

The Shroud of Turin and the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris

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Figure 1. The inside of the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris. The Grande Châsse containing the reliquaries and relics from Constantinople was on an elevated platform, under a baldachin, located in the centre, similar to the reproduction that can be seen today by tourists. Mario Latendresse 2017.

Summary

Several competing historical theses have been proposed to explain the provenance of the Shroud of Turin at the Chapel of Lirey, France, because its appearance around 1355 was sudden, with no clear historical trace, and the de Charny family who owned the Shroud did not clearly state its origin.

However, the most probable origin of the Shroud is a simple and direct route when we follow the fundamental historical documents because: 1) two Kings of France were directly involved in funding the collegiate and chapel at Lirey; 2) the notice “*Pour sçavoir la vérité,*” most probably written by the dean of the Lirey Collegiate, says that King Philip VI gave the Shroud to Geoffrey de Charny, who founded the collegiate church at Lirey; 3) the Kings of France had a large collection of relics at the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris, and that collection had clearly two relics of the same type found at Lirey (a Hair of the Virgin and a piece of the True Cross), and a cloth related to an image of Christ. These historical facts call

for a detail analysis of the possibility that the Sainte-Chapelle is the origin of the Shroud of Turin.

That collection of relics is well-known because it came from the Imperial Palace of Constantinople and was ceded by the Latin Emperor Baldwin II to Louis IX, in June 1247. The only relic from that collection that could be the Shroud is named Holy Cloth¹ in the official document ceding the relics. In 1534, the first inventory of these relics apparently reveals that the officials can no longer find the Holy cloth and confusingly try to hide that loss by renaming that relic as a “*treille*” (a trellis) instead of a “*toile*” (a cloth). Furthermore, the size of the reliquary of the Holy Cloth is ideal for a cloth the size of the Shroud of Turin. Many historians have identified the Holy Cloth as the Mandylion also known as the Image of Edessa, or Image of Abgar² [1] [2] [3] [4]. The Holy Cloth is therefore a plausible candidate for the origin of the Shroud. This simple and direct route not only explains the origin of the Shroud at Lirey, but establishes a direct connection between the Shroud and the Mandylion.

King Philip VI, and his son John, had great esteem for Geoffrey de Charny, which makes such a transfer to Geoffrey plausible. Moreover, according to “*Pour sçavoir la vérité*,” the reason for such a gift to Geoffrey is its attempt to regain the city of Calais, an essential strategic goal for Philip VI at the beginning of the one hundred-year war.

For some researchers, such a gift is inconceivable based on the preciousness of the Shroud, but that is assuming that the King knew about the value of such a relic, that is, that Philip VI knew the presence of an image on the Holy Cloth. However, the historical documents show that the officials of the Sainte-Chapelle were confused about the purpose of the Holy Cloth, and that no image was seen on it, in particular when it arrives in Paris in 1241. This ignorance may have persisted until King Philip VI gave the Holy Cloth to Geoffrey de Charny because the officials of the Sainte-Chapelle remain ignorant of the existence of such a relic as the Mandylion, as we know it today, until the French Revolution.

We will show that this route is well founded because all fundamental historical documents are coherent with it. This thesis has been proposed by Father André-

¹ The official document is in Latin. Item 8 is described as “Sanctam Toellam tabulae insertam,” a Holy cloth inserted in a table.

² The Image of Abgar is related to the Legend of Abgar. The Image of Edessa is a physical image that was most likely on a cloth, as described by the *Naratio*. The Mandylion is a Constantinopolitan term related to the word *Mantil*. There is a clear connection between the Image of Edessa and the Mandylion, because the former was physically transported from Edessa to Constantinople in 944. However, the relation from the Legend of Abgar to the Image of Edessa is not a physical one, but a historical relation.

Marie Dubarle and Hilda Leynen in the 90s [5] [6] [7], and previously suggested by Werner Bulst and Heinrich Pfeiffer [8], but its further study and diffusion have been lacking.

