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The Shroud and the iconography of Christ

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Abstract

The similarity between the Shroud face and most of the depictions of Christ known in art, both Eastern and Western, is clear and cannot be attributed to pure chance; it must be the result of a dependency, mediated or immediate, of an image from the other and of all from a common source. We can identify several elements on the Shroud that are not regular, hardly attributable to the imagination of the artists, that make us understand how the ancient representations of Christ's face depend on the venerated relic. It is reasonable to think that in the early days of the Church, the Shroud has been kept hidden for various reasons. During this period, for the representation of Christ they only used symbols or they applied to the figure of Christ appearances derived from other religions. After the victory of Christianity, sanctioned by Constantine in 313 with the Edict of Milan, a new image of the face of Jesus began to spread, which is characterized by not too long beard, mustache, narrow, tall and stately face, with long hair, falling on His shoulders, and sometimes with a middle line that divides them. Numerous testimonials, both written and iconographic, confirm that in Edessa (Şanlıurfa today, in south-eastern Turkey) there was an impression left by Jesus on a cloth with His sweat and His blood. This sacred cloth, hidden for centuries and rediscovered in the sixth century, became the inspirational model for the iconography of Christ. All the legends, the traditions, the references to the existence of such an image are important for reconstructing an itinerary of the Shroud in the dark ages prior to its appearance in Europe and to understand why there are so many references to the existence of an image of Christ on a cloth.

Keywords: Edessa, Mandylion, Sindone

The Shroud is an extraordinary relic because, besides having blood stains on it¹, it is imprinted with the image of the corpse that was wrapped in it². According to a long tradition³, it is the burial sheet of Jesus, the *sindón* (sheet) bought by Joseph of Arimathea for His burial, the *othónia* (cloths) that will be found empty by Peter and John⁴.

¹ P.L. BAIMA BOLLONE, *Indagini identificative su fili della Sindone*, in *Giornale della Accademia di Medicina di Torino* 1-12 (1982), pp. 228-239; J.H. HELLER - A.D. ADLER, *Blood on the Shroud of Turin*, in *Applied Optics* 19, 16 (1980), pp. 2742-2744.

² P.L. BAIMA BOLLONE, *Rilievi e considerazioni medico-legali sulla formazione delle immagini sulla Sindone*, in *La Sindone e la Scienza*, Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di Sindonologia, Torino 7-8 Ottobre 1978, Ed. Paoline, Torino 1979, pp. 109-114; R. BUCKLIN, *A pathologist looks at the Shroud of Turin*, in *La Sindone e la Scienza*, Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di Sindonologia, op. cit., pp. 115-125.

³ L. FOSSATI, *La Sacra Sindone. Storia documentata di una secolare venerazione*, Ed. Elledici, Leumann (TO) 2000.

⁴ Mt 27,59; Mc 15,46; Lc 23,53; Gv 19,40; Lc 24,12; Gv 20,5-7.

The dating of the cloth with radiocarbon method has placed the origin of the Shroud between 1260 and 1390 AD⁵, but that dating is not considered valid for justified reasons, as the examined sample was not representative of the whole cloth⁶.

The similarity between the Shroud face and most of the depictions of Christ known in art, both Eastern and Western, is clear and can not be attributed to mere chance; it must be the result of a dependency, mediated or immediate, of an image from the other and of all from a common source⁷.

It has been suggested the derivation of the features of the Shroud image from the classic and most widespread way to represent Christ in art. The Shroud would represent « an arrival point beyond which the tradition of *acheropite* could no longer go»; this icon «the last to come» would have « collected all the results of a whole pre-existing tradition»⁸. This thesis is not sustainable, because the research and the analysis carried out on the relic excluded, with absolute certainty, any hypothesis of a manufacturing with artistic means⁹.

The opposite argument, raised for the first time in the early twentieth century by the biologist Paul Vignon, asserts that the face of Christ, as it is presented in art, must depend on the Shroud; that is, there is a similarity between the classical type of the face of Christ with a beard and the Shroud image¹⁰.

We can identify on the Shroud several elements that are not regular, hardly attributable to the imagination of the artists, that make us understand how the ancient representations of Christ's face depend on the venerated relic: the hair is long and bipartite; many faces show two or three strands of hair in the middle of the forehead: it can be an artistic way of depicting the trickle of blood in the shape of an *epsilon* present on the forehead of the Shroud face; the superciliary arches are pronounced; many faces have one eyebrow higher than the other, like the Shroud face; by the root of the nose, some faces have a sign like a square, missing in the upper side, and below it there is a sign in the shape of a V.

Moreover, the nose is long and straight; the eyes are large and deep, wide open, with huge irises and large eye sockets; the cheekbones are very pronounced, sometimes with spots; a wide area between the cheeks and the hair of the Shroud face is without mark, so that the hair bands appear to be too detached from the face; one cheek is very swollen due to a strong trauma, so the face is asymmetrical; the mustache, which is often drooping, is arranged

⁵ P.E. DAMON et al., *Radiocarbon dating of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Nature* 337, 6208 (1989), pp. 611-615.

⁶ A.D. ADLER, *Updating Recent Studies on the Shroud of Turin*, in *American Chemical Society, Symposium Series* 625, 17 (1996), pp. 223-228; H.E. GOVE et al., *A problematic source of organic contamination of linen*, in *Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research*, B 123 (1997), pp. 504-507; R.N. ROGERS, *Studies on the radiocarbon sample from the Shroud of Turin*, in *Thermochimica Acta* 425 (2005), pp. 189-194.

⁷ H. PFEIFFER, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, Emmaus 2, Roma 1982, p. 13.

⁸ G.M. ZACCONE, *Dalle acheropite alla Sindone*, in *Sacre impronte e oggetti «non fatti da mano d'uomo» nelle religioni*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Torino 18-20 Maggio 2010, Ed. dell'Orso, Alessandria 2011, pp. 309-323, on p. 323.

⁹ J.H. HELLER - A.D. ADLER, *A Chemical Investigation of the Shroud of Turin*, in *Canadian Society of Forensic Sciences Journal* 14, 3 (1981), pp. 81-103; E.J. JUMPER et al., *A Comprehensive Examination of the Various Stains and Images on the Shroud of Turin*, in *Archaeological Chemistry III, ACS Advances in Chemistry* 205, 22 (1984), pp. 447-476; L.A. SCHWALBE - R.N. ROGERS, *Physics and Chemistry of the Shroud of Turin, A Summary of the 1978 Investigation*, in *Analytica Chimica Acta* 135 (1982), pp. 3-49.

¹⁰ H. PFEIFFER, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, op. cit., pp. 14-16; P. VIGNON, *Le Linceul du Christ. Étude scientifique*, Masson et C. Éditeurs, Paris 1902, pp. 163-192; P. VIGNON, *Le Saint Suaire de Turin devant la Science, l'Archéologie, l'Histoire, l'Iconographie, la Logique*, Masson et C. Éditeurs, Paris 1939, pp. 113-191.

asymmetrically and fall over the lips on each side with a different angle; the mouth is small, not hidden by the mustache; there is a beardless area under His lower lip; the beard, not too long, is bipartite and tripartite sometimes, and it is slightly displaced on one side.



Fig. 1 – Comparison between the face of the Shroud, photographic positive (on the left) and photographic negative (on the right), and the face of Christ in the catacombs of Pontian, Rome, 8th century (in the middle).

The inspiration from the Shroud is evident, for example, in the signs between the eyebrows, on the forehead and on the right cheek of the face of Christ (8th century) in the catacombs of Pontian in Rome¹¹ (fig. 1). So it is essential to look, into the history, the documents, the references, the descriptions of this unique object, to understand how much it might have influenced the depictions of Christ over the centuries¹².

It is reasonable to think that in the early days of the Church, the Shroud has been kept hidden for several reasons: first of all it was a very precious memory, having wrapped the body of the Redeemer. Also there was some fear that some opponent outside the community, or even within it, could seize and destroy it. The Jews, in observance of the Mosaic Law, considered it unclean everything that had had contact with a corpse¹³ and St. Paul recalled:

¹¹ I. WILSON, *Icone ispirate alla Sindone*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, edited by L. COPPINI e F. CAVAZZUTI, Ed. San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (MI) 2000, pp. 72-88, on p. 78.

¹² G. DROBOT, *Il volto di Cristo, fedeltà a un santo modello*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 57-71, on p. 60.

¹³ Nm 19,11-22.

«But we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles»¹⁴. It was natural that the custodians of the Shroud considered it unwise to show this impressive witness to the ignominious crucifixion.

The Benedictine monk Maurus Green affirmed: «The fact that our Lord's burial cloths and their arrangement were the first material evidence of the Resurrection would point to their preservation despite their defiling nature»¹⁵. The Apocrypha speak of the funeral cloths of Jesus. St. Jerome (4th century) in *De viris illustribus* quotes a passage of the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*¹⁶ (2th century): «The Lord, having given the burial cloth (*sindonem*) to the priest's servant¹⁷, went to James and appeared to him»¹⁸. Some writings of the 2th-4th century are known under different names¹⁹: *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, *Acts of Pilate*, *Gospel of Gamaliel*, *Mysteries of Saviour's Acts*²⁰. They report that the Lord, after the Resurrection, in the tomb shows the sheet and the sudarium to Joseph of Arimathea²¹.

In the *Inlatio* of the *Missa de sabbato Pasche ante octavas* of the *Liber Mozarabicus Sacramentorum* (6th-7th century) we read that Peter, with John, runs to the tomb and «sees in the linens the recent vestiges of the deceased and resurgent»²². There is nothing improbable in supposing that the Shroud has been collected with care and not concealed in indifference; this is also the opinion of St. Braulio, bishop of Saragossa (7th century), who affirms in the XLII letter that he believes that the burial linen of the Lord had been preserved by the apostles for the times ahead²³. As soon as the persecution finished, Pope Sylvester I (314-335) during the Provincial Council of 325, at the Baths of Trajan in Rome, ordered that the Holy Mass would be celebrated on a white linen consecrated by the bishop, in memory of the one in which the Lord was wrapped²⁴.

The corporal of pure linen, outstretched on the altar, is a figure of the clean Shroud in which Jesus was wrapped: this is the common interpretation of the ancient Eastern and Latin liturgists, such as John, Patriarch of Constantinople (6th century). Germanus, Bishop of Paris, writes: «The corporal, on which is placed the *oblato*, for this reason it is pure linen, because the Lord's body was wrapped in pure linen in the tomb»²⁵. It is also recalled by the Venerable Bede (8th century), Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz (9th century) and St. Remigius of

¹⁴ 1 Cor 1,23.

¹⁵ M. GREEN, *Enshrouded in silence. In search of the First Millennium of the Holy Shroud*, in *The Ampleforth Journal* 3 (1969), pp. 321-345, on p. 327.

¹⁶ P. SAVIO, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, SEI, Torino 1957, pp. 60 and 152-160.

¹⁷ D. FULBRIGHT, *Did Jesus give His Shroud to "the servant of Peter"?*, in *Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Scientific approach to the Acheiropoietos Images*, Frascati 4-6 May 2010, edited by P. DI LAZZARO, Ed. ENEA, Frascati (Roma) 2010, pp. 129-132.

¹⁸ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, O.E.I.L., Paris 1985, p. 120.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

²⁰ P. SAVIO, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 63 and 166-168.

²¹ F. AMIOT (edited by), *Gli Evangelii apocrifi*, Massimo, Milano, 1979, p. 123.

²² A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 130-132; P. SAVIO, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, op. cit., p. 70.

²³ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 128-129; P. SAVIO, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 68 and 174-178; P. SAVIO, *Prospetto sindonologico*, in *Sindon* 3 (1960), pp. 16-31, on p. 24.

²⁴ A. CALISI, *L'immagine della Sindone e l'Iconografia Bizantina*, in *Chi ha visto me ha visto il Padre*, Atti del 3° Convegno Nazionale degli Iconografi e degli Amici dell'Iconografia, Roma 24-26 Settembre 2010, pp. 1-10, on p. 8.

²⁵ P. SAVIO, *Prospetto sindonologico*, op. cit., p. 23.

Auxerre (10th century)²⁶. «*Sindone, quam solemus Corporale nominare*», affirmed St. Amalarius²⁷, liturgist and theologian, who was legate of Charlemagne in Constantinople in 813. The entire body of Jesus lying on a sheet appears in the corporal of linen widespread on the altar to celebrate the Eucharist in the Byzantine rite. It is significant to note that even today the corporal is called Shroud in the Ambrosian Rite²⁸.

