

The Italian Monarchy, The State, The Church and the Holy Shroud. Giorgio Bracaglia

Luigi Gedda, who was present at the 1946 Ostensione at Montevergine, writes of the event that honoured the importance of the Monastery sheltering the Shroud. In *L'ostensione della Sindone a Montevergine*, Professor Gedda produces King Umberto's final decree on how to handle his most precious property, The Holy Shroud of Turin.



King Umberto II

In the last month of June, after the institutional referendum, Umberto II wrote a letter to S. E. Card. Fossati in which the King entrusted to the Archbishop of Turin the custody of the Shroud, while still the property of the House of Savoy; the relic was thus declared to be inalienable, to ensure that the Shroud was never transferred abroad: the King also wished the relic to be brought back to Turin and Cardinal Fossati to choose when this happened. (Professor Luigi Gedda; 1946 *L'ostensione della Sindone a Montevergine*. pp 41-42.)

Note the clarity of the King's statement: while the property was claimed by the House of Savoy, the relic was declared "inalienable." The use of the word inalienable powerfully reinforces the King's ownership of the Shroud.

It was on June 2, 1946, Italy held a referendum to decide either on the continuation of the monarchy or to create a Republic holding democratic elections. The Holy See distrusting political partisan politics, preferred the continuance of the Monarchy believing it would create stability for the Church. However, with roughly 2 million more votes, Italians replaced the monarchy with a newly formed government elected by a democratic process of free elections.

Despite protest by King Umberto, the Republic was formally confirmed on June 6, 1946. The King proclaimed this was a coup d'état and his loyalists were advocating for civil unrest over what they perceived as a rigged election. Eventually, cooler heads prevailed, and the King abdicated his throne. One week after the Republic was formally proclaimed, King Umberto departed Italy and lived in exile at Cascais, Portugal for the remainder of his life.

During the referendum election, the Shroud was still at Montevergine. It was on June 10, 1946, Archbishop Maurilio Fossati received a letter from King Umberto II. In the manuscript written by Giovanne Mongelli, he details in the King's letter:

The things that have happened induce me today to communicate to Your Holy Eminence that it is my intention that this precious relic remain sacred and inalienable property of my House/the House of Savoy—from now I give my full authority that this Shroud will be placed again to its original location in Turin, in the Chapel that has its name. - (In Avellino III, 4) Giovanni Mongelli; 1973 La Sacra Sindone a Montevergine.

Continuing with Mongelli's account, it appears the Church was relieved with the King's decision concerning the sacred relic. The letter ended all questions.

“Truly it was the best solution that the King of Italy could have taken regarding that very precious relic. When the Shroud was taken to Montevergine, the ecclesiastical authority of Turin didn't have anything to do with its move, but only the guardians and the chaplains of the court; now, instead, for its return to the metropolis of Piedmont, all depended on the orders of the Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, archbishop of Turin. He thought that the end of October would be a good time to bring the Holy Shroud back to Turin.” Giovanni Mongelli; 1973 La Sacra Sindone a Montevergine.

While he was preparing to leave Italy, the King gave custody to the ecclesiastical authority for safeguarding the Shroud and allowed Cardinal Fossati to make the decision when the Shroud would be returned to the Guarino Guarini located inside the Royal Palace. Both Gedda and Mongelli, write of the King's wish that the Shroud be returned to Turin.

Seven years later the Shroud was still hidden beside the chapel Coreto di Notte, inside the Monastery at Montevergine. On October 28, 1946, Cardinal Fossati travelled to Montevergine personally to effect its return. Amongst the assemblage of guests who arrived with the Cardinal were two prominent individuals; Professor Luigi Gedda an accomplished genetics scientist and Professor Carlo Carreto. Both men were involved with the Catholic Action society. Professor Gedda was the president, while Professor Carreto was president of the Italian Youth of the Catholic Action. The official Catholic Action Society (Azione Cattolica) was founded in 1867, by Mario Fani and Giovanni Acquaderni. The society was formed in an attempt to counter ideologies found in the secular movement during the turbulent times of Italy's unification in the mid-1800s.