We will analyse in more detail the inventories of the relics of the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris based on Alexandre Vidier's transcriptions [9] [10] [11]. It will show that the Holy Cloth apparently disappeared from the Sainte-Chapelle during the same time that the Shroud appears in Lirey, and answer several objections to that thesis that were raised by several researchers.

The supporting evidence for that thesis is in sharp contrast with several other theses that have been proposed. In particular, the theses involving Greece, including the variations of the knight Othon de la Roche, can be shown to contradict historical documents. It can also be shown that the theses assuming that the Shroud went through Greece sprang from speculations and manipulations of historical documents.

From Lirey to the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris

We have several documents that clearly show that the church of Lirey was financially supported by King Philip VI and his son, John II. More precisely, in 1343, Philip VI agreed to provide revenues to Geoffrey de Charny to fund a collegiate chapel; in April 1349, the funding is modified by Philip VI becoming perpetual; after the death of Philip VI in August 1350, the funding is renewed in 1353 by his son and successor, John II.

The official founding document of 1353 of a collegiate chapel at Lirey does not mention any relics deposited at the chapel. The letter of 1357, from twelve cardinals, supporting the indulgences for any pilgrim visiting the Lirey Church, does not mention any specific relics, although it does mention the presence of relics. See [12], document E, for a transcription of the letter³. However, in 1418, we have a receipt of the list of relics when they are placed under the protection of Humbert de Villersexel, the second husband of Marguerite de Charny. That list mentions three important relics: A Shroud; a piece of the True Cross; and a Hair of the Virgin⁴. The last two relics are explicitly mentioned in the collection of relics at the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris: a large piece of the True Cross and several Hairs of the Virgin. We have no documents stating explicitly that the King gave these

³ Several researchers have written that relics were mentioned in the early documents related to the foundation of the Lirey chapel, but without the Shroud. This is not the case, because no specific relics are mentioned in the early documents of the foundation of the Lirey chapel.

⁴ Naturally, if Philip VI gave a Hair of the Virgin and a piece of the True Cross to Geoffrey, they were portions of relics from the Sainte-Chapelle, not entire relics.

two portions of relics to Geoffrey, but it was not uncommon for the King to give such portions of relics without notifying anyone.

So far, the historical documents suggest that the Shroud could have been given by either King Philip VI or his son, John. It is, so far, the most probable provenance of the Shroud. Other evidences are needed to support such a provenance which we will look into in the rest of the paper.

In 1390 Antipope Clement VII, in a letter to Pierre d'Arcis, the bishop of the city of Troyes and the diocese having jurisdiction over the Lirey chapel, stated that the Shroud had been 'freely offered' to Geoffrey⁵. In 1443 Marguerite de Charny, the granddaughter of Geoffrey de Charny, stated at the Besançon Court that the Shroud had been 'conquis' by his grandfather. The word 'conquis' may mean that some effort was used to acquire the Shroud⁶. These two statements are not contradictory, because 'conquis' does not imply the use of force. The mystery of these two statements disappears when considering the notice "*Pour Sçavoir la Vérité.*" The French text of that notice was published by Dubarle and Leynen [5], and an English translation was published by Crispino [13].

The notice states explicitly that King Philip VI offered the Shroud to Geoffrey for his attempt to regain the city of Calais. That attempt is a well-known historical event where Geoffrey de Charny, with an army of several hundred soldiers, attempted to regain control of Calais on the eve of 1350. Geoffrey is caught by the King of England, Edward III, and his son the Black Prince, and Geoffrey is made a prisoner. This attempt of Geoffrey is coherent with the statements made by Marguerite de Charny and Antipope Clement VII, because the Shroud would be freely given by Philip VI, but Geoffrey would have received it based on his effort to regain Calais.

The notice contains some inexact statements as well as a miraculous description of the liberation of Geoffrey de Charny from his captivity. However, the notice describes many historical facts confirmed by other writers. The statement about the Shroud donation of Philip VI is a serious candidate for the provenance of the Shroud because the notice was written by a member of the collegiate of Lirey who stated that he had access to documents from the Lirey chapel.

