 1 - Pilgrims resting by the wayside, by Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533). Engraving in the collection of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

The discovery pertains to the field of mediaeval pilgrimage badges. For anyone unfamiliar with such badges, Lucas van Leyden's delightfully detailed engraving of two pilgrims taking a 'refreshment' rest at the roadside provides a useful introduction [fig.1]. Unmistakeably identifying the pair as pilgrims are the badges that they are displaying on their hats - a shell to denote a visit to the shrine of St James at Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and a 'Veronica' face to show a visit to St. Peter's in Rome. Whenever mediaeval pilgrims went on pilgrimage, such hat badges were often their favourite souvenirs, much like today's 'I love NY' fridge magnets. And for badge purveyors, once a suitable mould had been created, simple press-outs in hot metal could be manufactured and sold by the hundred. On the Internet there is an excellent Dutch website, Kunera (www.kunera.nl) with built-in English

translation, that provides a master catalogue for the thousands of surviving badge specimens that are to be found scattered around the museums of western Europe. Any casual browse of this site enables some glimpse of the variety of badges that were flourishing during Christian pilgrimages' hey-day.

But what of the souvenirs provided for those mid-fourteenth century pilgrims who visited the first-known European expositions of the Shroud at tiny Lirey in northern France? As recently as the last Shroud Newsletter BSTS member Alan Foster wrote of his direct personal examination of the badge that has long been supposed the only survivor from that time - the partly damaged specimen that was found in the mud of the Seine around 1855, and became housed in the Musée de Cluny, Paris. This badge features the Shroud being held up by two clerics, with below it depictions of major relics of the Passion, e.g. the crown of thorns, the flagrum, the cross, the empty tomb, etc, while flanking the Passion relics can be seen two shields bearing the arms of the Shroud's earliest-known European owners Geoffroi de Charny¹ (d.1356), and his wife Jeanne de Vergy. As Alan Foster rightly pointed out, the badge's so remarkably detailed depiction of the Shroud itself, inclusive of the herringbone weave, the post-mortem blood flows across the small of the back, etc., coupled with the dating provided by the coats of arms, provides one of the best arguments for the Shroud today preserved in Turin being quite unmistakably the same cloth that was owned by the de Charny family back in the fourteenth century.

But thanks to the earlier mentioned new discovery, which I learnt of only this last April (following giving a lecture in Paris to the French equivalent of the BSTS, MNTV, or Montre-Nous Ton Visage), the Musée de Cluny badge is no longer the only known specimen from the time of the de Charnys. This uniqueness was lost in 2009 when a French jogger, running in the vicinity of the tiny village of Machy, just a few kilometres south of Lirey, noticed a strange-looking stone in the field that he was passing [fig 2]. When he showed this to local MNTV member Alain Hourseau (a French local history enthusiast who has recently produced a well-researched new book *Autour du Saint Suaire et de la collégiale to Lirey*), Alain quickly recognised its identity. Although the 'stone' (to be exact, a slate-coloured schist), had sustained some considerable damage, probably from its having been struck by a farmer's plough, enough of it has survived for it to be recognisable as a carefully carved mould for creating a Shroud pilgrim badge that would have been similar to, though not identical with, the Musée de Cluny badge. And some traces of metal still adhering to its vent holes showed that it had quite definitely once been used for actual badge production.



Figure 2 - Actual appearance of the mould found at Machy, near Lirey. Any pilgrim badge created from this would of course have been in mirror reverse, as in the reconstruction featured in Fig. 3. Photo courtesy Alain Hourseau.

Now not least of the fascinating aspects of our now having two different versions of souvenir badges created for pilgrims visiting the Shroud at Lirey is that, although both versions have suffered some substantial damage, there survives enough of each for both to be reconstructed with what may be cautiously considered reasonable accuracy.² And as can be seen when the two reconstructions are set side by side [figs 3 & 4], although the two badges would have been broadly similar to each other, they do exhibit some surprises and some intriguing differences.

For instance the Machy mould carries an inscription, of which one word 'SVAIRE' (suaire) is quite unmistakable even to the non-specialist. Worth pointing out in this context is that although we would normally expect the word 'Linceul' (the more accurate French equivalent for our English word 'Shroud' when this is used in a funerary sense), 'Suaire' is the French word that was used for the Shroud back at the time that it was being exhibited in Lirey, and in French it is still used for our 'Turin' Shroud to this day.