Conventional wisdom suggests that the professors were invited by the Cardinal because both men held prestigious positions in the Catholic Action and were in good standing as Catholics. It was also obvious that Professor Gedda was prepared to make a presentation during the Shroud's Veneration at Montevergine since he had slides and other Shroud materials to show his audience. Unfortunately, there is another possibility of why the two men were present - politics! During the 1946 Referendum, Pope Pius XII urged neutrality to his Catholic followers during the election. However, privately, Pope Pius XII agreed with Myron Taylor, The Pope's envoy appointed by

President Truman,

"...that it would have been far preferable for Italy to remain a monarchy, but he also noted that what was done was done". Giuliana Chamedes; The Vatican and the Making of the Atlantic Order, 1920-1960, Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY 2013 (pp 301,30 "Relationship between the Vatican and the DC," 13 F1946. The note references the 8 January 1946 meeting between Pius XII and Attilio Piccioni, secretary of the Christian Democrats.

The Pope had decided to do all in his powers to ensure that the Communists did not win the forthcoming general elections. His solution was to back the Christian Democrats and form a strong connection with them.

The Christian Democrat party, Democrazia Cristiana, DC, was founded by Alcide Amedeo Francesco De Gasperi during the Nazi occupation of Italy in 1943. De Gasperi was a very religious and devout Catholic whose vision was of a party whose principles were loosely based on Giuseppe Mazzini's concept during the Risorgimento movement of a republic based on Christian principles. The Christian Democrat party, religiously inspired, attracted both left and right leaning factions in the population. The importance of Catholic Action and other Catholic organisations was to help thwart the expansion of Marxist and Communism throughout the world.

By 1947 the Vatican had to accept the existence of the cold war and their loss of influence in countries such as Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Hungary. As a result, Pope Pius XII endorsed all Christian organisations that popularised Catholic Ideology to counter Soviet expansion. Encouraged by the Bishops at diocesan level, Catholic Action, and affiliated Catholic organisations were to be instructed to mobilise for the support of De Gasper's Christian Democratic party. It was imperative to the United States, and its allies that Italy would not fall into the hands of the Communists. By 1947, Alcide De Gasperi was losing popularity and the Communist party had hope of winning a majority of seats in the next election. Against the advice of De Gasperi to compromise with the left, the US Secretary of State, George Marshall, informed James C. Dunn, the Ambassador to Italy, that no aid will be provided under the Marshal Plan unless De Gasperi dissolve parliament and remove the Communist Party from political participation. Providing muscle to the anti-leftist movement was the Mafia who had deep connections inside the Christian Democrat party. To ensure the dissolution of Parliament, the CIA gave money and operational support to Professor Gedda's Catholic Action, hoping to encourage Italy's religious faction "to get out the votes."

By this time, Professor Gedda had over three million active members to spread the word. With support from the Vatican, Gedda was able to mobilise 300,000 Catholic Action activists from 22,000 parishes throughout Italy. On April 18, 1948, the first

Parliamentary election was held. When the results were counted, De Gasperi's Christian Democratic Party won 48.5 percent of the popular vote. Philip Willan, 2002; *Puppet masters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy.*

Regardless of which party won the most seats in the new republic, The Italian Constitution was already in place on January 1, 1948, more than four months before the election. Under the title of Transitional and Final Provisions in article XIII of the newly written Constitution, it declared, "*The members and descendants of the House of Savoy shall not be voters and may not hold public office or elected offices. Access and sojourn in the national territory shall be forbidden to the ex-kings of the House of Savoy, their spouses, and their male descendants. The assets, existing on the national territory, of the former kings of the House of Savoy, their spouses, and their male descendants shall be transferred to the State. Transfers and the establishment of royal rights on said properties which took place after 2 June 1946, shall be null and void.*"

It is apparent under the title of Transitional and Final Provisions in article XIII, to any members and descendants of the House of Savoy that the assets existing on national territory, are to be transferred to the State and that any arrangements transferring the House of Savoy's property after June 2, 1946, are made null and void. The Final Provision makes it clear; The Shroud of Turin would also be considered the property of the State.

It was 16 years after the Veneration of the Shroud in Montevergina the Ex-King petitioned the Church to coordinate an Exposition and to allow scientific research. The King's proposal was warmly accepted by the Church. However, Cardinal Fossati was already in his eighties, and he would have preferred to leave the King's request to his successor.