Regarding the features of Jesus, you must keep in mind that Sacred Scripture does not hand down any physical description of the Savior; prohibitions of the Old Law²⁹ prevented certainly the first disciples to fix His features in pictures or statues, although the legend attributes some of them to St. Luke or Nicodemus³⁰. Irenaeus (2th century) and Origen (3th century) consider it legitimate the representation of God into an image³¹; in the early days of Christianity, however, they only used symbols, such as the lamb, the bread and the fish, whose Greek name *ichthùs* is formed from the initials of the words: *Jesus Christ Son of God Savior*. The image of Eucharistic fish can be seen, for example, in the crypt of Lucina in Rome, in the Catacombs of St. Callixtus (2th century).

An alternative was to apply to the figure of Christ features derived from other non-Christian religions. Among the oldest images we recall the *Christus Sol Invictus* in the Mausoleum of the Julii in the Vatican necropolis (3th century), in which Jesus is depicted as the Sun God, in opposition to pagan *Helios*³². In this period the human figure of the Good Shepherd, of the thaumaturgist and of the teacher were also introduced³³. The Christ who heals the hemorrhaging woman of the catacombs of St. Marcellinus and St. Peter in Rome (3th century) belongs to this kind of representations. Jesus is shown beardless to emphasize His divine nature³⁴.

After the victory of Christianity, sanctioned by Constantine in 313 with the Edict of Milan, a different image of the face of Jesus started to spread, characterized by not too long beard, mustache, narrow face, tall and majestic, with long hair that fall on the shoulders and that sometimes show a central line that divides them³⁵. One of the earliest depictions of a bearded Christ appears in Rome in the hypogeum of Aurelii (3th century). Among the works that show Him with a beard we must remember some sarcophagi of the Theodosian era (4th century) still preserved, for example, in the former Lateran Museum in Vatican City, at St. Sebastian Outside the Walls in Rome, at St. Ambrose in Milan and at the Lapidary Museum of Arles.

Jesus with a beard can be found in Rome, even in the apse of the basilica of St. Pudenziana (4th century); the Christ the Teacher of the Cubiculum of Leo in the Catacomb of Commodilla (4th century) and the enthroned Christ between Peter and Paul in the catacombs of Sts.

²⁶ P. SAVIO, *Prospetto sindonologico*, op. cit., pp. 25-27.

²⁷ C. DU CANGE et al., *Glossarium mediæ et infimæ latinitatis*, Favre Ed., Niort 1883-1887, t. 2, col. 576c.

²⁸ A. CALISI, *L'immagine della Sindone e l'Iconografia Bizantina*, op. cit., p. 8.

²⁹ Es 20,4; Dt 5,8.

³⁰ E. MARINELLI, *Three Acheiropoietos Images in comparison with the Turin Shroud*, International Interdisciplinary Conference on the Acheiropoietos Images, Toruń, Poland, 11–13 May 2011, pp. 1-7.

³¹ G. EGGER, *L'icona del Pantocrator e la Sindone*, in *La Sindone e la Scienza*, Atti del II Congresso Internazionale di Sindonologia, op. cit., pp. 91-94, on p. 91.

³² C. CECHELLI, *Rapporti fra il Santo Volto della Sindone e l'antica iconografia bizantina*, in *La Santa Sindone nelle ricerche moderne. Risultati del Convegno Nazionale di Studi sulla Santa Sindone*, Torino 2-3 Maggio 1939, LICE, Torino 1941, pp. 195-211, on pp. 199-200.

³³ G. EGGER, *L'icona del Pantocrator e la Sindone*, op. cit., p. 91.

³⁴ H. PFEIFFER, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

Marcellinus and Peter (4th-5th century) belong to the same type. In all the depictions of the Savior the similarity with the Shroud face is always marked: note, for example, the ancient image of SS. Savior venerated in the oratory of St. Lawrence in *Palatio*, called *Sancta Sanctorum*, in Rome, whose original icon goes back to the 5th-6th century; the mosaic (7th century) of the Chapel of St. Venantius by the Baptistery of St. John Lateran; the Christ of the cathedral of Tarquinia (12th century); the Savior of the cathedral of Sutri (13th century); and the mosaic (13th century) of the apse of the basilica of St. John Lateran³⁶.

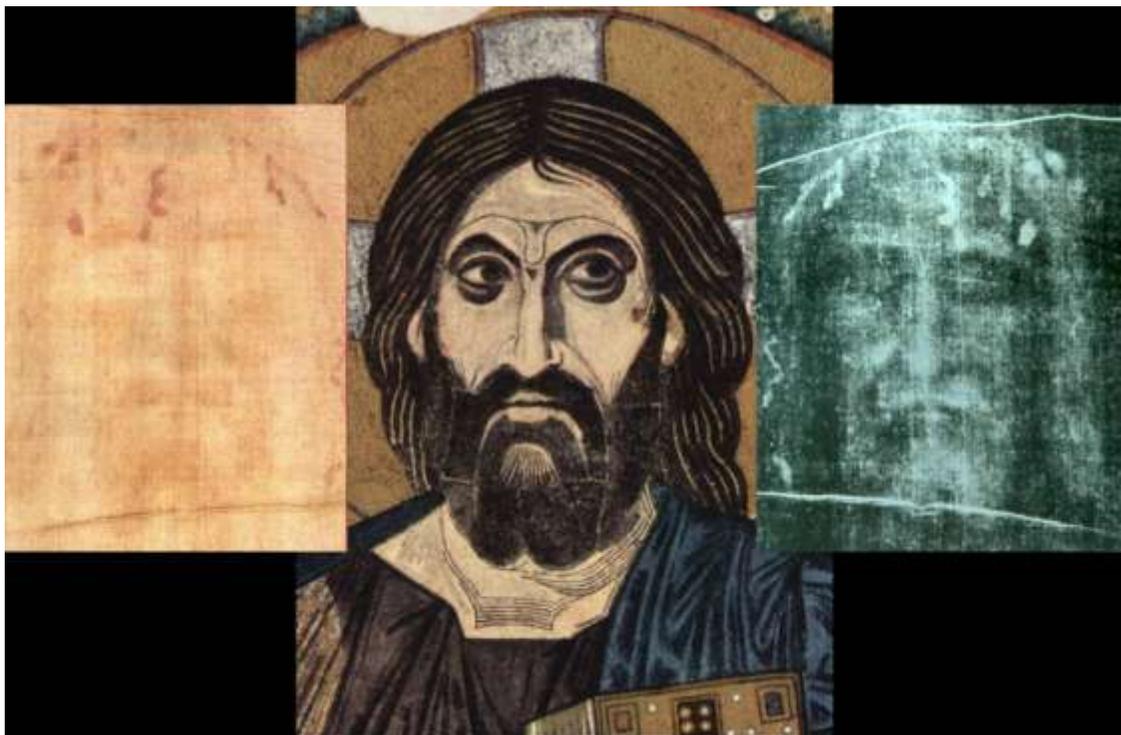


Fig. 2 – Comparison between the face of the Shroud, photographic positive (on the left) and photographic negative (on the right), and the *Pantocrator* of the church of the monastery of Daphni, Athens area, 12th century (in the middle).

Starting from the 6th century also in the East spreads a particular type of portrait of Jesus inspired by the Shroud: it is the majestic Christ, with a beard and mustache, called the *Pantocrator* (Almighty), of which there are splendid examples in Cappadocia³⁷. There is an evident inspiration from the Shroud in the face of Christ in the silver vase of the 6th century found in Homs, Syria, now in the *Louvre* in Paris, and in that of the silver reliquary of 550, from Chersonesus in the Crimea, which is in the *Hermitage* in St. Petersburg³⁸.

³⁶ G. ZANINOTTO, *L'Acheropita del SS. Salvatore nel Sancta Sanctorum del Laterano*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 164-180, on pp. 178-179.

³⁷ L. MANTON, *The Cappadocian frescoes in relation to the Turin Shroud*, in *Acheiropoietos, "non fait de main d'homme"*, Actes du III Symposium Scientifique International du CIELT, Nice 12-13 Mai 1997, Éditions du CIELT, Paris 1998, pp. 119-126

³⁸ M. MORONI, *L'icona di Cristo nelle monete bizantine. Testimonianze numismatiche della Sindone a Edessa*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 122-144, on p. 124.

The *Pantocrator* is also present in the post-Byzantine era and it will remain substantially unchanged until today³⁹. In the East, this image will become the only one for all the figurative art and even in the West it will always prevail⁴⁰. In the *Pantocrator* (13th century) of St. Sophia (Istanbul) and in the *Pantocrator* (14th century) of St. Saviour in Chora (Istanbul) we find concave cheeks and prominent and asymmetric cheekbones. Regarding the detail in the middle of the forehead, which can be a strand or a double strand of hair, or some red or white line or spot, sometimes even a vertical wrinkle, it is always painted in the middle and does not change the essential form but its content in the various images of several centuries. This reveals, despite the different interpretations, a unique origin: the characteristic trickle of blood on the forehead of the Shroud face.

You can notice the lock of hair, simple or double, for example in the *Pantocrator* (9th century) of the oratory of St. Lawrence in *Palatio* in Rome, in the *Pantocrator* (12th century) of Cefalù (Palermo), in the *Pantocrator* (12th century) of Monreale (Palermo), in the *Pantocrator* (12th century) of Sant'Angelo in Formis in Capua (Caserta) and in the *Pantocrator* (12th century) of the church of the monastery of Daphni, near Athens⁴¹ (fig. 2), while it appears like a real trickle of blood on the forehead of Christ on the crucifixion panel in one of the windows of the Portal of the Kings in Chartres cathedral (12th century)⁴².

The observation of the Shroud face also affects the representation of Christ on the Byzantine coins from the 7th century⁴³. The hypothesis that «the model of Christ *rex regnantium* of the coins is the iconography of the *Pantocrator* according to a possible pagan model, certainly not coming from the Shroud: that of the Zeus *pambasileus*, represented for example by the famous chryselephantine statue of Olympia, made by Phidias, of which remains a marble copy of the face» is not acceptable⁴⁴. Observing the mentioned Zeus *pambasileus*, actually you do not notice at all the alleged similarities with the face of Christ.

Justinian II (Byzantine emperor from 685 to 695 and from 705 to 711) was the first emperor to order the face of Jesus to be represented on coins. On his golden *solidus* (692-695) appears a *Pantocrator* whose features are very similar to those of the Shroud: wavy hair falling around the shoulders, beard, mustache and the quaint little tuft on the forehead.

Unfortunately, there are very few images of Christ that survived the terrible period of the iconoclastic fury (730-843), during which prevailed the denial of sacred images. After the iconoclast struggles, the face of Christ, inspired by the Shroud, will be portrayed again on coins. A strongly inspired by the Shroud *Pantocrator*, expressive, with large eyes, long hair and beard, appears on the golden *solidus* of Michael III (842-867).

With the technique of superposition in polarized light⁴⁵ it has been shown that the Shroud face fits in most points with that, suitably enlarged, of the *Pantocrator* portrayed on coins:

³⁹ G. GHARIB, *Icone bizantine e ritratto di Cristo*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 35-56, on p. 35.

⁴⁰ H. PFEIFFER, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, op. cit., p. 20.

⁴¹ G. GHARIB, *Le icone di Cristo, storia e culto*, Città Nuova Ed., Roma 1993, p. 153.

⁴² R. FALCINELLI, *Testimonianze sindoniche a Chartres*, in *Sindone e Scienza. Bilanci e programmi alle soglie del terzo millennio*, Atti del III Congresso Internazionale di Studi sulla Sindone, Torino 5-7 Giugno 1998, pp. 300-311, on p. 303 and 310.

⁴³ M. MORONI, *L'icona di Cristo nelle monete bizantine. Testimonianze numismatiche della Sindone a Edessa*, op. cit., pp. 122-144.

⁴⁴ A. NICOLOTTI, *Dal Mandylion di Edessa alla Sindone di Torino. Metamorfosi di una leggenda*, Ed. dell'Orso, Alessandria 2011, p. 165.

⁴⁵ A.D. WHANGER - M. WHANGER, *Polarized image overlay technique: a new image comparison method and its applications*, in *Applied Optics* 24, 6 (1985), pp. 766-772.

there are more than 140 points of congruence, that are the points of overlap, with the *solidus* and with the *tremissis* of the first reign of Justinian II. This widely satisfies the American forensic criterion, according to which from 45 to 60 points of congruence are enough to establish the identity or similarity of two images. The same technique was applied to one of the finest examples of *Pantocrator*, that of the monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai (6th century), which has 250 points of congruence⁴⁶. Another comparison of the Shroud face was made with the technique of digital processing. It turned out that the traits and the outlines of the Shroud face are similar to those of the Christ of the *solidus* of Justinian II and the icon of the Sinai⁴⁷.