Given these historical documents could we accept such provenances as the Templars, an ancestor of Jeanne de Vergy, the Smyrna campaign, or Athens? They

⁵ In the letter, the Latin text is "sibi liberaliter oblatam".

⁶ In the French Larousse dictionary, one meaning of 'conquis' is "acquired with the price of efforts or sacrifices." The word 'conquis' does not necessarily mean "taken by force."

do not appear plausible given the historical documents seen so far, and we have taken into account the most fundamental and closest historical documents to the time and place of the foundation of the collegiate chapel of Lirey⁷. These other theses can only be considered if the simplest and most direct route has been shown not to be possible.

However, was there such a relic as the Shroud at the Sainte-Chapelle from which Philip VI could have given the Shroud to Geoffrey? And knowing today the unique nature of the Shroud, is it conceivable that the King gave such a relic to Geoffrey? We address these two questions in the following section.

The Relics of Constantinople at the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris

From 1239 to 1242, twenty-two relics from the Imperial Palace of Constantinople are transferred to Paris [14] [15] [16]. King Louis IX had acquired these relics from his cousin, Baldwin II, emperor of Constantinople. In an official letter of June 1247, signed by Baldwin II, the twenty-two relics are ceded to Louis IX. The list of relics and reliquaries is given in Latin (see [17], p. 134-135). A new Sainte-Chapelle is completed in 1248 with the clear purpose of glorifying the relics. It is called a Sainte Chapelle, and it is the first such chapel for which it had a special meaning in France. Ten Sainte Chapelles were built in France before the French Revolution, but only seven are still standing. A Sainte Chapelle had to house a relic of Christ and its founder must be a descendant of Louis IX [15].

The twenty-two relics are stored in a large reliquary called the Grande Châsse which is mounted on a high platform behind the altar. The Grande Châsse is locked and the reliquaries and relics cannot be seen by the public unless it is turned around and its protective doors are open.

Item 8 of the list of relics is described as *sanctam toellam tabulae insertam*: A Holy Cloth inserted in a table. It is the only relic that could be the Shroud because all relics have a clear purpose and description which are, except in two cases, very different to the Shroud of Turin. The only other possible candidate, besides item 8, is item 16, but described as a *part* of a shroud stored in a reliquary too small to contain the Shroud of Turin⁸. A sample of that cloth was given by Louis IX to the

⁷ An undated and unsigned manuscript in the Aube Archives, but attributed to the bishop Pierre d'Arcis and dated at the end of 1389 by Ulysse Chevalier, states, among other things, that the Shroud is inauthentic because his predecessor, Henri de Poitiers, allegedly had found that it was a painting. However, we know today that the Shroud is not a painting and Henri de Poitiers only praised the cult that was taking place at Lirey, which cast doubts on the accuracy reported in that undated and unsigned manuscript.

⁸The letter of Baldwin II describes item 16 as "partem sudarii quo involutum fuit corpus ejus in sepulchro."

cathedral of Toledo that was analyzed in 2001 [18] and found to have a weaving completely different to the Shroud. Therefore, item 16 cannot be the Shroud displayed at Lirey.

The description of item 8 given by the letter of Baldwin is too short to give us its exact appearance and purpose. It is a cloth - a Holy Cloth - but no image is mentioned and we do not have its size. However, many other documents describe the twenty-two relics and reliquaries: the chronicles of the transfer of the relics, the hymns of the chapel for the festivities of the reception of the relics [3], the inventories of the relics stored in the Grande Châsse [11] [10] [9], and the drawing of the Grande Châsse published by Sauveur-Jérôme Morand. Before going through the detailed study of these documents here is a summary of what we will find.