In 1965, just two years after King Umberto's proposal, Cardinal Fossati passed away. The exposition was now in the hands of the newly appointed Archbishop, Michele Pellegrino. Many responsibilities were assigned to a newly elected Archbishop, and Pellegrino needed to meet those obligations first. Finally, after seven years, the King's wish was granted.

Throughout the seven years, Father Rinaldi was amenable and offered Pellegrino much assistance in the coordination for the Exposition. In return, the Archbishop personally invited the members of the Holy Shroud Guild to be active participants. An ecstatic Father Rinaldi wrote to Father Otterbein to share his excitement. "He (Cardinal Pellegrino) particularly favours an expression of opinions by experts in various fields of Sindonology on the desirability and procedure of a thorough scientific examination of the relic, which is to be considered during the forthcoming exposition. (See *Uncovering the Paradox...2019 P55.*)

The Guild had two scientific members on their staff that they would rely heavily upon.

A letter from the Archdiocese of New York, signed by Rt. Reverend Monsignor Terrence J Cooke, in 1967, lists the members of the Holy Shroud Guild as follows; Fr. Otterbein; Fr. Filas; Fr. McGuire; Fr. Barry; Fr. Rinaldi; Fr. Sieradski; and Fr. Weyland. The laity provided two members, Dr. Anthony Sava, and Dr. Robert Bucklin. Dr. Bucklin became a member in 1957 as a replacement for Prof. Ceroni, who passed away that year, and Dr. Sava was a member almost from the inception in 1953.

A Pro-Memoria dal Holy Shroud Guild of America was presented by Father Rinaldi to Archbishop Michele Pellegrino on October 3, 1966. The documents contained seven points advising the Archbishop that a committee of competent authorities composed of international members, in preparation for the exposition. In the end, the exposition would consist of two phases that were focused on devotion and scientific study. The final scientific results of the examination would then be released to competent officials.

Even Father Rinaldi admitted in a letter to Father Otterbein that he too was unable to get any information about the examination. Even worse, King Umberto II felt betrayed by the commission's secrecy. In 1972, Father Rinaldi visited the King at his home, Villa Italia, in Cascais, Portugal. Rinaldi describes his visit to the King in a letter to Father Otterbein, written on July 24, 1972:

"While the Shroud was the main subject, the King came up with diverse topics; politics in the States and Italy, the situation in the Church and the Salesian Society, etc. You might know that a Salesian from the nearby Salesian house (at Estoril) is an occasional Chaplain to the Villa. With regards to the Shroud, two things seemed to disturb him: The secret exposition of the relic in 1969 and the feeling he has (his words: I can't rid myself of the idea that...) that in Italy, with regards to the Shroud, "someone is trying to pull the carpet from under my feet..." He then explained, "I asked repeatedly for a report from the 1969 commission. When it finally arrived, I was amazed to note that six of the participants had refused to sign." As for the second point, he said, " You must know by now that there is open talk that the Italian Government might lay its hand on the Shroud just as it did on a number of properties belonging to the House of Savoy. What I'll do, I do not yet know. I have been advised to give the Shroud to the Holy See, but, then, will it become a bone of contention between the two States?" (Uncovering the Paradox...2019, P49)

The most obvious reason for the secrecy for the 1969 examination was the King's request. Documented in the Commission report, Luigi Gedda and Umberto Provana di Collegno who was the King's representative announced to Cardinal Michele Pellegrino during the commencement of the examination that if the backing of the Shroud were removed, it would be returned to his majesty. The King's request was well known in advance of June 16, 1969. The Church had always shown him great respect. However, it was not going to get too involved in the legalities between the State and the House

of Savoy. It is clear on these matters the Church remained neutral in the eyes of two notable people who attended: Professor Umberto Chierici, Ministry of Education, whose expertise was in culture and the restoration of Italian monuments and Nino Riccardo Toncelli, Ministry of Finance, responsible for the State's general accounting. Amongst those present during the examination, Umberto Provana di Collegno was the only one to represent specifically the interests of the King.