In the Byzantine literary sources the image of the *Pantocrator* is called *acheiropoietos* – not made by human hands – or *apomasso* – imprint – and according to tradition it derives from a cloth; therefore it is called *Mandylion*. This canon portrait of Christ is considered up to now the only valid representation, not only by the Orthodox Church, but also by the Catholic Church⁴⁸.

It is interesting to note that the wooden doors of the basilica of St. Sabina in Rome (5th century) present Christ with a beard in the scenes of the Passion, while He is without a beard in all the other scenes of His previous life. This distinction also characterizes the mosaics of St. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (6th century)⁴⁹. So there was a reason to put in relation the depiction of the bearded Christ with His Passion; this reason could be a pre-existing image, clearly related to the moments of Jesus' suffering. It comes natural to think of the Shroud, to the Veronica and other testimonials, both written and iconographic, of an imprint left by Jesus on a cloth with his sweat and His blood.

All the legends, the traditions, the references to the existence of such an image are important for reconstructing an itinerary of the Shroud in the dark ages prior to its appearance in Europe and to understand why there are so many references to the existence of an image of Christ on a cloth.

A letter attributed to St. Epiphanius of Salamis (4th century) narrates that by the entrance to a church in Anablatha, not far from Jerusalem, it was hung a veil with the image of a man who could have been Jesus or a saint. Epiphanius rips it because he believes this was in contradiction with Scripture. To the guardians of the place, outraged by the iconoclastic act, he promises to send a new veil without a human figure. Also he recommends the guardians to use the ripped veil for a pauper's funeral. The cloth was then very large⁵⁰.

St. Adamnano (7th century), Abbot of Iona in the Hebrides, in *De locis sanctis* describes the Holy Land relying on the story of St. Arculph, a bishop of Gaul, who was housed in the Abbey because of a wreck which occurred on the way back from his trip to Palestine. The Venerable Bede (7th century) made a compendium of this text. Arculph reported that he saw the *sudarium* which had been on Jesus' head: this *lintheum* was eight feet long (about 2.50 m).

⁴⁶ A.D. WHANGER, *Icone e Sindone. Confronto mediante tecnica di polarizzazione di immagine sovrapposta*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 145-151.

⁴⁷ R.M. HARALICK, *Analysis of Digital Images of The Shroud of Turin*, Spatial Data Analysis Laboratory, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA, Dec. 1, 1983, pp. 1-97; N. BALOSSINO – G. TAMBURELLI, *Icone e Sindone. Analisi comparativa con metodologie informatiche*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 152-157.

⁴⁸ G.EGGER, *L'icona del Pantocrator e la Sindone*, op. cit., p. 93.

⁴⁹ H. PFEIFFER, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, op. cit., pp. 19-25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-8.

There also was a longer *lintheamen*, whose weaving was attributed to Our Lady, in which there were *intexta* (interwoven) the *formulae* of the twelve apostles (the articles of the Apostolic Symbol) and the *imago* of the Lord Himself⁵¹.

The presence in Jerusalem of a *sudarium* of Christ, in the basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, is also demonstrated by the *Commemoratorium de casis Dei vel monasteriis*, written around 808 for the Emperor Charlemagne⁵².

An anonymous pilgrim of Piacenza, on the other hand, in the sixth century had seen the *sudarium* in a cave on the banks of the Jordan and in Memphis, in Egypt, a linen cloth with which the Lord had dried His face and in which He had left His image at the time of the flight into Egypt⁵³.

The testimonies concerning the image of Edessa (the modern Şanlıurfa, in south-eastern Turkey), that the historian Ian Wilson⁵⁴ identified with the Shroud, are particularly interesting. In the Museum of Şanlıurfa we can find a mosaic of the face of Christ (6th century) that is very similar to a detail of the icon of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus (6th century) from the monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai, now preserved at the Museum of Western and Oriental Art in Kiev, Ukraine. Both of these representations have traits inspired by the Shroud⁵⁵.

Eusebius of Caesarea⁵⁶ (4th century) said that Abgar, king of Edessa at the time of Christ, was ill. Having known of the existence of Jesus of Nazareth, who performed miracles, he sent Him a letter asking Him to go to the court of Edessa. Jesus did not go, but Thaddeus the Apostle went to Edessa, with the response letter written by Jesus. The king witnessed a great vision which appeared on the face of Thaddeus and prostrated before him. The apostle laid his hands on Abgar and healed him. The king believed in Jesus and ordered all the townspeople to gather to listen to the preaching of Thaddeus.

A parallel tradition is contained in the *Doctrine of Addai* (the Syriac equivalent of Thaddeus)⁵⁷. This text could date back to the 4th-5th century⁵⁸, or to the mid-sixth century⁵⁹. It is a Syriac composition that includes various legends. According to this version, Abgar sent his archivist and painter Hannan with the letter.

Jesus commissioned Hannan to bring an oral response to the king, but the archivist decided to do more: «When Hannan, the archivist, saw that Jesus spoke to him in this way, as he was also a painter of the king, he took quality colors, painted a picture of Jesus and took it with him to Abgar, the king, his lord. And when Abgar, the king, saw the picture, he received it with great joy and placed it with great honor in one of his palaces⁶⁰. Jesus also promised the safety of Edessa. The portrait and the protection of the city are missing in the narrative of

⁵¹ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 132; H. PFEIFFER, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, op. cit., pp. 8-11.

⁵² A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 133.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

⁵⁴ I. WILSON, *The Shroud of Turin. The burial cloth of Jesus Christ?*, Doubleday & C., Garden City, New York 1978.

⁵⁵ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, Transworld Publishers, London 2010, pp. 188-189.

⁵⁶ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *Ecclesiastical History*, book I, 13.

⁵⁷ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., p. 412.

⁵⁸ I. RAMELLI, *Possible historical traces in the Doctrina Addai*, in *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 9, 1 (2006), pp. 1-66.

⁵⁹ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 107.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

Eusebius, while the promise of sending the disciple and the vision on his face are present in both texts, which place these events in the year 30 AD, when Jesus was crucified⁶¹.



Fig. 3 – Above: the *Mandylicon* of the church of the Annunciation, monastery of Gradač, Serbia, 14th century. In the middle: the *Mandylicon* of the church of Christ Pantocrator, monastery of Dečani, Kosovo, 14th century. Low: the *Mandylicon* of the church of the Panagia Forvotissa of Asinou, Cyprus, 14th century.

⁶¹ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., p. 163.

The *Universal History* by Agapios of Menbidj (10th century) and the *Chronicle* by Michael the Syrian (12th century) agree both in presenting the form of a letter by Jesus without the ultimate promise of protection and in telling the execution of a portrait painted by Hannan. These works contain elements of certain ancientness, because they are based on documents similar, but not identical, to those of Eusebius and prior to them⁶².

Moses of Corene, Armenian historian of the 5th century⁶³, whose text may date back to the 8th century⁶⁴, mentions «the image of the Savior, which is still located in the city of Edessa»⁶⁵.

Egeria, pilgrim in Edessa between 384 and 394⁶⁶, reports that the bishop of the city, in making her visit the major sites, lead her to the Gate of the Ramparts by which Hannan, the messenger of Abgar, had entered bearing the letter of Jesus; however, in the record of what she has seen, she does not mention a picture of the Savior in that place⁶⁷.

Wilson lists some reasonable clues for us to believe that the facts narrated in the *Doctrine of Addai* have an historical basis and relate to Abgar V, who reigned at the time of Jesus. When he died in 50 AD, he was succeeded by his son Ma'nu V. After the death of the latter, in 57 AD, the kingdom passed into the hands of the other son of Abgar V, Ma'nu VI, who returned to paganism and persecuted Christians. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the image had to be hidden and its precise memory faded until its rediscovery, which occurred in the 6th century. At the time of Eusebius and Egeria it was no longer possible to display the image; this would explain their silence about it⁶⁸. The legend may have originated at the time of Abgar VIII (2th century)⁶⁹.

In 525 the Daisan, the stream that ran through Edessa, caused a catastrophic flood. Justinian, the future emperor, undertook a monumental reconstruction, which also benefited from the main church, St. Sophia. It is very plausible that then the discovery of the long time forgotten image took place. A small chapel to the right of the apse was destined to it; it was kept in a reliquary and was not exposed to the sight of the faithful⁷⁰.

The sacred cloth could also have been discovered during the Persian siege of 544 by King Chosroes I Anoshirvan, mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea in his book *The War of the Persians* without mentioning the image⁷¹; the precious effigy would have been rediscovered in a niche in the wall that overlooked the city gate⁷². The image was given the power to have contributed to repel boarders. Testimonials of that can be found in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius the Scholastic (594), which is about the liberation of the city from the 544 siege thanks to the sacred representation *theóteuctos*, «God's work»⁷³.

⁶² A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 109-119.

⁶³ I. RAMELLI, *Dal Mandilione di Edessa alla Sindone: alcune note sulle testimonianze antiche*, in *Ilu. Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 4 (1999), pp. 173-193, on pp. 173.

⁶⁴ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, Brill, Leiden 2009, pp. 160-161.

⁶⁵ I. RAMELLI, *Dal Mandilione di Edessa alla Sindone: alcune note sulle testimonianze antiche*, op. cit., pp. 173-174.

⁶⁶ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., p. 171.

⁶⁷ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 108.

⁶⁸ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., pp. 159-174.

⁶⁹ D. SCAVONE, *Edessan sources for the legend of the Holy Grail*, in *Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Scientific approach to the Acheiropoietos Images*, op. cit., pp. 111-116, on p. 112.

⁷⁰ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁷² E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Immagini di Cristo*, Ed. Medusa, Milano 2006, p. 130.

⁷³ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 95-96.



Fig. 4 – The *Mandylyon* moonlit, Ms. lat. 2688, f. 77r, National Library, Paris, 13th century.

In 787, during the Second Council of Nicaea, which was about the veneration of images, they talked about the Edessa image, not made by human hands and sent to Abgar; it was mentioned as a main argument in defense of the legitimacy of the use of sacred representations against the adverse thesis of the iconomache. The text by Evagrius was read during the fifth session and immediately after Leo, a reader of the Church of Constantinople, brought a personal testimony: «I've been to Edessa and I saw the holy image, not made by human hands, honored and venerated by the faithful»⁷⁴. There is no doubt that in Edessa in

⁷⁴ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

the 6th century, people had the conviction of possessing an image of Christ, a divine and non-human work⁷⁵.

In the Syriac *Acts of Mar Mari*, written in the 6th century, but based on previous material and containing historical traces, the painters sent to Jerusalem by Abgar «could not portray the image of the loved humanity of Our Lord. The Lord then [...] took a cloth [*seddona*, in Greek *sindón*], pressed it on His face [...] and it turned out as Himself was. And they brought this cloth and as a source of aid, it was placed in the church of Edessa, until the present day»⁷⁶.



Fig. 5 – The *Imago pietatis* of the basilica of the Sts. Four Crowned, Rome, 14th century.

A Syriac hymn celebrates the inauguration of the new cathedral of Edessa, eight years after the 525 flood that had destroyed the previous one⁷⁷. In it the image not made by human hands is mentioned as something already known and the magnificence of the marble of the cathedral is compared with it: «Its marble is similar to the image *that-not-by-hands* and its walls are harmoniously covered with it. And for its completely clean and completely white splendor, it takes the light in itself»⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 105.

⁷⁶ I. RAMELLI, *Il Mandylion di Edessa, cioè la Sindone*, in *Il Timone* 85 (2009), pp. 28-29, on p. 28.

⁷⁷ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 169.

⁷⁸ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 99-100.

An interesting source is the *Narratio de Imagine Edessena*⁷⁹, attributed to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, emperor of Constantinople from 912 to 959. This composition could have been realized by an ecclesiastic from the circle of the emperor by his order⁸⁰, by the proto-secretary Theodore Daphnopates⁸¹ or by Simeon Metaphrastes⁸², who certainly used this text for his menologium, a collection of documents about the lives of the saints and the events celebrated each day⁸³. The *Narratio de Imagine Edessena* provides an interesting description of the image: «Regarding the reason why, thanks to a liquid secretion without a coloring material nor pictorial art, the appearance of the face formed on the linen cloth and how what came from such a corruptible material, did not suffer any corruption through time and all the other arguments that who applies himself to realities as a physicist loves investigating carefully, we have to leave it all to the inaccessible wisdom of God»⁸⁴.