First, it will become clear that the reliquary of the Holy Cloth has a portrait of Christ painted on it. We can even say that representations of bloodstains were visible in that painting. During the transfer of the Holy Cloth and its reliquary to Paris, the image painted on the reliquary appears easily accessible, but later on in the inventories, the image is described as being on the bottom and inside the reliquary. The precise size of the reliquary is given and it is large enough, even of a comfortable size, to contain a cloth such as the Shroud of Turin. Most importantly, the Holy Cloth has likely disappeared from its reliquary before 1534 but the officials of the Sainte-Chapelle are confused about this disappearance and believe that what was in the reliquary was not a cloth but a *trellis* that they can see painted in the portrait of Christ. In other words, the officials do not record the cloth's disappearance but modify the description of the relic that was inside the reliquary.

The Holy Cloth at the Sainte-Chapelle in the 13th century

The monk Gérard de Saint-Quentin-en-l'Isle wrote the chronicle "*Translatio sancta corone*" of the transfer of the relics from Constantinople to Paris, most likely around 1242 (see [16]). He describes one of the relic as "*tabula quedam quam, cum deponeretur Dominus de cruce, ejus facies tetigit*" (a table or board that touched the face of the Lord when He was laid down from the cross) which can only be ascribed to the reliquary of the Holy Cloth because all other relic descriptions correspond to other known relics. The description is mysterious because there is no mention of a cloth and whatever was seen (by Saint-Quentin or whoever reported it to him), it did make the observer conclude that Christ's face touched the table (or board) right after being taken down from the cross. We will see that the inventories of the relics of the Grande Châsse mention a portrait of Christ inside and at the bottom of the reliquary. We can only conclude that Saint-Quentin is referring to that portrait but, instead of directly describing what was seen, a reason for its production is given. Is it possible that bloodstains can be

seen in the portrait? Why is the observer capable of seeing the portrait without mentioning the cloth? We will try to answer these questions once the analysis of the inventories of the relics of the Grande Châsse has been done.

In 1247, as already mentioned, an official letter signed by the Latin emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin II, lists the relics and there is a confirmation that the cloth is present.

A festivity of the reception of the relics was established on the 30th of September at the Sainte-Chapelle. Hymns were composed for the festivity in the second half of the 13th century. In these hymns the relics are mentioned and the Holy Cloth is described as *mapula* and *mapa* and its reliquary is described as *tabula* (see Karen Gould [3], p. 331 and the table on p. 338-339). This is nothing new but it confirms that the cloth is still perceived to be in the table. There is no mention of an image in these hymns.

Given these two historical documents we can conclude that there is a cloth in the reliquary of the Holy Cloth when it arrived in Paris.

What appears difficult to establish at this point is the presence or absence of an image on the Holy Cloth. If indeed the Holy Cloth had a portrait of Christ - and it was visible - why was it not mentioned in the Hymns in the letter of Baldwin II, and by Gérard de Saint-Quentin? If the clerics at the Sainte-Chapelle knew of the existence of the Mandylion in Constantinople why would they not describe the Holy Cloth as the Mandylion⁹? These two questions are interrelated. Indeed, if the clerics are unaware of the existence of a cloth with an image as the Mandylion they would not pursue their analysis and search for that image on the cloth. Moreover, the clerics have no access to the relics to analyse them. They remain under the control of the King.

The next documents to analyse are the inventories of the relics and reliquaries in the Grande Châsse. These inventories are precise descriptions done to ensure that the relics are not lost, and for monetary values that precious stones or other ornaments to the reliquaries are not missing. In other words, these inventories are reports of observation of the relics and reliquaries directly as seen. They are a reliable source of information essentially untainted by religious fervour or political agenda. However, one bias to consider is the possible attempt of the officials to hide the loss of relics or precious decorations of the reliquaries.

⁹ We do not expect the clerics of the Sainte-Chapelle to use the exact term "Mandylion." However, if the clerics were aware of such a relic as the Mandylion, we expect the relic to be described as one of the terms used in Constantinople or at least refer to the Legend of Abgar or the city of Edessa. The lack of such a reference shows that the Mandylion was not well known in France in the 13th century.