Throughout his life, Umberto Provana di Collegno was always loyal to the Monarch, and so continued in his friendship with Vittorio Emanuele. As a personal adviser to the King throughout his exile, it is assumed Umberto Provana di Collegno informed him of what transpired during the 1969 Commission that so worried the King. I can only assume why six participants refused to sign the report, but it is clear that the Commission was overseen by Government representation. As for Luigi Gedda, I am sure he was acting in good faith for both parties as a mediator.

Back to the question of ownership. I have to confess, from Shroud research dating back before 2000, I always believed that the State owned all the Savoy's possessions, including the Shroud. I believed this because my mother indeed had told me so. The explanation why is quite simple. She was a dear friend of Gustavo and Fiammetta Ajo;

Mr. Ajo was the executive vice president of Bache & Co and was in charge of the international branch representing high-powered people all over the world for their financial investments. One of his clients was King Umberto. If memory serves me well, I believe my mother met the King in 1967 during an art exhibit at Bryon Gallery. The art exhibition was to benefit the Florentine Relief Fund, to help with the conservation and restoration of thousands of artworks badly damaged in Florence the previous year from the flooding of the Arno River. Chaperoning the King for the event was Fiammetta Ajo, and afterwards, Mrs. Ajo, ended the evening by entertaining the King with the traditional social event, a cocktail party.

A dear friend of the family, Mauro Lucentini, whose prestigious career spanned close to 70 years as an ANSA journalist, was the husband of Paola Ajo. Paola was the eldest daughter of Gustavo and Fiammetta. Occasionally, the Lucentinis met with the King informally. I visited Mauro in 2018 for confirmation of my mother's knowledge about the Savoy's properties. Unfortunately, Mauro does not remember discussing proprietorship or anything relating to the Shroud with the King. Instead, Mauro recalls his offer to write the King's autobiography, a possibility to which the King was sympathetic. When I pressed Mauro again on legal dealing with the State about ownership, specifically on the Shroud, he explained that the matter was never discussed. It is understandable since the King dominated the conversation, and Mauro was being a gracious host.

I explained to Mauro my interest in this topic because I am finishing up my book using documents from the Guild's archives. Understanding the importance of this chapter,

Mauro was eager to assist me and would ask a friend who was very much involved in Shroud politics, Vittorio Canuto.

What prompted my interest in ownership was the huge amount of letters concerning the proprietorship of the Shroud. However, in the end, I will admit, I found nothing definitive in any of these letters because those who wrote them were not the primary source. That said, the letters are still interesting.

The first document I came across which stimulated my investigation was a letter from Monsignor Coero Borga to Father Rinaldi. On October 28, 1966, he offered his own opinion on the matter of ownership, while planning for the 1969 examination of the Shroud. Monsignor Coero Borga writes *“In my opinion, the moving of the Holy Shroud from Italy should not be considered (the question of ownership would surely come up); nor should it leave Turin. In the opinion of the majority, the best solution would be to transfer it secretly to the Archbishop’s palace where the necessary equipment could be installed.”* (Bracaglia, *Uncovering the Paradox within the Archives of the Holy Shroud Guild*, 2019)

The letter from Monsignor Coero Borga does demonstrate the church’s concerns in dealing with the delicate matter between the House of Savoy and the State. Another supporting document found was the guest list, which included prominent State officials at the 1969 examination of the Shroud. The two most important representatives for the State were, Professor Umberto Chierici, Ministry of Education, and Nino Riccardo Toncelli, Ministry of Finance. Digging deeper into their importance for the State, I researched the ministries they represented.

Nino Riccardo Toncelli represented Italy’s Ministry of Finance. The Ministry has four main departments: The Department of Treasury; General State Account; Finances Department; and the Department of General Administration. Of the four, the Treasury Department funds the Cultural Heritage of Italy’s tangible and intangible historical past. Italy and many other European countries depend on cultural heritage for their tourism economy. But, more importantly, for the human psyche, it defines civilisation. This was elegantly explained by archaeologist and art historian, Salvatore Settis during a presentation at BARD Graduate Centre: *“While current laws (protection of Cultural Heritage) belong to a sequence started after Italian unification (1859–70), they cannot be explained in terms of nationalism. Rather, ethical and juridical principles of conservation have a much deeper root, i.e. a lasting tradition, starting (for instance in Rome, Naples, or Venice) long before the very concept of “nation” was operative in Europe.”* (The Protection of Cultural Heritage in Italy.) Thus, cultural heritage defines human development; the good, and the bad.