In an Apocrypha composed around 900, the *Acts of Andrew*, the image of Edessa is described «not made by human hands, formed immaterially into the material»⁸⁵. The *Letter of Abgar* in which we read: «The Lord took some water in His hands, washed His face and putting the cloth on His face He painted Himself on it. Jesus' appearance fixed on it for the wonder of everyone that was sitting with Him»⁸⁶ is from the same period.

The story of the *Narratio de Imagine Edessena* reports the most widespread tradition about the origin of the image: the letters exchanged between Abgar and Jesus, a painter's attempt of fixing on a canvas the master's features while he was preaching, the miraculous impressing of an image on the cloth with which Christ dries His just washed face.

«Regarding the main point of the argument – the text continues – everyone agrees and concurs that the shape has been impressed in a wonderful way in the cloth from the Lord's face. But as for a particular of the thing, that is the moment, they differ, but it does not affect at all the truth, that it happened before or later. Then here's the other tradition. When Christ approached to His voluntary Passion, when He showed the human weakness and He could be seen praying in agony, when His sweat turned into beads of blood, according to the Gospels, then, they say, He had this piece of cloth that we are seeing now from one of His disciples and He dried with it the effusion of His sweat. And this visible imprint of His divine traits impressed immediately»⁸⁷.

The two traditions affirm that the image is not composed by material colors, but the second one adds the particular of the blood and this agrees with what can be seen on the Shroud⁸⁸. In the *Narratio de Imagine Edessena* we can also read what King Abgar's vision consisted of, making a connection with Jesus' image: Thaddeus «placed the likeness on his own forehead and went in thus to Abgar. The king saw him coming from afar and seemed to see a light

⁷⁹ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., pp. 7-69.

⁸⁰ E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Immagini di Cristo*, op. cit., p. 126.

⁸¹ G. ZANINOTTO, *La Sindone/Mandyllion nel silenzio di Costantinopoli (944-1242)*, in: *Sindone 2000*, Atti del Congresso Mondiale, Orvieto 27-29 Agosto 2000, edited by E. MARINELLI e A. RUSSI, Gerni Ed., San Severo, Foggia 2002, Vol. II pp. 463-482 and Vol. III pp.131-133, on p. 467.

⁸² M. GUSCIN, *La Síndone y la Imagen de Edesa. Investigaciones en los monasterios del Monte Athos (Grecia)*, in *Linteam*, 34 (2003), pp. 5-16, on p. 13.

⁸³ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 155.

⁸⁴ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 69.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

shining out of his face, too bright to look at, sent forth by the likeness that was covering him»⁸⁹.

Abgar then ordered to destroy the statue of a pagan deity that was above the city gate and in its place he ordered to put the image in a semicircular niche, fixed to a wooden board and decorated with gold. Abgar's son respected his father's will, but his son wanted to go back to paganism and like his grandfather had destroyed the idol above the city gate, so he wanted to do the same with Christ's image. But the town's bishop hid it, covering it with a tile, putting a lamp in front of it and walling up the niche.

During the Cosroe siege, one night the bishop Eulalius had a vision that revealed him where the image was hidden: above one of the city gates. The bishop went there and he found it reproduced on the tile, with the lamp still alight⁹⁰. The Byzantines will call the image *Mandylion*⁹¹ (from the Arabic *mindil*⁹²) and the tile *Keramion*⁹³. It must be noticed that the word *mandylion* (in Latin *mantilium*, in Aramaic *mantila*) normally, although not always, it refers to a quite big cloth, like a monk's cloak or a sort of a tablecloth⁹⁴.

There are still two boards that claim to be the real Edessa image: one in the papal collections in Vatican, which until 1870 was in the church of St. Sylvester in Capite in Rome, and the other in the church of St. Bartholomew of the Armenians in Genoa⁹⁵. Moreover in St. Peter they worshipped a Holy Face that they said it was the one of the Veronica, the woman that according to a 12th century tradition would have dried the bloodstained face of Jesus on the Way of Grief⁹⁶. The reliquary is in the chapel of St. Veronica in the pillar with the same name of the dome of St. Peter⁹⁷. The name Veronica, according to Gervase of Tilbury (13th century), comes from «true icon»⁹⁸; the most ancient core of the legend, that goes back to the 4th century, says that the name of the protagonist is Berenice⁹⁹.

According to the Jesuit Heinrich Pfeiffer¹⁰⁰, professor of History of Christian Art at the Papal Gregorian University, the veil of the Veronica would be the *acheiropoietos* face of Camulia¹⁰¹ that arrived in Constantinople in 574. Its tracks were lost around 705; in that time it would have been moved to Rome and called veil of the Veronica. This sacred image would have been shown for the last time to the pilgrims in 1601. The original image would have been stolen from Rome in 1618; in that year it would have been moved to Manoppello (PE) where a Holy Face is still worshipped, a veil of fine weaving that can be perfectly overlapped on the Shroud face. This veil could be a painting of the 16th century¹⁰².

⁸⁹ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 27.

⁹⁰ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., pp. 31-37.

⁹¹ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., pp. 233-234.

⁹² H. BOUBAKEUR, *Versione islamica del Santo Sudario*, in *Collegamento pro Sindone*, Maggio-Giugno 1992, pp. 35-41, on p. 36.

⁹³ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., p. 181.

⁹⁴ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 205.

⁹⁵ H. PFEIFFER, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁹⁸ E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Immagini di Cristo*, op. cit., p. 164.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁰ H. PFEIFFER, *Il Volto Santo di Manoppello*, Carsa Ed., Pescara 2000.

¹⁰¹ E. MORINI, *Icone e Sindone. Alterità, identità, trascendimento*, in: *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 17-34, on p. 25.

¹⁰² R. FALCINELLI, *The Veil of Manoppello: work of art or authentic relic?* The 3rd International Dallas Conference on the Shroud of Turin, Dallas, USA, 8-11 September 2005, pp. 1-11.

Four elements are common between the tradition of the *Mandylion* and the Veronica one: the representation of Christ's face is soon made on a cloth instead of a plank; the image is made through the direct contact with Christ's face; the imprint is produced through water, sweat or blood sweat; extraordinarily different versions of both traditions talk about an image on a linen that includes Jesus' whole body. These stories try to explain the mysterious nature of an image on a piece of cloth, clearly not painted, that appears like the direct imprint of a face. In their following versions they want to account most for the extraordinary nature of the image of the story. These reformulations get closer and closer to the reality of the Shroud and in some sources they start to speak of Jesus' whole body¹⁰³.

In the past years a vivid debate inflamed, among the scholars that do not accept the identification of the Edessa image with the Shroud, like the expert in Patrology Pier Angelo Gramaglia¹⁰⁴, the historian Antonio Lombatti¹⁰⁵ and the historian Victor Saxer¹⁰⁶, and who, on the contrary, supports this identification, like the historian Karlheinz Dietz¹⁰⁷, the historian Daniel Scavone¹⁰⁸ and the historian Gino Zaninotto¹⁰⁹.

The discussion is still going on nowadays, among who, like the historian Andrea Nicolotti, thinks that the Edessa image is «a little piece of cloth, the size of a towel»¹¹⁰ and who, like Mark Guscini, expert of Byzantine manuscripts, thinks that from the sources can be drawn different conclusions: «It should be stressed that there are no artistic representations of the Image of Edessa as a full-body image or with bloodstains and the majority of texts make no reference to either characteristic; but at the same time it is undeniable that at some point in the history of the Image of Edessa, some writers were convinced, for whatever reason, that it was indeed a full-body image on a large cloth that had been folded over (possibly in such a way that only the face was visible) and that it did contain bloodstains»¹¹¹.

In the 6th century there is a rewriting of the *Doctrine of Addai*, entitled *Acts of Thaddeus*¹¹²; this text could be tardier and date back to the 7th-8th century¹¹³. In the text there is the story of

¹⁰³ H. PFEIFFER, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

¹⁰⁴ P.A. GRAMAGLIA, *La Sindone di Torino: alcuni problemi storici*, in *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* XXIV (1988), pp. 524-568; P.A. GRAMAGLIA, *Ancora la Sindone di Torino*, in *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* XXVII (1991), pp. 85-114; P.A. GRAMAGLIA, *Giovanni Skylitzes, il Panno di Edessa e le «sindoni»*, in *Approfondimento Sindone I 2* (1997), pp. 1-16; P.A. GRAMAGLIA, *I cimeli cristiani di Edessa*, in *Approfondimento Sindone III 1* (1999), pp. 1-51.

¹⁰⁵ A. LOMBATTI, *Impossibile identificare la Sindone con il mandylion: ulteriori conferme da tre codici latini. Con un'edizione critica del Codex Vossianus latinus Q69, ff. 6v-6r*, in *Approfondimento Sindone II, 2* (1998), pp. 1-30; A. LOMBATTI, *Novantacinque fonti storiche e letterarie che non possono essere scartate. Una risposta a D. Scavone*, in *Approfondimento Sindone III 2* (1999), pp. 67-96.

¹⁰⁶ V. SAXER, *La Sindone di Torino e la storia*, in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* XLIII 1 (1989), pp. 50-79; V. SAXER, *Le Suaire de Turin aux prises avec l'histoire*, in *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* 76 (1990), pp. 1-55.

¹⁰⁷ K. DIETZ, *Some hypotheses concerning the early history of the Turin Shroud*, in *Sindon* N.S. 16 (2001), pp. 5-54.

¹⁰⁸ D. SCAVONE, *Comments on the article of A. Lombatti, Impossibile identificare la Sindone...», in A.S., II, 2 (1998)*, in *Approfondimento Sindone III 1* (1999), pp. 53-66.

¹⁰⁹ G. ZANINOTTO, *La Sindone di Torino e l'immagine di Edessa. Nuovi contributi*, in *Sindon* N.S. 9-10 (1996), pp. 117-130; G. ZANINOTTO, *Ragionamenti di Lombatti alla I Crociata contro la Sindone*, in *Collegamento pro Sindone*, Settembre-Ottobre 2000, pp. 22-34.

¹¹⁰ A. NICOLOTTI, *Dal Mandylion di Edessa alla Sindone di Torino. Metamorfosi di una leggenda*, op. cit., p. 7.

¹¹¹ M. GUSCINI, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 215.

¹¹² E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Immagini di Cristo*, op. cit., p. 102.

¹¹³ M. GUSCINI, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 145.

Lebbaïos, native of Edessa, who was baptized by John the Baptist, taking the name of Thaddeus and becoming one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. In the narration Abgar's messenger, besides transmitting the invitation of the king, under his order he had to «observe carefully Christ, His looks, His height, His hair, in one word, everything». Anania left. «After giving the letter, he looked Christ carefully and he did not manage to get Him. But He, who knows the hearts, noticed it and asked (for the things he needed) to wash Himself. He was given a *tetrádiplon* cloth (redoubled four times¹¹⁴). After having washed His face, He dried it. As His image had been impressed on the cloth (*sindón*), He gave it to Anania ordering him to bring an oral message to his master. He, meeting his own messenger, prostrated himself and worshipped the image; in that moment he was cured of his illness»¹¹⁵.

An interesting version is in the *Vindobonensis hist. gr.* 45 manuscript that dates back to the 9th-10th century. In this manuscript we read that Abgar's messenger had to «observe carefully Christ, His looks, His height, His hair, in one word, His whole body»¹¹⁶. He was then asked the description of Jesus' whole body.

Important indications on the Edessa image can be found in the *Synaxáron*, a liturgical book with the lives of the saints of the Orthodox Church, and in the *Menaion*, that contains in addition hymns and poems. The basic texts of both books originated with Simeon Metaphrastes (10th century)¹¹⁷.

In some manuscripts of the *Menaion* that exist in the monasteries of Mount Athos, that go from the 12th to the 18th century¹¹⁸, it is written: «looking upon the whole human form of Your image...»¹¹⁹. In some manuscripts of the *Synaxáron* that go from the 12th to the 18th century¹²⁰, still in the monasteries of Mount Athos, Abgar asks Anania to «make a drawing of Jesus, showing in all detail His age, His hair, His face and His whole bodily appearance, as Ananias knew the art of painting very well». We can also read: «In life You wiped Your form onto a shroud, in death You were placed in the final linen shroud»¹²¹.

In some representations, like the one in the church of the Annunciation of the monastery of Gradač in Serbia (14th century), the *Mandyllion* is a big rectangle, much more wide than high, in the middle of which just Christ's head can be seen (fig. 3 above). The rest of the surface shows a grill of lozenges, each one with a flower in the middle. At the edges the fringes of the cloth can be seen. One could assume that the cloth might have been folded many times, hence the employment of the neologism *tetrádiplon*¹²²; folding the Shroud eight times you get exactly the wide rectangle with the head in the middle that you can see on the copies of the *Mandyllion*. This interesting deduction by Wilson¹²³ would be, on the contrary, a «confused reconstruction» according to Nicolotti¹²⁴.