The Inventories of the Grande Châsse

As it was mentioned, the Grande Châsse contained the Constantinopolitan relics in their reliquary. In 1790, Sauveur-Jérôme Morand published an engraving of the Grande Châsse (see Figure 2). Inventories of the relics and reliquaries of the Grande Châsse were done at irregular intervals. Alexandre Vidier published a complete transcription of the inventories [9] [10] [11].

The first complete known inventory occurs only in March 1534, that is, almost three centuries after the arrival of the Constantinopolitan relics. Only one other inventory of the 13th century appears to have been done for some of the relics of the Grande Châsse. It is inventory A, done between 1256 and 1315¹⁰. One item is described as

11/24. Item ung escrin de fust peint où il y a ung grant saintuaire sans escript.

That can be translated to ‘A painted reliquary where there is a large relic without identification.’ It was item 11 among 24 relics. It is not clear that item 11 refers to the reliquary of the Holy Cloth but the statement that the reliquary is painted and that no identification exists leave no other alternative reliquary and relic. As will be seen in the next inventories a portrait is painted in the reliquary as if it were directly painted on it. If indeed it is the Holy Cloth it is described as large and with no identification, that is - purpose. The officials could not assign a purpose to that relic.

The first complete known inventory of the Grande Châsse was done on March 22, 1534, called inventory L. Eight officials were doing that inventory. Some officials evaluate the value of the reliquary others represent the King or the clerics of the Sainte-Chapelle and the new head of the canons of the Sainte-Chapelle is present. Each inventory is based on the previous inventory, that is, the officials follow the previous inventory to locate what was previously described ensuring that the relics and reliquaries are not damaged or missing. For that inventory, it is clear that the previous document is very similar to the list of relics from the official letter of Baldwin II, because for almost all descriptions, it is a translation of the Latin text. This would indicate that it is likely that no previous inventory of the Grande Châsse was done before 1534.

¹⁰ See A. Vidier (1907), p. 200, based on manuscript BnF, français 2833, fol. 139v–140 (15th century) and BnF, français 4426, fol. 269–270 (17th century). The entries of the inventories are preceded by the notation n/m where n is the position of the entry in an inventory and m is the number of items in that inventory. This notation gives us the considered values of the relics, with the most important one first.

Something unique happened for item 8, that is, for the Holy Cloth, because it is no longer described as a cloth. The description becomes 8/22. *La sainte trelle inserée à la table* (The holy trellis inserted in a table.)

The word ‘toile’ (for toellam) is not used. It is rather the unknown term ‘trelle’, which in medieval French has no clear meaning, but the word ‘treille’ is used by another copy of this inventory published by Michel Félibien [19]. The following comment at the end of the inventory gives additional essential details:

Regarding the eighth item, containing the trellis inserted in a table, after several difficulties, it was finally found in a large reliquary and panel decorated with gilded silver; where there is the appearance of a portrait, the trellis like transformed against the said panel, around, by and into the said portrait¹¹.

There is a detail mentioned in that text that gives us a probable clue on how the holy cloth was kept in the reliquary: there appears to be an independent panel in the reliquary. Is that panel fixed or movable inside the reliquary? If it is movable the panel could have been placed over the cloth to keep it tightly secure in the reliquary. We will come back on this subject below when we address the last inventories.

The officials had several difficulties to locate the relic and repeat the word ‘trellis’. What exactly did the officials find?

The disappearance of the word “cloth”, in other words, the disappearance of the cloth itself, is the coherent interpretation of that inventory. The officials appear to be hiding the disappearance of the relic by claiming that they found the relic but they have to modify the description of the relic from the official letter of Baldwin II from a *cloth* to a *trellis*. The comment appears to be saying that the trellis is embedded around and in the portrait. Such a description is similar to some ancient representations of the Mandylion where a trellis is visible as part of the background of the portrait of Christ. Figure 3 shows one example.