The second of the State’s distinguished guests present during the 1969 examination was Professor Chierici. As Minister of Education, his expertise was in conservation. Born into one of the most influential families in conservation-restoration, his father,

Gino Chierici was the leading architectural restorer during the first half of the twentieth century. After World War Two, Gino retired and now the baton was in the hands of his son, Umberto. As part of the team for postwar reconstruction, Umberto was appointed to the position of Superintendent of medieval and modern art for Abruzzo and Molise in the L'Aquila region.

The Superintendents are appointed by the Ministry of the Cultural Heritage as the regional directors protecting and restoring historical assets in their respective localities. The history of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage has gone through many official names and reorganisations, though the underlying mission has never changed: this is to protect the Italian Republic's historical and artistic cultural heritage. The Vatican is also obliged to protect the Church's cultural heritage. In the modifications to the Lateran Concordat made in 1984, Article 12, both the Church and State agreed to collaborate for the protection of these assets. Articles 13 and 14, discusses the circumstances and implementation of these processes.

After World War Two, Italy began to revitalise its commercial infrastructures and expanded its development in housing projects away from historical centres. Afraid of unregulated expansion throughout Italy, in 1964, the Ministry of Education proposed a public inquiry. Known as the Franceschini commission, it was named after Francesco Franceschini who presided over the assignment. The Commission was composed of 16 parliamentary members and 11 experts in artistry, archaeology, law, and library science. Due to the Italian bureaucracy, the commission only lasted three years and it was replaced by a new group. Not all was lost. In the three years of the commission's existence, they managed to propose nine urgent recommendations of which one was to inventory Italy's cultural heritage systematically.

In a cost projection report in 1966, the now Superintendent, Umberto Chierici of Piemonte, inventoried the once magnificent Royal Residency, Palazzo Venaria. In disgust, he reported the physical condition of the Royal Residency, stating, *[...] Even today, through the abandoned halls, the vandals continue to roam and to demolish all that is possible, cutting and removing wooden beams wherever they are. Nothing remains of the floor, not a window or door, the iron keys that the driving thrust to the vaults and arches of the Gallery of Diana, chimneys have been removed, as well as the stone slabs to cover the terraces [...].* (Main Source on Page (p 24), 28 Dalla perizia di spesa n. 8 del 30 aprile 1966 a cura del Soprintendente Umberto Chierici.

In 1969, as Superintendent of Piedmonte, Professor Umberto Chierici, published his book entitled, Torino, Il Palazzo Reale. The book's introduction was a brief history of the Royal Palace, followed by documentary photographs categorising the historical artefacts of each room inside the building. Oddly, the book photographed only three items inside the Cappella Regia, with its main focus on Pietro Piffetti's Tabernacle. What was not featured in the book was the La Cappella della Sindone and no mention

was made of the Sacra Sindone. Many attribute the absence of these items to the fact that the four secretive rooms off the Swiss Hall are not part of the Palazzo Reale. Nonetheless, Professor Chierici could have included both La Cappella della Sindone as well as the Sacra Sindone because of his presence in the 1969 Shroud Commission. It does appear Professor Umberto Chierici, was involved in appraising the cost of structural repairs and the monetary assets of the confiscated property and contents of Palazzo Venaria. The cost report is used by the States Treasury Department as well as that concerned with Cultural Heritage and Activities. In my research, I did not find a cost report for the Palazzo Reale, however, inside the 1969 publication of Torino, Il Palazzo Reale, the official stamp of the Superintendent of Piemonte, found on the first page of the book is clearly marked. The significance of the official stamp indicates that Professor Chierici executed a systematic inventory inside Il Palazzo Reale, as recommended during the Franceschini commission.