¹¹⁴ K. DIETZ, *Some hypotheses concerning the early history of the Turin Shroud*, op. cit., pp. 5-54, on pp. 10-25; I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., pp. 190-192.

¹¹⁵ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 105.

¹¹⁶ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 146.

¹¹⁷ M. GUSCIN, *La Síndone y la Imagen de Edesa. Investigaciones en los monasterios del Monte Athos (Grecia)*, op. cit., p. 13.

¹¹⁸ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 124.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹²² A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

¹²³ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., pp. 190-192.

¹²⁴ A. NICOLOTTI, *Forme e vicende del Mandilio di Edessa secondo alcune moderne interpretazioni*, in *Sacre impronte e oggetti «non fatti da mano d'uomo» nelle religioni*, op. cit., pp. 279-307 and tables 23-31, on p. 286.

The decoration with lozenges that can be seen on the surface of the cloth¹²⁵ could be the memory of the gold ornament put there by Abgar¹²⁶. Although on the *Mandyllion* we can always see just Jesus' face, sometimes the considerable dimensions of the cloth make us understand that it was not a little cloth. As a clear example of this we have the *Mandyllion* (fig. 3 in the middle) of the church of Christ Pantocrator of the monastery of Dečani in Kosovo (14th century) and the *Mandyllion* (fig. 3 low) of the church of the Panagia Forviotissa of Asinou, Cyprus (14th century). Particularly interesting is the *Ms. lat. 2688* of the National Library of Paris, which dates back to the 13th century¹²⁷. In the folio 77r we can see a miniature in which the *Mandyllion* (fig. 4) is a long cloth that falls down out of its frame.

An exceptional respect is given to the Edessa image, also brought as authoritative evidence to justify the existence of the sacred images during the iconoclastic period. In a 715-731 letter, attributed to Pope Gregory II, the image of Christ is mentioned, «not made by human hands»¹²⁸.

In the same years Germanus I, patriarch of Constantinople (reported by chronicler George the Monk, 9th century), affirmed: «There is in the city of Edessa the image of Christ not made by human hands, that performs amazing wonders. The same Lord, after having imprinted in a *soudáron* the appearance of His same form, sent (the image) that preserves the aspect of His human form through the intermediary Thaddeus apostle to Abgar, toparch of the city of the Edessenes, and cured his illness»¹²⁹.

The same George the Monk said about the iconoclasts: «They fight publicly Christ, who took a wonderful cloth and dried His divine figure sovereignly shining and beautiful; He sent it to the chief of the Edessenes, Abgar, who prayed Him with faith. From that time and until today, thanks to the tradition and to the apostolic exhortation, in view of recognize and of remember what Christ did and suffered for us, as it is told in the holy pages of the Gospel, we make images and we worship them with respect, in spite of Christ's opponents»¹³⁰. Still dreadfully actual words, after twelve centuries.

About 726 Andrew of Crete, in his work *On the veneration of the images*, referring to the «venerable image of Our Lord Jesus Christ on a cloth», affirms: «It was an imprint of His corporal features and He did not need colored paint»¹³¹. In the same period St. John Damascenus lists, among the things that the faithful worship, the sepulchral linens of Christ¹³². Against iconoclasm, he defended the legitimacy of the images referring to the Edessa one. In the treatise *On the Orthodox faith* we can read: «The same Lord applied a cloth on His same divine and vivifying face and impressed His appearance on it». In the *Speech on the images* he writes that Jesus «took the cloth and put it on His face; His same features impressed on it»¹³³. It is interesting to notice that while in the second text the word that

¹²⁵ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., p. 229.

¹²⁶ I. WILSON, *The Shroud of Turin. The burial cloth of Jesus Christ?*, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

¹²⁷ I. RAGUSA, *The iconography of the Abgar cycle in Paris MS. Latin 2688 and its relationship to Byzantine cycles*, in *Miniatura 2* (1989), pp. 35-51; A. TOMEI, *Il manoscritto lat. 2688 della Bibliothèque Nationale de France: la Veronica a Roma*, in *Medioevo: immagine e racconto*, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Parma, 27-30 Settembre 2000, edited by A.C. QUINTAVALLE, Electa, Milano 2003, pp. 398-406.

¹²⁸ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

¹²⁹ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 81.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹³² P. SAVIO, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 72-73; A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 133-134.

¹³³ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 82.

indicates the cloth is *rákos*, the one commonly used for the cloth on which the image is imprinted, in the first text it is *imátion*, which normally indicates a cloak¹³⁴.

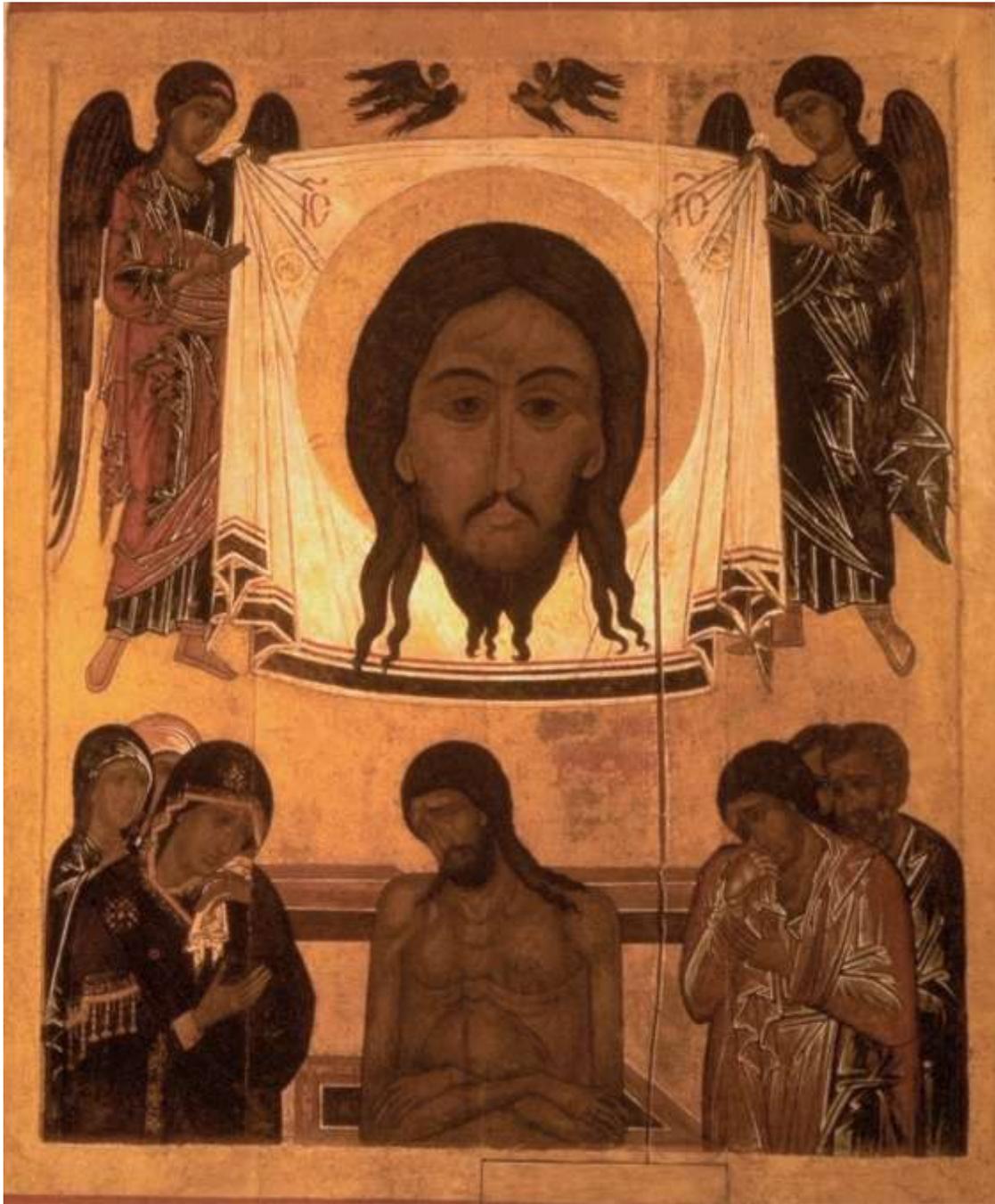


Fig. 6 – The *Mandylion* with the *Imago Pietatis*, Kolomenskoe Museum, Moscow, 16th century.

John of Jerusalem, secretary of Theodore, Patriarch of Antioch, about 764 composed a speech in favor of the sacred images, to refute the iconoclastic council held in Hieria in 754

¹³⁴ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

by convocation of the emperor Constantine V Copronimus. He wrote: «Actually Christ Himself made an image, the one that is told not made by human hands, and until today it still exist and it is worshipped and no one says it is an idol among the people sound in spirit. Because if God had known that it would have been an occasion of idolatry, He would not have left it on Earth»¹³⁵.



Fig. 7 – Comparison between the frontal image of the Shroud, with the head bent joining together the two creases in the area of the neck (on the left), and the *Imago Pietatis* of the sanctuary of the SS. Pity of Cannobio (VB), 15th century (on the right).

The patriarch Niceforo I of Constantinople between 814 and 820 in the *Antirrheticus* affirmed: «If Christ, urged by a believer, impressed His divine appearance on a cloth and He sent it, why are those who represent it blamed?». And in the text *Against the Iconomache* he insists saying that we have to ask «Christ Himself, who making there and then the representation of Himself in divine appearance, He sent it to who asked for it»¹³⁶. In the same

¹³⁵ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

period Theophanes the Chronographer recalled: « Did not Christ Himself send to Abgar His own image not made by human hands?»¹³⁷.

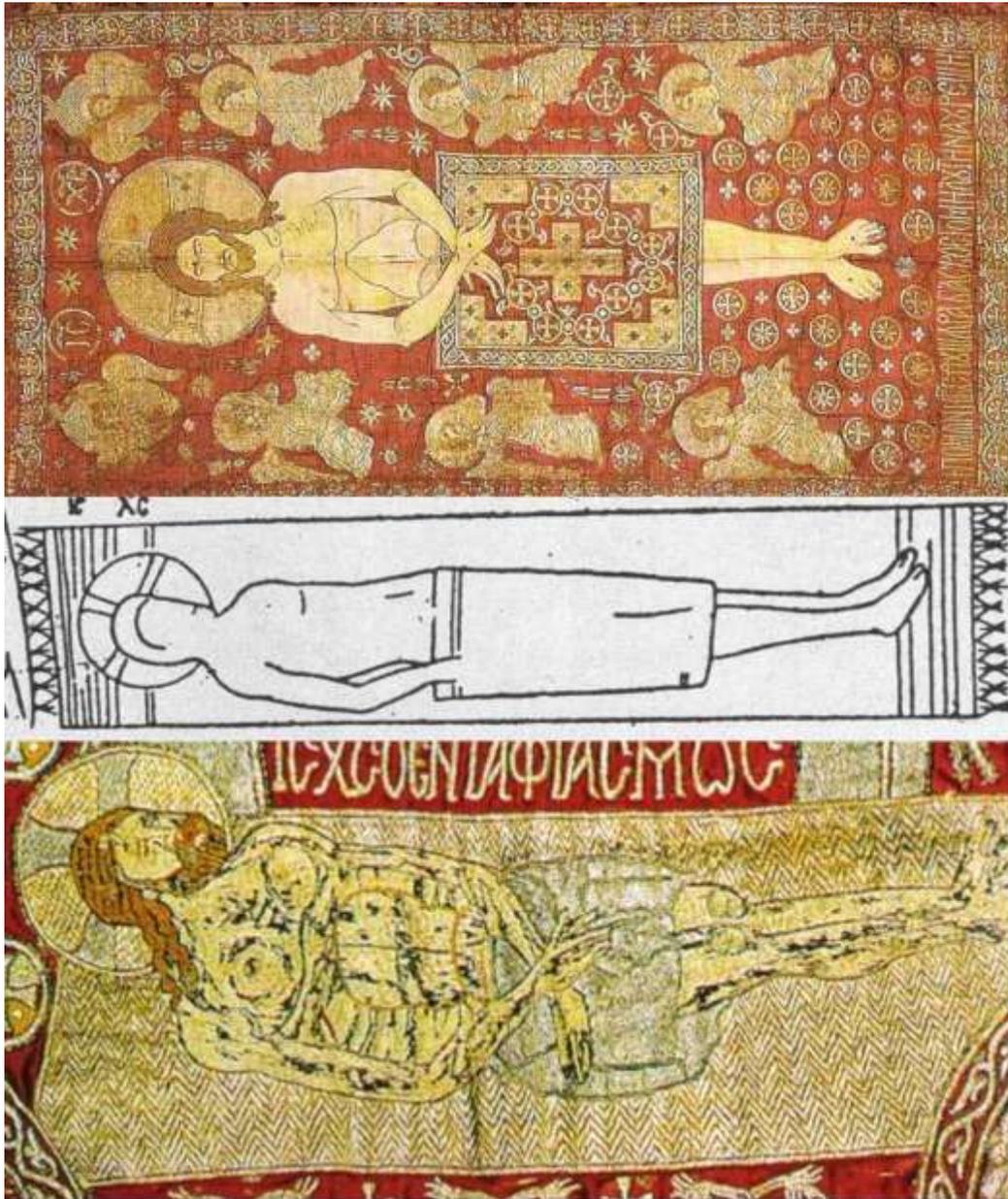


Fig. 8 – Above: the epitaphios of Stefan Uros II Milutin, king of Serbia between 1282 and 1321, Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church of Belgrade. In the middle: the sketch by G. Millet that reproduces the fresco, now lost, in the church of the Mother of God Source of Life, Messenia, Peloponnesus, 12th century. Low: the epitaphios of the monastery of Stavronikita at the Mount Athos, 14th-15th century.