Some researchers explain the use of ‘trelle’ as an error by the officials producing the inventory [20] [21] or by the transcription done by Vidier [22]. However, the AnF (Archives nationales de France) manuscript P2309 f107-108 shows that it is indeed ‘trelle’ that was used and that the error would have to occur three times. The comment at the end of the inventory would be a description of a damaged cloth. However, such an interpretation contradicts all future inventories where the

¹¹ The original French text is “Et au regard du huitième article, contenant la trelle inserée à la table, après plusieurs difficultés, a esté finalement trouvée en un grand reliquaire et tableau garny d'argent surdoré, où y a apparence d'une effigie, ladite trelle comme consommée contre ledit tableau, autour, environ et dans ladite effigie.”

portrait of Christ is clearly identifiable without any trace of a cloth. We cannot have a portrait that can be clearly identified, on a cloth, and have the cloth mostly gone. The French text also shows that the portrait described is not on the 'trelle' but around and in the portrait.

For item 19, the next inventories O and M, of the 16th century, say essentially the same thing, 'The Veronica, where ten stones are missing.' The missing stones refer to the reliquary. The term 'Veronica' refers to a portrait of Christ, a term used solely in the West.

The important point is that no cloth, neither 'trelle,' is mentioned, and the word 'inserted' is no longer used. It is indeed as if the cloth is gone and that using the adjective 'inserted' no longer makes sense. The portrait of Christ, which is known by the term 'Veronica,' becomes the main characteristic of the relic. If there were a cloth why would it no longer be described as inserted in the table?

The next inventory R, of 1740, reveals more about the reliquary of the Holy Cloth and remains coherent with the absence of a cloth. The text is:

19/21. Another box, of twenty-two inches long by fifteen inches wide, also covered with silver plates and decorated by a few precious stones; inside the said box, the bottom is covered with golden plates in all its contour, and in the centre, is the representation of the Holy Face of Our Lord, or the Veronica.

This text is quite remarkable because it is the most precise description of the size of the reliquary. If indeed it is the reliquary of the Mandylion this text is unique and easily overshadows all descriptions of that reliquary that came to us from Constantinople. This description tells us the size of the reliquary which is about 60 cm x 40 cm¹². Its depth is not stated, but it is approximately 5 to 8 cm by the engraving of Morand. It is large enough to comfortably contain the folded Shroud of Turin. There is a description of a portrait of Christ on the bottom of the reliquary but again no cloth is mentioned. The golden plates may refer to an embellishment around the painting similar to the well-known Holy Face of San Silvestro kept in the Matilda chapel in the Vatican or the Holy Face of Vienna.

The last four inventories are done in quick succession during the French Revolution. Inventories CC and DD of March 1791 simply states, "A Holy Face." The very last inventory II of November 18, 1793, only contains a description of the reliquaries because all relics have been removed. That inventory reveals another aspect of the reliquary of the Holy Cloth: 20/25. Another box with a sliding cover containing a portrait.

¹² The French inch was about 2.7 cm, not 2.54 cm.

It is remarkable that the portrait is still mentioned although all relics have been removed from all other reliquaries. This implies that the portrait does not appear removable from the reliquary or that it is considered part of the reliquary and not a relic by itself. The word “Another” is mentioned because it comes after the reliquary of a piece of stone from the tomb of Christ which also has a sliding cover. Parts of the reliquary of the stone are still at the Louvre Museum in Paris. The sliding cover is substantially narrower than the width of the reliquary. If the reliquary of the Holy Cloth is the same as this inventory says it means that a portrait could be seen through that sliding cover.

The main point to address: Is the description of the portrait mentioned in all these inventories, which appears to be on the bottom of the reliquary and not on a cloth, be the Mandylion itself?

If it were, that would directly contradict almost all representations of the Mandylion including the icon of Abgar, where the Mandylion is held as a cloth in the arms of Constantine VII represented as Abgar, the mention of a cloth in the letter of Baldwin II when the relics of Constantinople were ceded to Louis IX, and the Hymns of the Sainte-Chapelle. All these descriptions occurred before the inventory of 1534.