More recently, In June of 1997, a report to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee compiled a list of all the residences of the Royal properties owned by the State. The report was prepared to secure international funding for the conservation and preservation of the Royal Houses. On page 98 of the report, it emphatically states, “In the west wing, the Cappella of the Sacred Shroud, is structurally part of the Palace.” (*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1997*)

The report submitted to the World Heritage Committee demonstrated that the Cappella of the Sacred Shroud where the Shroud was kept, belonged to the Republic. Ironically, The Shroud was removed the same year as the World Heritage Committee report was compiled because of the 1997 fire inside the Chapel. In 2018, the restoration of the Chapel was completed and supposedly, the Shroud was to be returned. But, because of the conservation work on the Shroud, the Chapel at this time is not suitable, and the Shroud has remained at the Cathedral.

In 2016, I gathered my documents from the Holy Shroud Guild’s archives, months of research, and my mother’s testimony, and contacted Carlos Evaristo to clarify the matter of ownership. Evaristo’s expertise as a Shroud historian is exemplified in his 2011 book, *The Untold Story of the Holy Shroud*. His book is a collection of his presentations, which include unknown facts and rituals regarding the Shroud communicated to him by Prince Vittorio Emanuele himself. As luck would have it, Evaristo was to receive the Savoy Prince in a few weeks during the FIDES conference that Evaristo hosts. He explained that he was going to show the letters that I had presented to him to the Prince for his evaluation.

I had forwarded to Evaristo material that brought to light more information about the relationships between the King, the Church, and the State regarding the ownership of the Shroud. Throughout my investigations and the documents that had been retrieved from the Guild, I was convinced the Shroud belonged to the State. The underlying theme of documents relating to the Shroud’s ownership revealed that the Church and

the King were fearful that the State might intervene at any time to take legal action and confiscate the Shroud on behalf of the Republic. On June 3, 2016, just one day after the FIDES conference, I received Evaristo's email with the Prince's confirmation. In the Email, he writes,

"Hi, Giorgio, the visit of HRH the Prince of Venice for the institution of FIDES and the King Umberto II of Savoy medal for Shroud promotion and Research went great. I referenced you and your letters in my talk on King Umberto and the Prince confirmed the truth of this."

The Prince agreed with the reason that I had given for the Italian State's having never acted to repossess the Shroud. As I mentioned to Evaristo, it would be safe to assume that the Italian State understood the importance of the Shroud to Catholics and Christians alike and would have never interfered with the King's wishes to will the relic to the living Pope. It was also prudent for the King to establish ownership by entertaining experiments with the Shroud in hopes that one day he would be able to return to his homeland. Confirmation of my hypothesis was announced at the Fides Conference at Fatima.

Here is a YouTube link provided by Carlos from his presentation during the June 2nd, 2016, FIDES Conference at Fatima.

It was Dr. Ceroni who was the first Guild member to ask permission for a private exposition for American Scholars to examine the Shroud. In 1955, as a member of the Holy Shroud Guild, Dr. Ceroni visited the exiled King of Italy, Umberto II, requesting his approval for a new investigation, including carbon dating of the Shroud. The meeting between his Majesty and Dr. Ceroni was agreed upon after Dr. Ceroni

composed nine queries for the King's approval. The meeting took place in Cannes, where the King gave his blessing to all of Dr. Ceroni's requests and expressed his great admiration for the work of the Americans' Sindonologists on the behalf of the Shroud.

Throughout His Majesty's exile, King Umberto was always entertaining Shroud research with the Church acting as the custodian. The relationship between the House of Savoy and the Church, remained as it was even after the abdication of the King's throne. This interdependent relation allowed the Church to continue venerating the Holy Cloth, and the King affirming his justly claimed legal ownership. A simple example to understand his Majesty's logic is to imagine you own a private driveway that is used by other neighbours continually and uninterruptedly for more than 20 years. If within a 20-year period the driveway is never obstructed to prevent egress or ingress, it is considered public domain. To prevent loss of ownership, the driveway must be impassable for at least one full day within the 20 years. Doing this demonstrates proprietorship of the driveway and provides sufficient proof of ownership in case of litigation. Thus, assertion of ownership of the Shroud took place

during a parliamentary hearing. An amendment to the Constitution was ratified on October 23, 2002, allowing the descendants of the House of Savoy to return to Italy. However, their assets and territories would continue to be treated as in the original 1946 Italian Constitution. To assure the Republic's claim to the House of Savoy's possessions, in 2007, Legislators, Marco Perduca and Donatella Poretti, from the Democratic Party submitted a written question to the Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities. The submission is found in Italian in this source.