Slightly more problematic is the badge lettering that immediately follows 'SVAIRE': 'IhV'. Normally we would expect IhS or IhC, denoting the first three letters of the name 'Jesus' in



RECONSTRUCTION ONLY

Figure 3 - Reconstruction of the original appearance of the Machy badge. The depiction of cleric on right, together with the architecture seen behind him, have been reconstructed to match the surviving features seen at the left. The depiction of the Shroud figure, almost entirely effaced on the mould, has been reconstructed from the Musée de Cluny badge. Note the incorrect vertical orientation of the Shroud's herringbone weave. Provisional reconstruction by Ian Wilson.

Greek. However the IhV form, although rare, is known. It is a genitive form, comprising the Greek Iota and Eta for the first two letters of Jesus' name followed by the Latin case ending V (our 'u'), indicating that the abbreviation is possessive, i.e. 'Shroud of Jesus'.³

Now this is actually quite important because it shows in the most unequivocal manner that at the time that this particular badge was created the Shroud was being totally openly presented



RECONSTRUCTION ONLY

Figure 4 - Reconstruction of the original appearance of the Cluny version of the Lirey pilgrim's badge in the light of the Machy mould discovery. The depictions of the heads of the two clergy have been reconstructed from the extant depictions on the Machy version. The exact wording of the inscription is uncertain, other possible variants being "S.SVAIRE" and 'SVAIRE'. The arched background behind the clergy is the most conjectural element, the surviving Gothic pillars at either side of the Cluny badge actually suggesting a different architectural setting to that on the Machy mould. Provisional reconstruction by Ian Wilson.

as the true 'Suair' of Jesus - exactly as we know from the d'Arcis Memorandum to have happened during the time of Geoffroi I de Charny (i.e. the Geoffroi who died in 1356) - and not just as a figure or representation', with its authenticity as the true Suair 'noised abroad in private', as happened in 1389, when Geoffroi de Charny's son, Geoffroi II initiated his highly controversial showings.