George Syncellus, who had been secretary of Tarasios, patriarch of Constantinople (784-806), after the death of the latter wrote in his *Summary of Chronography* that Thaddeus' arrival in Edessa and King Abgar's recovery happened in the year 36 of the Incarnation. The

¹³⁷ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 86.

apostle «illuminated all the inhabitants with his words and his actions. The whole city worships him until today; they also worship the Lord's appearance not made by human hands»¹³⁸.

In a synod letter of 836, addressed to the emperor Theophilus, from the Eastern Patriarchs Christopher of Alexandria, Jacob of Antioch and Basil of Jerusalem, we can read: «The same Savior impressed the imprint of His holy shape in a *soudáron*, sent it to a certain Abgar, toparch of the great city of the Edessenes, through Thaddeus, the apostle of divine language; He wiped the divine sweat of His face and left there all His characteristic traits»¹³⁹.

To argue against the iconoclasts, St. Theodore Studite (9th century) speaks of the Shroud «in which the Christ was wrapped and laid in the tomb»¹⁴⁰ and of the image not made by human hands that was sent to Abgar: «In order to clearly entrust us His divine features, our Savior who had been dressed with them, impressed the form His own face and portrayed it touching the cloth with His same skin»¹⁴¹.



Fig. 9 – The Deposition from the cross of the church of St. Panteleimon, Nerezi, Skopje, Macedonia, 1164.

¹³⁸ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p.86.

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 89-90.

¹⁴⁰ P. SAVIO, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁴¹ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 89.

The *Legend of St. Alexis*, composed in Constantinople in the 8th century, narrates that in Edessa there was «the image not made by human hands of the features of our master, the Lord Jesus Christ»¹⁴²; in this text, the cloth on which the image is impressed is called *sindón*¹⁴³. Also in the *Nouthesia Gerontos* Jesus impresses His face in a *sindón*¹⁴⁴.

St. Alexis' wanderings in Rome can be put next to Pope Stephen III's speech, who in 769 to the Lateran Synod spoke in favor of the legitimacy of the use of the sacred images referring to the Edessa one, which he knew about thanks to the stories of faithful that came from the Eastern regions¹⁴⁵. The sermon is also about the glorious image «of the face and of the whole body» of Jesus on a cloth¹⁴⁶. This part of the text, that could be an interpolation, certainly prior to 1130, explains how the impression of Jesus' body happened: «He stretched His whole body on a cloth, white as snow, on which the glorious image of the Lord's face and the length of His whole body was so divinely transformed that it was sufficient, for those who could not see the Lord bodily in the flesh, to see the transfiguration made on the cloth»¹⁴⁷. About 1212 Gervase of Tilbury will quote this text in his work *Otia imperialia*¹⁴⁸.

The *Codex Vossianus Latinus Q 69* ff. 6r-6v, preserved in the *Rijksuniversiteit* of Leiden (Netherlands), is a manuscript of the 10th century that refers to a Syriac original prior to the 8th century, period in which it was translated in Latin by the archiatre Smira. In it we can read that while answering Abgar's letter, Jesus writes: «If you wish to look at my appearance as it is physically, I send you this sheet on which you will see portrayed not only my face, but you could look at the form of my whole body divinely transfigured».

Later on the text continues: «The mediator between God and men, in order to satisfy completely the king, laid Himself down with the whole body on a sheet as white as snow. And then a wonderful event happened, an amazing event to see and to hear. The glorious image of the Lord's face, with also the most noble form of His body, for divine virtue suddenly transformed on the sheet. In this way, to those who have not seen the Lord coming in a human body, it is enough, to see Him, the transfiguration produced on the sheet. Still uncorrupted, despite its age, the sheet is in Mesopotamia of Syria, in the city of Edessa, in a room of the major church. During the year, on the occasion of the most important feasts of the Lord Savior, among hymns, psalms and special canticles, the cloth is pulled out of a golden casket and worshipped with great reverence by all the people»¹⁴⁹.

An allusion to the image of the whole body was made, about 1140, also by Ordericus Vitalis. In his *Historia ecclesiastica* he names Abgar «to whom the Lord Jesus sent a sacred letter and a precious linen with which He wiped the sweat from His face and in which shines the image of the same Savior, painted in a wonderful way, which offers to the eyes the appearance and the height of the body of the Lord»¹⁵⁰. A Muslim author, Massûdî, in 944

¹⁴² A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁴³ I. WILSON, *Discovering more of the Shroud's early history*, 1st International Congress on the Holy Shroud in Spain, Valencia, April 28-30, 2012, pp. 1-32, on p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ M. GUSCIN, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., p. 154.

¹⁴⁵ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁴⁶ I. RAMELLI, *Dal Mandilione di Edessa alla Sindone: alcune note sulle testimonianze antiche*, op. cit., p. 179.

¹⁴⁷ I. WILSON, *The Shroud of Turin. The burial cloth of Jesus Christ?*, op. cit., p. 135.

¹⁴⁸ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

¹⁴⁹ G. ZANINOTTO, *L'immagine Edessena: impronta dell'intera persona di Cristo. Nuove conferme dal codex Vossianus Latinus Q 69 del sec. X*, in *L'identification scientifique de l'Homme du Linceul: Jésus de Nazareth*, Actes du Symposium Scientifique International, Rome 10-12 Juin 1993, OEIL-F.-X. de Guibert, Paris 1995, pp. 57-62.

¹⁵⁰ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 57.

wrote that in Edessa there was a cloth «that was needed to dry Jesus of Nazareth, when He came out of the Baptism waters»¹⁵¹.



Fig. 10 –The unction of Jesus' corpse and the visit of the *mirofore* at the tomb, Pray Codex, f. 28r, National Library, Budapest, 1192-1195 (on the left) and comparison between the front image of the Shroud (in the middle) and the Christ of the Pray Codex (on the right).

The Edessa image belonged to the Orthodox/Melkite Church. The Nestorians made a copy of it in the 6th century and the Monophysites/Jacobites made another in the 8th century¹⁵². According to the Arabian Jacobite historian Yahia ibn Giair, the Edessa image was preserved folded and put between two tiles under the altar of the Great Church of Edessa officiated by the Melkite. When the Byzantine emperor Romanus I Lecapenus wanted to take possession of the image, once the diplomatic requests failed, sent the army under the command of the Armenian general John Curcuas. The bishop of Samosata, Abramius, who received the image on behalf of the emperor, was also shown the two copies of the Nestorians and of the Monophysites to verify which one was authentic¹⁵³. But actually all the three confessions thought they had the only authentic icon and they thought that those of the other two

¹⁵¹ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁵² G. ZANINOTTO, *La Sindone/Mandyllion nel silenzio di Costantinopoli (944-1242)*, op. cit., pp. 463-464.

¹⁵³ E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Immagini di Cristo*, op. cit., p. 123.

communities were copies¹⁵⁴. One of these images of Christ's face will be taken to Constantinople between 1163 and 1176¹⁵⁵.

The reliquary that contained the precious effigy delivered to Abramius arrived in Constantinople on the 15th August 944 surrounded by a triumphal reception. It was put for a first veneration in the church of St. Mary of Blachernae and the following day a solemn procession accompanied the moving of the reliquary through the streets of Constantinople as far as St. Sophia. From here it was moved to the *Bukoleon* (the imperial palace) and placed in the chapel of St. Mary of the Pharos together with the other relics of the Passion¹⁵⁶. The event was remembered by a liturgical feast on the anniversary, on the 16th August¹⁵⁷. Some hymns composed for this feast hint at the image, particularly worshipped, to which it is attributed a thaumaturgic power¹⁵⁸.

There is another acquisition in favor of the identification of the Edessa image with the Shroud: The *Codex Vat. Gr. 511* ff. 143-150v., which dates back to the 10th century. In it is reported the Oration of Gregory, archdeacon and referendarius of the Great Church of Constantinople (St. Sophia). After a scrupulous list of the colors used to draw the faces of the icons, the orator affirms that the image has not been produced with artificial colors, as it is just «splendor». And that is how Gregory explains the imprint: «The splendor – and may everyone be inspired by this narration – has been impressed just by the beads of sweat of the agony flowed from the face which is source of life, dripped down like drops of blood, also like from God's finger. These really are the beauties that produced the coloring of the imprint of Christ, which has been further embellished by the drops of blood dripped from His own side. Both are full of teachings: blood and water there, sweat and image here. What resemblance of the events! These things come from the One and the Same». On the Edessa image, then, you could not see only the face, but also the chest at least until the level of the side¹⁵⁹.

This interpretation is not shared by Guscini¹⁶⁰; but it is unacceptable to think, like the psychiatrist Gaetano Ciccone and his wife Carmela Sturmann, that the orator refers to «blood coming from the wound on Jesus' side sprinkled on the depiction of the face»¹⁶¹.

In Constantinople the reliquary of the *Mandyllion* must have been opened and so it became clear that it did not include just the face, but Christ's whole body with the signs of the Passion. The *tetrádiplon* cloth must have been partly opened: this is the only possible explanation for the artistic creation, during the 12th century, of the *Imago pietatis*, that

¹⁵⁴ E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Immagini di Cristo*, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁵⁵ A. DESREUMAUX, *Histoire du roi Abgar et de Jésus*, Brepols, Turnhout 1993, p. 168.

¹⁵⁶ E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ, *Immagini di Cristo*, op. cit., p. 124.

¹⁵⁷ G. GHARIB, *La festa del Santo Mandyllion nella Chiesa Bizantina*, in *La Sindone e la Scienza*, op. cit., pp. 31-50.

¹⁵⁸ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 73-74.

¹⁵⁹ A.M. DUBARLE, *L'Image d'Edesse dans l'homélie de Grégoire le Référendaire*, in *L'identification scientifique de l'Homme du Linceul: Jésus de Nazareth*, cit., pp. 51-56 ; G. ZANINOTTO, *Orazione di Gregorio il Referendario in occasione della traslazione a Costantinopoli dell'immagine Edessena nell'anno 944*, in *La Sindone, indagini scientifiche*, Atti del IV Congresso Nazionale di Studi sulla Sindone, Siracusa, 17-18 Ottobre 1987, Ed. Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo (MI) 1988, pp. 344-352.

¹⁶⁰ M. GUSCINI, *The Image of Edessa*, op. cit., pp. 208.

¹⁶¹ G. CICCONE – C. STURMANN CICCONE, *La Sindone svelata e i quaranta sudari*, Casa Ed. Donnino, Livorno 2006, p. 185.

portrays the dead Christ standing upright in the tomb¹⁶². A splendid example of this is the *Imago pietatis* of the basilica of Holy Cross in Jerusalem in Rome, which dates back to the 14th century¹⁶³. The *Imago pietatis* of the basilica of the Sts. Four Crowned in Rome¹⁶⁴ (fig. 5) belongs to the same period. Another interesting icon is that of the *Mandylion* together with the *Imago pietatis* (16th century) preserved in the Kolomenskoe Museum in Moscow (fig. 6). Besides the front crossed arms, in these images Jesus always has the head bent on the right side; Pfeiffer noticed that joining together the two folds present in the neck area, you get a flexion of the head right on that side¹⁶⁵ (fig. 7).



Fig. 11 – Bible of Holkham, f. 32r, f. 32v and f. 33r, British Library, London, 14th century. On the left: the Crucifixion. In the middle: the covering of the hips and the wounded side. On the right: the Deposition.