With the help of Google Translator, here is an adequate English version:

"To the Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities - Given that: the XIII transitional and final provision of the Constitution of the Italian Republic, as leading scholars of the relationship between State and Church in Italy, who is responsible for the revision of the 1984 Concordat, has expressed as a reasoned opinion, reiterating that, pursuant to the aforementioned XIII provision, the Shroud is the property of the Italian State, since the act of donation of the relic to the Pope, was made by the Savoy, following a testamentary bequest, on the death of the last king of Italy, Umberto II, in the 1983; the reaffirmation of State ownership of the Shroud, in the opinion of the interrogators, can and must above all mean the possibility of new independent scientific studies, not conditioned on the origins of the sheet. We wish to know what initiatives the Minister intends to take, in the light of the authoritative opinion expressed by Professor Margiotta Broglio, to affirm and reaffirm the ownership of the Italian State of the Shroud, without denying in any way to both believers and faithful the possibility of access and veneration, and to the Turin Episcopate the possibility of preserving and displaying the relic."

However, the Shroud's proprietorship continues to be ambiguous, even among elected officials. Poretti and Perduca provide legal opinion supporting State ownership. But still, the question remains, does the Holy See through the living Pope have the full title to the Holy Relic? Or is legal scholar Professor Broglio, right in asserting that sole ownership rights belong to the State. Perduca and Poretti addressed the question to the Minister of Cultural Heritage probably just to have it recorded by the Government.

One of the main functions of Cultural Heritage department is to protect Italian tangible artefacts and relics including those owned by the Church. Article 12 of the 1984 Concordat revision stipulates that both parties, the Church and the State agree to collaborate in protecting Italian heritage. These measures also necessitate cooperation protecting other countries' heritage as well.

About 20 years ago I had a discussion with Father Brinkman, the last President of the Holy Shroud Guild. He raised an interesting hypothesis. Father Brinkman told me that during the time of carbon dating, he was told if the Shroud dated back to the first century, international jurisdiction of proprietorship can be claimed by the Turkish Government. The assertion was based on the historical documents from the fourth Crusades. The responsibility of the determination of proprietorship falls to the United

Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and is enforced by Interpol or local jurisdictions, and in this case, Italy's, Il Comando Carabinieri Tutela Patrimonio Culturale. At the time, I did not think much of the information shared by Father Brinkman. However, with the ambiguous actions of the radiocarbon Labs, imagine if the Shroud was dated back to the first century?

In 2019, I was back in New York City to have paperwork finalised at the Italian Consulate for my daughter's wedding. While there, I visited Mauro Lucentini. Our discussions were more informal, mostly talking about our families. Thankfully, during our conversation, Mauro brought up Vittorio's response relating to the proprietorship of the Shroud. In essence, Professor Canuto agreed with my analysis.

The strongest evidence of ownership I provide of the Shroud is from the June 2nd, 2016, FIDES Conference. It was during the conference that Carlos Evaristo relayed Prince Vittorio's response to my inquiry. Prince Vittorio's acknowledgment is the most powerful evidence of Shroud ownership. During my conversation with Carlos Evaristo, I made Carlos aware that the Prince's family and ours both had mutual acquaintances with the Ajos, and Lucentini. The Prince was probably aware that Fiammetta or Gustavo Ajo might have discussed with my family his father's concerns. Gustavo undoubtedly would have known about Umberto's estate as his financial adviser.

Today, the Shroud is definitely under the Pope's custodianship. With the modifications of the Lateran Concordat in 1984, cultural, historical, and artistic heritage belonging to the Church is administered by the Ecclesiastical authorities. As for ownership, the authoritative opinion expressed by Professor Margiotta Broglio emphasises that the title of the Shroud belongs to the State, under the supervision of Il Ministro per i beni e le attività culturali. And as previously happened throughout King Umberto's exile, the Government will not impede Turin's authority assigned to the Cardinal to preserve and display the Holy Shroud to all of Christianity.

Related information used and cited:

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Giovanni Mongelli; 1973 *La Sacra Sindone a Montevergine*

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Philip Willan; *Puppet-masters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy*.