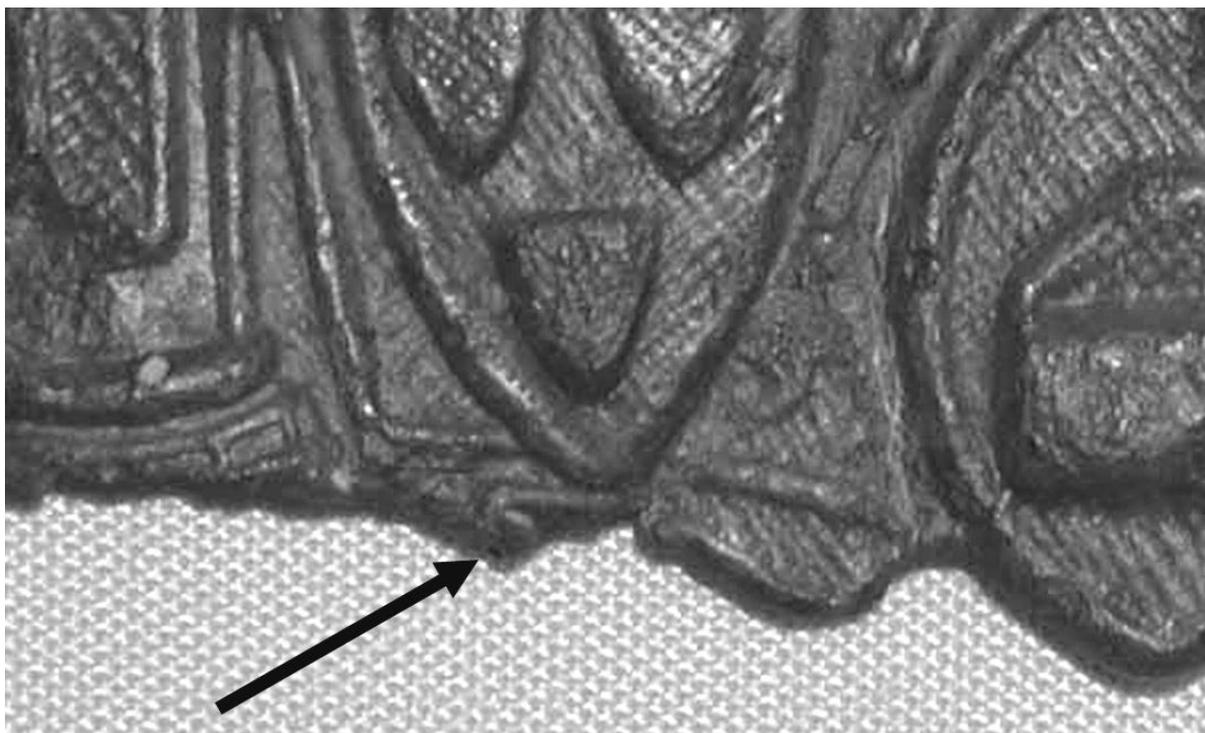


Figure 5 - Detail of the top left hand edge of a banner (arrowed) apparently lost from the base of the Musée de Cluny's badge. This banner very likely contained the word 'SVAIRE', similar to the inscription on the Machy version. From an original photo by Dr. Niels Svensson.

This 'Suaire of Christ' inscription on the Machy badge in its turn inevitably gives rise to the question of whether the badge preserved in the Musée de Cluny, the lower part of which has been lost, may originally have carried a similar inscription. In which regard, although no inscription had previously been suspected on the Cluny badge, when one looks carefully just below the de Charny shield there can quite clearly be discerned the edge of what may very reasonably be construed to have been the top left hand section of an inscription-bearing banner. [fig 5] We can be reasonably confident of this because we now know, thanks to the aforementioned Kunera website, that there were similar banners on later versions of Shroud pilgrimage badges of which I was previously unaware, badges of a later period (yet to be properly studied), that the Kunera website catalogues as objects 10980 and 11140 [fig 6]. The wording within these later banners is 'S. SVAIRE' and 'SVAIRE' respectively, hence although we cannot be sure exactly what wording the Cluny badge carried, the likelihood is that it would have been one of the three variations cited here.

Such is the interest value of the Machy badge that the inscription is far from its only surprise. Another is the disposition of the two heraldic shields. On the Cluny badge Geoffroi de Charny's heraldic coat of arms ('gules, three escutcheons argent' - that is, red background with three silver shields), appears at spectator's left, and that of his wife Jeanne de Vergy at spectator's right. On the Machy badge this positioning is reversed. One possible reason for this different positioning is arguably because one of the two badges was struck at a time when Geoffroi was still alive, the other when he was recently deceased, his widow Jeanne de Vergy arguably having taken over charge of these activities. But which badge was the earlier one? Although before the discovery of the Machy specimen British genealogy expert the late Noel



Figure 6 - Mould of a Shroud pilgrimage badge in the collection of the Brussels Bibliothèque Royale, featuring a banner bearing the word 'SVAIRE'. From a modern engraving, this has been reproduced here mirror-reversed to convey the appearance of any badge created from it. Although Kunera have classified the mould as from the post-1453 Chambéry period of the Shroud's history, the date is yet undetermined. Kunera object 11140.

Currer-Briggs very confidently stated that the positioning of the arms on the Cluny specimen indicated it to have been created in Geoffroi's lifetime, subsequent correspondence with present-day specialists in the light of the Machy discovery has revealed substantially less certainty. In the words of one, 'the practice of marshalling arms was still in its infancy in France in the fourteenth century, and no clear rules had yet been established.'

In actuality there is a good reason for preferring the Machy badge as the earlier of the two - the fact that although, like the Cluny specimen it shows the fine detail of the Shroud's herringbone weave, it incorrectly shows this as oriented vertically instead of horizontally. On the Cluny specimen, by contrast, the weave correctly appears oriented horizontally thereby at least suggesting - though certainly far from proving - that the Machy badge was the earlier of the two versions, its pioneering mistake having been specially rectified on the later Cluny badge.

This arguable historical priority of the Machy version has considerable pertinence to yet another of its 'surprise' features, the objects that the artist, or whoever was directing him, chose to depict between the two badges.



Figure 7 - Detail of the Machy mould showing the disembodied Christ face on a landscape background, flanked by what seem to be two stars. This too has been mirror-reversed to show the image as it would have appeared on an actual badge.