Also the depictions of Jesus' whole body on a sheet begin in the 12th century. The *aèr* liturgical veil of the Byzantine ritual is embroidered with the figure of the lying Christ¹⁶⁶. The fresco in the church of the Mother of God *Source of Life* in Messenia, in the Peloponnesus, that is the most ancient example of *melismòs* (the *fractio panis*)¹⁶⁷ is from that period. At the sides of the cloth you can notice the fringes, which recall the ones present on the ancient depictions of the *Mandylion*. Of the fresco, now lost, it remains a sketch by G. Millet (fig. 8 in the middle). Another example, still belonging to the 12th century, is on the enamel reliquary of the ancient Stroganoff Collection, today in the *Ermitage* of St. Petersburg. This kind of

¹⁶² H. PFEIFFER, *La immagine della Sindone e quella della Veronica*, in *La Sindone, la Storia, la Scienza*, Ed. CentroStampa, Leinì (TO) 1986, pp. 41-51 and tables I-XII, on p. 48.

¹⁶³ D. SCAVONE, *Greek Epitaphioi and other evidence for the Shroud in Constantinople up to 1204*, in *Proceedings of the 1999 Shroud of Turin International Research Conference*, Richmond, Virginia, June 18–20, 1999, Magisterium Press, Glen Allen, Virginia, USA 2000, pp. 196-211, on p. 199-200.

¹⁶⁴ H. PFEIFFER, *Le piaghe di Cristo nell'arte e la Sindone*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 89-104, on p. 94.

¹⁶⁵ H. PFEIFFER, *Le piaghe di Cristo nell'arte e la Sindone*, op. cit., on p. 92; H. PFEIFFER, *La immagine della Sindone e quella della Veronica*, op. cit., tav. IX.

¹⁶⁶ E. MORINI, *Le «sindoni» ricamate. Simbologia e iconologia dei veli liturgici nel rito bizantino*, in: *Guardare la Sindone. Cinquecento anni di liturgia sindonica*, edited by G.M. ZACCONE e G. GHIBERTI, Effatà Editrice, Cantalupa (TO) 2007, pp. 229-257, on p. 233.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

representation will be then present on the Byzantine liturgical veil called *Epitáfios Thrénos* (funeral lament)¹⁶⁸ and on the *Plaščanica* (Sudarium) in the Russian sacred art¹⁶⁹. The reference to the Shroud is evident also in a Byzantine ivory (12th century) preserved in the *Victoria & Albert Museum* in London¹⁷⁰.

A precious epitaphios is the veil of Stefan Uros II Milutin, king of Serbia between 1282 and 1321, today preserved in the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church of Belgrade¹⁷¹ (fig. 8 above). The starry background, present in the most epitaphios, must be noticed. Other very remarkable epitaphios are the one of Thessalonica (14th century) preserved in the Museum of the Byzantine Civilization of Salonika¹⁷² and the one (fig. 8 low) of the monastery of Stavronikita on Mount Athos (14th-15th century)¹⁷³, both with the herringbone cloth of the Shroud that recalls the original linen of the Shroud.

The fresco of the church of St. Pantaleimon in Nerezi, in Macedonia, that dates back to 1164, is very interesting: Jesus is portrayed lying on a large sheet that presents geometrical drawings that look like the ones that often appear in the reproductions of the Edessa image¹⁷⁴ (fig. 9). Another feature present in the iconography of the Edessa image is a stylized floral decoration; you can see it, for example, in the Holy Face (13th century) preserved in the cathedral of Laon, France. A similar motif can be found in Christ's deposition sheet of the Psalter of Melisenda f. 9r (1131-1143), preserved in the British Library of London.

A miniature of the *Pray Codex* of the National Library of Budapest (fig. 10), that dates back to 1192-1195¹⁷⁵, is clearly inspired by the Shroud. In the upper scene of the folio 28r it is portrayed the unction of Christ, laid down from the cross on a sheet: the body is completely naked and the hands cross to cover the lower part of the abdomen. The thumbs are not shown. On the forehead there is a sign that recalls the similar trickle of blood that can be observed on the Shroud.

Nicolotti's objections are groundless: «The sheet is unrolled in the sense of the width»; «The man of the Shroud crosses the hands, not the forearms»; «You just have to turn the page to see the risen Christ with all the fingers»; «On Jesus' forehead, above the right eye, there is a little dark sign that would correspond to the trickle of blood that can be seen on the Shroud face. But the sign appears as an indistinct stain»; «And it does not even surprise the Shroud scholars that Jesus' body and the sheet lack the wounds of the nails, of the scourging and of the spear, that on the Shroud appear so evident because of the drips of blood»¹⁷⁶. Clearly the artist reported, in a stylized way, the details that had caught him; nor can we expect that he, while portraying the risen Christ, would continue portraying Him with the thumbs bent.

¹⁶⁸ M. THEOCHARIS, "Epitafi" della liturgia bizantina e la Sindone, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 105-121, on pp. 106-108.

¹⁶⁹ P. CAZZOLA, *Il Volto Santo e il Sudario di Cristo (Plaščanica) nell'arte sacra russa*, in *La Sindone e la Scienza*, op. cit., pp. 51-57; P. CAZZOLA, *I Volti Santi e le Pietà*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 158-163.

¹⁷⁰ I. WILSON, *The Blood and the Shroud*, The Free Press, New York 1998, p. 147.

¹⁷¹ I. WILSON, *Icone ispirate alla Sindone*, op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁷² M. THEOCHARIS, "Epitafi" della liturgia bizantina e la Sindone, op. cit., p. 117.

¹⁷³ M. GUSCIN, *La Sindone y la Imagen de Edesa. Investigaciones en los monasterios del Monte Athos (Grecia)*, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

¹⁷⁴ I. WILSON, *Holy Faces, Secret Places*, Doubleday, London 1991, p. 152.

¹⁷⁵ A.M. DUBARLE, *L'icona del "Manoscritto Pray"*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 181-188, on p. 181.

¹⁷⁶ A. NICOLOTTI, *I Templari e la Sindone, storia di un falso*, Salerno Ed., Roma 2011, pp. 87-88.

In the lower scene we can see the arrival at the tomb of the pious women, the *mirofore*, to whom the angel shows the empty sheet. According to Nicolotti, on the contrary, «the angel points at a sarcophagus whose cover had been removed and superimposed diagonally, with a funeral cloth on top of it»¹⁷⁷. If it were so, the cavity of the empty tomb should have been visible below; but Nicolotti thinks that this tomb had «two stones»¹⁷⁸.

The upper part of the empty sheet has a pattern that imitates the herringbone cloth of the Shroud, while little red crosses cover the lower part. Under the angel's foot you can notice two red winding marks that could represent two trickles of blood. In both parts of the cloth you can see some little circles, arranged in the same sequence of a group of four burning holes that on the Shroud is repeated four times¹⁷⁹. This damage to the relic is certainly prior to the 1532 fire: in fact these signs are reproduced on a pictorial copy of 1516 preserved in the collegiate church of St. Gommaire in Lierre in Belgium¹⁸⁰.

It is impressing the recall to the Shroud in four miniatures of the *Bible of Holkham*¹⁸¹ preserved in the British Library of London, an Anglo-Norman manuscript made in London in the 14th century. In the folio 29v there is the scene of the scourging and the signs of the strokes are evident on the whole naked body. In the scene of the folio 32r there is the crucifixion and the feet are nailed in a twisted position. Jesus crucified is still naked and in the scene of the folio 32v the Virgin Mary takes off her veil to cover His hips. The blood from the transfixed side falls down abundantly along Longinus' spear and in the folio 33r there is the representation of the Deposition (Fig. 11). The portrayal of the naked Jesus during the scourging, with His body full of wounds, can be also found on two psalters of the 9th century, the Utrecht Psalter and the Stuttgart Psalter¹⁸².

Another detail of the Shroud influenced the artists for the representation of the crucifixion. On the relic it seems to see one leg shorter than the other: it is the left one, which stayed more bent on the cross due to the superimposition of the left foot on the right one and fixed in this way by the cadaveric stiffness. Starting from the 8th century, Jesus is not portrayed any more rigid and upright, but with the head bent on the right side and the body moved on one side, so that it describes a movement, defined by the scholars «Byzantine curve». The artists, convinced by influence of the Shroud that Jesus had a shorter leg, had to give a curve to the hips to get the feet nailed in the same height. An example of this is the crucifix by Cimabue (13th century) preserved in the church of St. Dominic in Arezzo (Fig. 12).

The tradition of the lame Christ also influences the representation of the Infant Jesus, because the Redeemer is considered lame since birth. Many icons of the Virgin Mary portray her with her Son in her arms and often the little feet are represented in different ways: one is normal, while the other is shorter and more twisted¹⁸³.

¹⁷⁷ A. NICOLOTTI, *I Templari e la Sindone, storia di un falso*, op. cit., p. 87.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁷⁹ A.M. DUBARLE, *L'icona del "Manoscritto Pray"*, op. cit., pp. 186-187.

¹⁸⁰ L. FOSSATI, *The Documentary Value of the Lier Shroud*, in *Acheiropoietos, "non fait de main d'homme"* op. cit., pp. 195-196.

¹⁸¹ J.R. DEPOLD, *"How they will suffer pain": death and damnation in the Holkham Bible*, Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, USA 2009.

¹⁸² H. PFEIFFER, *Le piaghe di Cristo nell'arte e la Sindone*, op. cit., on p.103.

¹⁸³ P. CAZZOLA – M.D. FUSINA, *Tracce sindoniche nell'arte bizantino-russa*, in *La Sindone, Scienza e Fede*, Atti del II Convegno Nazionale di Sindonologia, Bologna 27-29 Novembre 1981, CLUEB, Bologna 1983, pp. 129-135.

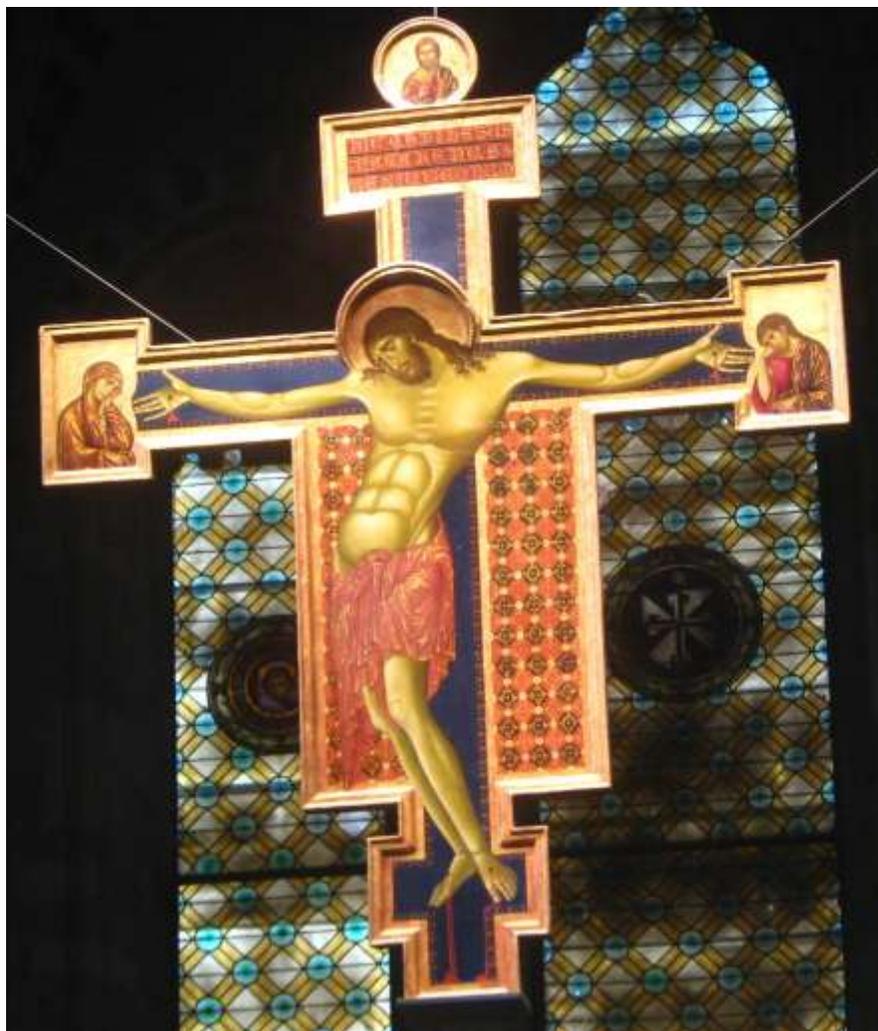


Fig. 12 – Cimabue's crucifix of the church of St. Dominic, Arezzo, 13th century.