This is probably the source of the confusion about the Mandylion: there was a painting in the reliquary showing only a face of Christ, but also containing a cloth on which there was an image. It is also possible that the painted portrait was on a board that could be moved up and down in the reliquary with the cloth placed underneath that board.

Ian Wilson proposed that, in its reliquary, the Mandylion was folded only to show the face [23]. Instead, it appears that a portrait of Christ was painted on wood in the reliquary, even as part of the reliquary, and served as an indication of what the cloth contained. The cloth would have been folded to hide and protect the complete precious image. That would be a more appropriate way to preserve and sanctify such an image. This possibility was mentioned by Hilda Leynen in [6] and visually reported by [4], but without a description.

This possibility is supported by three facts: 1) the comment of inventory L, mentioned above, described the portrait found in a “reliquary and panel” as if the panel was independent of the reliquary; 2) the reliquary had a sliding cover that could be opened, and the board would reveal the image without seeing the cloth; 3) that would explain the comment of Gérard de Saint-Quentin-en-l’Isle only mentioning an image on a board without seeing the cloth. The presence of the image on the movable board, hidden and keeping the cloth tightly underneath, is coherent with the contradictory observations reported at the Sainte-Chapelle.

Objections to the Thesis of the Sainte-Chapelle

Many objections by several researchers have been raised against the thesis of the Sainte-Chapelle. Due to a lack of space, we address only a few of them.

One of the objections is related to the statement of Robert de Clari, who in 1203, saw the “*Sydoines de Nostre Seigneur*” at the Saint Mary of Blachernae (Βλαχέρναι) church in Constantinople. For many, that would be a clear indication of the presence of the Shroud in Constantinople, and because the Mandyllion was kept at the Pharos chapel the two objects would not be the same. However, when de Clari describes the Mandyllion at the Pharos chapel he does not say that he saw the Mandyllion. He describes the reliquary of the Mandyllion hanging “from a silver chain”. It is possible that the Mandyllion would have been transported to the Blachernae church in 1203 leaving the reliquary empty. The distance between the Pharos chapel and the Blachernae church is six kilometers. In 1203 the Emperor was using the Blachernae palace as his residence - not the Great Palace. It is even possible that the Mandyllion was brought by boat to Blachernae, as it was done in the opposite direction during the procession of 944 when the Mandyllion was received from Edessa and finally kept in the Imperial Palace after it was deposited for one day at the Blachernae church. The Mandyllion would have been brought back to the Pharos chapel to be inserted in its reliquary therefore producing this effect of disappearance reported by Robert de Clari.

For many, the gift of a relic as precious as the Shroud from the King to Geoffrey appears implausible based on the value of such a relic. Such a statement assumes that the King knew the value of the relic, that is, that an image as we know it today, was seen and known by the King.

For example, Daniel Raffard de Brienne wrote in French “*On imagine mal un roi faisant en cachette à un particulier le don d'une relique de l'importance du Linceul*” (“We can hardly imagine a King secretly giving to a person a relic of the importance of the Shroud.”) and adds “*D'ailleurs l'ouverture de la châsse de la Sainte-Chapelle (ignorée du récit) exigeait la présence de deux porteurs de clefs différentes*” (Moreover, the opening of the Grande Châsse of the Sainte-Chapelle (ignored in the story) required the presence of two holders of different keys) [24], p. 85. The first statement assumes that the King was aware of the image on the cloth which is contradicted by the analysis of the historical documents we have today. The last statement is false because in the 14th century the King had exclusive access of the relics. Furthermore, it also ignores that the relics were transported where the King was attending the main religious festivities of the year, and in particular for King Philip VI on attended Easter of 1349 (12 April 1349) at the abbey Notre-Dame du Lys, near Melun (see [25] and [26], p. 46). The

King had clearly exclusive access to the relics during these festivities. It was also the case throughout the year for all the Kings until the 17th century. Interestingly, based on the archives of Father André-Marie Dubarle at the Saulchoir in Paris, Hilda Leynen asked Daniel de Brienne, who was the director of CIELT at the time, to publish her analysis of the thesis of the Sainte-Chapelle in the newsletter of the CIELT, but that was rejected by de Brienne. Instead, he published an incorrect analysis without mentioning Hilda Leynen's publication, in 1992, in the Belgian newsletter Soudarion [2].