On the Cluny badge we see immediately below the depiction of the exhibited Shroud a roundel with Jesus' empty tomb, accompanied by implements of the Passion such as the crown of thorns, the scourge, the cross, the spear, etc. On the Machy mould, however, none of these items are represented. Instead there appears solo what can hardly be interpreted other than as the face of Jesus (although notably without halo) on a landscape aspect background, flanked at either side by a vent hole with striations radiating from it. Although vent holes were technically necessary in badge moulds for the badge's casting from hot metal, the placement of this particular pair, each with radiating surround, suggests that the artist may have intended each hole to double as the body of a star, the radiating striations being the star's rays. [fig 7]

Now such a depiction of the Shroud in 'face only on a landscape background' form and with eyes apparently open and staring (a common interpretation of the Shroud 'eyes'), is of course of very considerable interest in the light of the theory that the Shroud may have had its origins as the Byzantine world's Image of Edessa. Amongst those most sceptical towards the Shroud's authenticity one of the most common objections raised against the Edessa theory of the Shroud's earlier history is the seeming incompatibility of connecting a cloth spoken of in Byzantine sources mostly as bearing just a facial imprint of the living Jesus, with the cloth bearing the extraordinary full body 'dead Jesus' imprint that we see on the Shroud. Yet on the Machy pilgrim mould the connection is there, absolutely manifest for all to see.

As for the apparent stars flanking the face (and stars notably surround the face on the so Shroud-like *epitaphios* of the Serbian king Milutin II Uros [fig 8]), one of the most notable features of Geoffroi de Charny's career is that he was a leading initiator of the extremely short-lived French chivalric order known as the Company of the Star. Just like its contemporary rival the English Order of the Garter, the Company of the Star was founded to

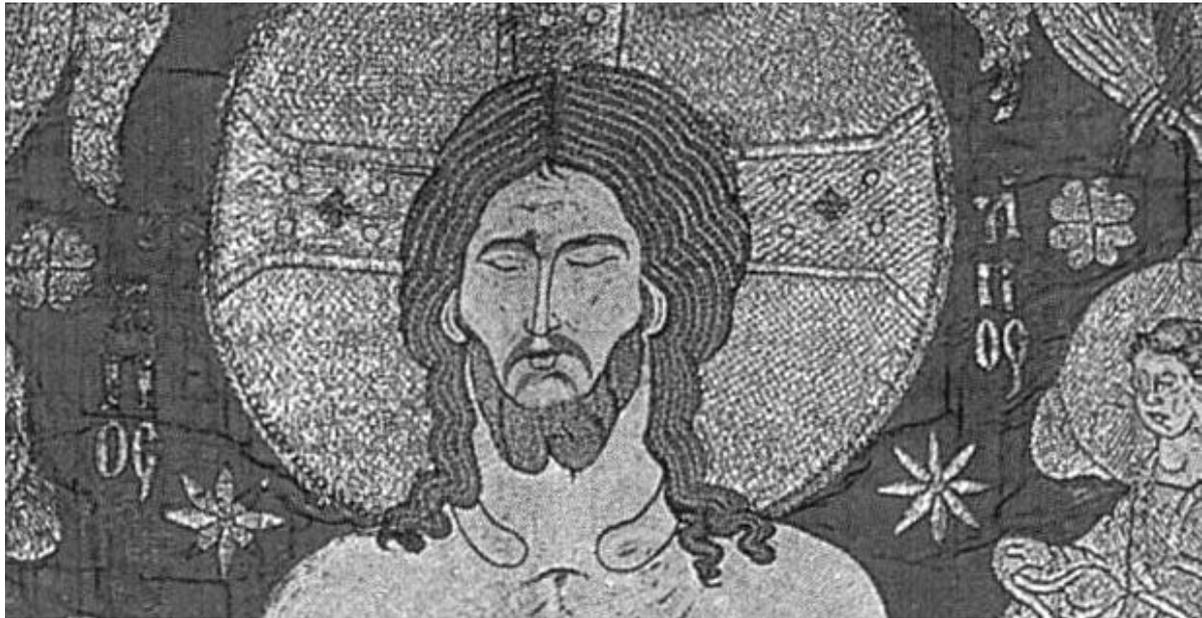


Figure 6 - Detail of the epitaphios of Serbian King Milutin I Uros, a very Shroud-like Byzantine liturgical embroidery created c.1320. Note how stars similarly flank the Christ face. Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade.