The presence of the Shroud in Constantinople is documented by other written testimonies, that date back mostly to the 11th-12th century. About 1095 a letter attributed to the emperor Alexios I Komnenos lists, among the relics kept in the city, «the cloths that were found in the tomb after the Resurrection»¹⁸⁴. William of Tyre narrates that Manuel I Komnenos in 1171 showed Amalric I, king of Jerusalem, the relic of the Passion, among which there was the Shroud. Jesus' funeral linens in Constantinople are named also in 1151-1154 by Nicholas Soemundarson, abbot of the monastery of Thyngeyr in Iceland¹⁸⁵ and in 1207 by Nicholas of Otranto¹⁸⁶, abbot of the monastery of Casole, who probably saw them then in Athens¹⁸⁷.

Nicholas Mesarites, custodian of the relics preserved in the chapel of St. Mary of the Pharos, in 1201 had to defend them from a sack attempt and he did it remembering the rebels the holiness of the place, were they kept, among other things, the *soudáron* with the funeral

¹⁸⁴ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

¹⁸⁶ P. SAVIO, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

¹⁸⁷ D. SCAVONE, *The Shroud of Turin in Constantinople, the documentary evidence*, in *Sindon N.S.* 1 (1989), pp. 113-128, on pp. 120-121.

cloths. «They - Mesarites underlines - yet know the scent, they defy the corruption, because they wrapped the ineffable dead, naked and embalmed after the Passion». It is logical to deduce that while mentioning the naked body, Mesarites referred to the image of the entire body of the Savior on a sheet¹⁸⁸. Speaking to the rebels, after having enumerated ten among the most precious relics, Mesarites follows: «But now I put in front of your eyes the Legislator faithfully portrayed on a towel and engraved in a fragile clay with such a drawing art that it is clear that this does not come from human hands»¹⁸⁹.



Fig. 13 – Comparison among the Shroud face (on the left), the face of Templecombe, England, 13th-15th century (in the middle), and the *Santo Rostro* of the cathedral of Jaén, Spain, 14th century (on the right).

In 1207 Mesarites makes another reference to the image of Jesus on a cloth in his brother Giovanni's funeral oration, where he affirms: «The indescribable, appeared *similar to men*¹⁹⁰, like us it is describable, having been impressed in a prototype on the towel». The theologian A. M. Dubarle comments: «What is remarkable, is that for him the miraculous image is the *prototype*, the model of the images made by human hands and their justification»¹⁹¹.

In his work *La conquête de Constantinople*, Robert de Clari, chronicler of the IV Crusade, wrote about the wonders that could be seen before the city fell (12th April 1204) in the hands of the Latin Crusaders: among these, there was a church called «St. Mary of Blachernae, where was the Shroud (*Sydoines*) in which Our Lord had been wrapped, that every Friday was raised upright, so that it was possible to see well the figure of Our Lord. No one, nor Greek nor French, knew what happened to this Shroud when the city was conquered»¹⁹².

¹⁸⁸ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁹⁰ Fil 2,7.

¹⁹¹ A.M. DUBARLE, *Histoire ancienne du linceul de Turin*, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

¹⁹² P. SAVIO, *Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 190-191; P. SAVIO, *Le impronte di Gesù nella Santa Sindone*, in *Sindon* 9 (1965), pp. 12-23.

According to Nicolotti, «the story of Robert de Clari is not much believable»¹⁹³. He would not have seen the Shroud but a silk veil, in front of an icon of the Virgin Mary, which would have been raised miraculously every Friday. On the contrary the crusader becomes believable when among the relics of St. Mary of the Pharos names a tile and a cloth: «The author is clearly speaking of the Mandylion and of the holy tile», Nicolotti comments¹⁹⁴. And he does not accept the hypothesis that that Mandylion could be a copy, while the original could have been opened, recognized as Shroud and worshipped in St. Mary of Blachernae¹⁹⁵.

There are three principal objections formulated to deny the identification of the Shroud with the Mandylion of Edessa: 1) Robert de Clari in 1204 saw the Mandylion in the Chapel of the Pharos and a *Sydoines* in the church of the Blachernae, which was in the opposite part of the city¹⁹⁶. 2) During the 1204 sack the Shroud disappears, but not the Mandylion; this will be sent only afterwards to St. Louis, king of France, together with other relics and it will stay in Paris until it will be destroyed during the French Revolution¹⁹⁷. 3) If the Mandylion were the Shroud folded in order to show just the face, the exposed part would be darker¹⁹⁸.

But actually, the objections are not decisive, because the Mandylion in Edessa was not exposed to light but closed in a reliquary and what Robert de Clari sees at the Pharos is just the reliquary, which in that moment could have been empty, as the Shroud was exposed at the Blachernae. This reliquary will be sent to Paris with other relics¹⁹⁹. And among these could have been one of the other two Mandylion of Edessa.

The philologist Carlo Maria Mazzucchi thinks that the discovery of the true nature of the *Mandylion* and the transfer to St. Mary of Blachernae could have taken place between 1201 and 1203, among the most hectic years of the story of Byzantium. We must remember that when it arrived in Constantinople, as it was said before, the Edessa image was first taken to St. Mary of Blachernae and then placed in the chapel of St. Mary of the Pharos; so a transfer between the two churches is not improbable. Moreover about 1100 the Byzantine historian George Kedrenos wrote that in the winter of 1036-1037 the *Mandylion* was brought in procession by foot from the imperial palace to St. Mary of Blachernae to celebrate the end of a long drought²⁰⁰.

The Shroud seen by Robert de Clari, anyway, in 1204 disappears from Constantinople. Probably Othon de La Roche, Latin Duke of Athens, who had been one of the protagonists of the IV crusade, brought in France the venerated sheet. About the middle of the 14th century the Shroud appeared in Lirey, in France, in possession of Geoffroy de Charny, whose wife,

¹⁹³ A. NICOLOTTI, *I Templari e la Sindone, storia di un falso*, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁹⁴ A. NICOLOTTI, *Dal Mandylion di Edessa alla Sindone di Torino. Metamorfosi di una leggenda*, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

¹⁹⁵ D. SCAVONE, *Documenting the Shroud's missing years*, in *Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Scientific approach to the Acheiropoietos Images*, op. cit., pp. 87-94, on p. 88.

¹⁹⁶ A. NICOLOTTI, *Una reliquia costantinopolitana dei panni sepolcrali di Gesù secondo la Cronaca del crociato Robert de Clari*, in *Medioevo greco* 11 (2011), pp. 151-196, on p. 162.

¹⁹⁷ A. NICOLOTTI, *Forme e vicende del Mandilio di Edessa secondo alcune moderne interpretazioni*, op. cit., pp. 302-307.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

¹⁹⁹ C. BARTA, *What the Shroud is and it is not*, 1st International Congress on the Holy Shroud in Spain, Valencia, April 28-30, 2012, pp. 1-20, on pp. 7-9.

²⁰⁰ C.M. MAZZUCCHI, *La testimonianza più antica dell'esistenza di una sindone a Costantinopoli*, in *Aevum* 57 (1983), pp. 227-231, on p. 230.

Jeanne de Vergy, was a descendant of Othon de la Roche²⁰¹. Moreover Geoffroy de Charny had the same name, and was probably a relative, of a Templar who ended up on a stake in 1314²⁰². According to Wilson, the relic could have been kept and worshipped for a while by Templars²⁰³. The theory has been taken again by the historian Barbara Frale²⁰⁴ and contested by Nicolotti²⁰⁵.



Fig. 14 – Comparison between the Shroud face, photographic positive (on the left) and photographic negative (on the right), and the icon of the Holy Mandylion, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, 14th century (in the middle).

During the Second World War, an interesting representation has been found on a panel made of oak wood in Templecombe, in England. The place takes its name from the fact that from 1185 until the beginning of the 14th century it was the site of a Templar Preceptory²⁰⁶. On the panel there is a bearded face, whose borders are blurred. There are no doubts that it represents Jesus: you just have to confront it with the *Santo Rostro*²⁰⁷, a 14th century holy face preserved in the cathedral of Jaén, in Spain (fig. 13). And it is unequivocally similar to the Shroud: with the technique of the superimposition in polarized light 125 points of congruence between the two images have been found²⁰⁸. The objections concerning the differences between the Shroud face and the Templecombe one, whose mouth and eyes are open, do not keep in mind that observing the Shroud naturally, it can actually seem to see the mouth and the eyes open; it is the photographic negative that reveals that they are closed, on the contrary. Also the lack of the blood and the wounds is not significant: there are many other holy faces

²⁰¹ A. PIANA, “Missing years” of the Holy Shroud, in *Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Scientific approach to the Acheiropoietos Images*, op. cit., pp. 95-102.

²⁰² I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., p. 274.

²⁰³ I. WILSON, *The Shroud of Turin. The burial cloth of Jesus Christ?*, op. cit., pp. 154-165.

²⁰⁴ B. FRALE, *I Templari e la sindone di Cristo*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2009.

²⁰⁵ A. NICOLOTTI, *I Templari e la Sindone, storia di un falso*, op. cit., pp. 28-85, 89-95, 100-104 and 127-136.

²⁰⁶ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., p. 266.

²⁰⁷ I. WILSON, *Holy Faces, Secret Places*, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁰⁸ R. MORGAN, *Testimonianza iconografica della Sindone in Inghilterra*, in *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, op. cit., pp. 189-194, on pp. 193-194.

of Jesus, inspired by the Shroud, that are amended from the signs of the suffering. You just have to think to the icon of the *Holy Mandylion* (14th century) of the Tretyakov Gallery of Moscow (fig. 14). But it still remains incomprehensible how Nicolotti could see on the Shroud face two mustaches: in fact he writes that the «corpse» of the Shroud «has a big mustache under the nose and immediately under the bottom lip»²⁰⁹.

With the radiocarbon method, the Templecombe panel has been dated between 1280 and 1440 AD and the scientists that carried out the exam commented: «The dates are entirely compatible with the wood being cut in the period AD 1280-1310, and thus the painting might be associated with the Knights Templar, perhaps commissioned prior to their suppression in 1307 by King Philip the Fair of France»²¹⁰.

Wilson thinks that a confirmation of the veneration for the Holy Face of Christ by the Templars can be found in some seals that belonged to German Masters of the Temple²¹¹. It is surprising that Nicolotti, while describing them, refers to the upper part of the shoulders «covered by the purple cloak that Jesus brought to the Golgotha»²¹², obviously in contrast with the Gospels²¹³, where, on the contrary, we read that Jesus had been dressed again with His clothes to be taken to the Calvary.

The Templecombe panel could have been the cover of a wooden box in which the Shroud was kept. It is interesting to notice that when it was discovered, the panel had bright colors, bright blue and red. Moreover in the reconstruction we can notice a starry background²¹⁴. This detail recalls what Simeon of Thessalonica (15th century) wrote in the *De Sacra liturgia*: «At the end the priest covers the altar with the epitaphios. This symbolizes the firmament, where is the star, and it also recalls the funeral shroud, which wrapped Jesus' body sprinkled with myrrh: the mystery is presented to us like on a painted board»²¹⁵.

Still today on a venerated relic we contemplate the features, mysteriously impressed, of the Man of Sorrows, who reveals Himself to those who has clear eyes to see beyond the woof of the ancient linen.

Translated by Michela Marinelli

²⁰⁹ A. NICOLOTTI, *I Templari e la Sindone, storia di un falso*, op. cit., p. 82.

²¹⁰ R.E.M. HEDGES et al., *Radiocarbon dates of the Oxford AMS system: Archaeometry datelist 6*, in *Archaeometry* 29, 2 (1987), pp. 289-306, on p. 303.

²¹¹ I. WILSON, *The Shroud. Fresh light on the 2000-year-old Mystery...*, op. cit., pp. 265-266.

²¹² A. NICOLOTTI, *I Templari e la Sindone, storia di un falso*, op. cit., p. 76.

²¹³ Mt 27,31 e Mc 15,20.

²¹⁴ R. MORGAN, *Did the Templars take the Shroud to England? New evidence from Templecombe*, in *History, Science, Theology and the Shroud*, Proceedings of the St. Louis Symposium, St Louis, Missouri, USA, 22-23 June 1991, Aram Berard Ed., Amarillo, Texas, USA 1991, pp. 205-232.

²¹⁵ M. THEOCHARIS, «Epitafi» della liturgia bizantina e la Sindone, op. cit., p. 108.