Another objection is the de Charny family would have used the royal provenance to avoid the interference of the Bishop Pierre D'Arcis who wanted to stop the exposition of the Shroud around 1390. Such a statement would not have helped because the King of France, Charles V, wanted to gain possession of the Shroud. It would have ended the ownership of the Shroud for the Lirey church.

The Sainte-Chapelle Thesis Compared to Other Theses

The current state of our knowledge on the origin of the Shroud is such that it relies on indirect signs for its origin. One is left with an evaluation of the most probable origin based on the historical documents. How does the thesis of the Sainte-Chapelle compare to other proposed theses?

The thesis of the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris is a simple and natural origin because Geoffrey de Charny was in close contact with the King of France who owned many important relics of Christ and the King accepted to fund the collegiate of Lirey. The likely disappearance of a relic from the Sainte-Chapelle, called the Holy Cloth, coherent with the period the Shroud appeared at Lirey, asserts that relic as the most likely origin of the Shroud. The notice "*Pour Sçavoir la Vérité*", most likely written by the dean of the collegiate church of Lirey, states explicitly that King Philip VI gave the Shroud to Geoffrey, confirming that origin. That the Holy Cloth has been recognised by several specialists as most likely the Mandylion, the Image not made by human hands, is not even a necessity to support that origin. On the contrary, that origin supports the identification of the Mandylion as most likely the Shroud of Turin.

That origin was not proposed until recently. Instead, several other origins have been proposed over several centuries. One such origin, that can be shown to have no solid basis, is Greece. The main source of that origin is the falsified thesis based on the knight Othon de la Roche, put forward by Pierre Joseph Dunod, who was indirectly influenced by Philiberto Pingone. See [27], p. 55, where Pierre Joseph Dunod refers to Baillet who refers to François de la Pallud, who mentions Cyprus. We can trace the erroneous information from Philiberto Pingone (1581), Jean-Jacques Chifflet (1631), Pierre Joseph Dunod (1714), François Ignace Dunod (1750), and François Chamard (1902) (see [28] [29]).

Conclusion

When the historical documents of the collegiate of Lirey are followed the most probable route for the Shroud goes through King Philip VI and reaches the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris. There is only one relic received at the Sainte-Chapelle from the Great Palace of Constantinople that can correspond to the Shroud. That relic is described as a Holy Cloth but the clerics are confused about its function and provenance. There is a portrait of Christ inside the reliquary of that Holy Cloth where there is also likely representation of bloodstains.

In all likelihood, that cloth disappeared from the Sainte-Chapelle during the same period that the Shroud appears in Lirey. The canons as well as the Kings do not appear to have discovered the true identity of that relic before its disappearance. That relic has been recognised by many historians as the Mandylion, the Image of Edessa, that had been received in Constantinople in 944. It is indeed the only possible relic that would correspond to the description of the inventories of the Grande Châsse.

Many other theses have been proposed for the origin of the Shroud but none are as coherent with the historical documents as the thesis of the Sainte-Chapelle.

Figures



Figure 2. A 1790 engraving of the Grande Châsse containing the reliquaries and relics at the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris, published by Sauveur-Jérôme Morand. Item 18, which appears as a flat box under a cross, is the reliquary of the Holy Cloth. Morand described the relic as a 'Holy Face', and no cloth is mentioned.



Figure 3. The Mandylion and Keramion. A trellis is drawn all around the central portrait of Christ, as similarly described by inventory L of 1534.

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