reflect in real life the story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, whose ultimate prize, for the perfect knight Galahad, was highly privileged vision of the crucified Christ within the Holy Grail. Accordingly that real life 'perfect knight' Geoffroi de Charny's ownership of the Shroud may in some way have been connected with the Company of the Star (which was so prematurely and decisively rendered extinct, just like Geoffroi himself, by the devastating French defeat at the battle of Poitiers in 1356), is a possibility clearly needing some serious ongoing study

Overall the discovery of the Machy mould, when it is taken together with certain other similarly significant recent discoveries yet to be fully explored, may well prove a touchstone for throwing fresh light on the so longstanding mysteries surrounding Geoffroi de Charny's so shadowy and controversial expositions of the Shroud back in the early 1350s. The possibilities that are currently being opened up are sufficiently wide-ranging, both geographically and thematically, that I am anticipating quite a collaborative effort by specialists in several countries to help with what I am calling 'Project Charny' as a quest ultimately to determine beyond reasonable doubt exactly how, when, and from where Geoffroi de Charny of Lirey came to own the cloth that we now know as the Shroud of Turin.

But what about that earlier mentioned 'sting in the tail'? Most frustratingly, this concerns the Machy mould's present-day whereabouts. For although Alain Hourseau, my most helpful informant on the discovery, was allowed to photograph the mould, and to study it quite lengthily at his home, the jogger who originally discovered it, and who was only temporarily living in the Lirey area pending a divorce, decided to put the mould up for sale at 500 Euros, and proceeded to advertise it on eBay. At much this same time Alain Hourseau's computer crashed, causing him to lose all his email correspondence and addresses, and by the time he

was operational again the jogger had not only left the area, all trace of the mould had vanished from eBay.

Accordingly the 'Machy mould' is a very unsatisfactory case of 'Found, only to be Lost again'. I have personally arranged a notice on the Kunera website in the hope that any new owner of the mould may report his or her acquisition on the site and thereby at least re-establish it as a locatable object. For much this same reason I have chosen to publish the find in Shroud circles just as early as possible in the hope that if there is any Shroud enthusiast who happens to have purchased the mould, he or she may be persuaded to at least make his identity known to Mark Guscini, Barrie Schwartz or myself. The mould's significance for Shroud studies really is very considerable, and there are a number of further features not mentioned here, such as the setting for the showing of the Shroud, twisted rope columns and trefoil tracery in delicate arches (quite different from the more conventional Gothic church setting seen on the Cluny version), that are yet to be evaluated. It cannot be emphasised enough that an object so closely associated with such a key period of the Shroud's history greatly needs to be preserved in a suitable museum (such as the Musée de Cluny, or the Shroud Museum in Turin), where it can be properly accessible for scholarly study, rather than its being kept in any private collection. however conscientious the collector...

P.S. I would like to express my thanks to Alain Hourseau, Mark Guscini, Hugh Duncan, Dr Sarah Blick of Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, Dr Willy Piron of Kunera, Professor Steven Muhlberger of Nipissing University, Canada, and others, for some most helpful specialist advice on topics raised in the course of preparing this article

¹ BSTS Newsletter readers may find it puzzling that hitherto I have usually used the Anglicised spelling 'Geoffrey' when referring to Geoffroi de Charny. However, although the spellings of Geoffroi's name varied greatly even back in the fourteenth century, 'Geoffroi' has become the rendition that is most widely accepted by scholars. Accordingly I am adopting it as a matter of future policy.

² The most conjectural element is the arched background, behind the clergy, on the Cluny reconstruction. For reasons yet to be properly explored, the two badges show different settings for the showing of the Shroud by the clergy, i.e. twisted rope columns in the case of the Machy version, more 'Gothic church' pillars in the case of the Lirey version. Hence we cannot be sure of the two arches background at the top of the Cluny badge reconstruction.

³ For further info., see <http://www.skipperw.com/wiki/IHS> - note an upper or lower case 'h' to convey the Greek Eta is interchangeable.