

## NEWS FROM ITALY

As promised in the last newsletter, following are the highlights from Sindone News for the whole year up to the date of publication. The newsletter is published by the Diocesan Commission for the Shroud and then redistributed by AM\*STAR in the USA.

*From the November-December 2003 newsletter*

### **A remarkable visit to the HOLY SHROUD MUSEUM**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November an unexpected call from the “Turin Film Festival” Organisation (an internationally renowned film festival held in Turin) informed us of the wish of an well-known director to visit the Holy Shroud Museum.

The director was William Friedkin, who was involved with such films as “The French Connection”, but above all “The Exorcist”. Attended by Gian Maria Zaccone, Friedkin stayed more than two hours in the Museum. He was extremely interested in all the subjects relevant to the Holy Shroud, on which he proved to be well informed, asking accurate and detailed questions. When he arrived in front of the last niche of the Museum, where some words of the spiritual meaning of the Holy Shroud are projected, he wanted to investigate the themes expressed by Paul VI and by John Paul II, stating again the deep interest that the Holy Shroud exerts on him. He is Jewish. After a long stop in front of the full-size copy of the Holy Shroud he exclaimed, “It’s amazing”.

Friedkin said that since he was a boy, he has always been attracted by the mystery of the Shroud, and at the end of his visit, he wanted to specify, “It is one of the most astonishing experiences I have ever gone through. It was also a condition for my presence at the Turin Festival: I agreed to come only if I could visit the Holy Shroud Museum”.

His visit caused a great deal of activity in the press; the day after “La Repubblica” devoted a full page to the event. His visit, but above all, his appraisal, together with that of many visitors who visit the Museum every day, expresses once again the importance of the presence of the Museum in Turin.

*From the January 2004 newsletter*

## SEPULCHRAL SHROUD OF THE 1st CENTURY DISCOVERED IN JERUSALEM

In the spring of 2000, Doctor Shimon Gibson, an archaeologist from the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research of Jerusalem, took a group of students and researchers of the North Carolina-Charlotte University to visit the ancient sepulchres of Jerusalem. In the Hinnon Valley (Gehenna) he ran into a cavern plundered some time ago, but that still contained burial remnants: ossuaries (approx. 20), remains of bones and of human hair, pottery, glass and stones and – exceptionally – remnants of cloth. He immediately thought it could be from a funeral sheet and, after obtaining the necessary permission, had it examined in Arizona with the C14 method: the reply was that it was a fabric dating back to the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century of the Christian era. Many other analyses were undertaken besides this one (with the assistance of the Hebrew University), that continued for almost three years and have now been published. It is possible to see an *online* report dated 20<sup>th</sup> November 2003 on Internet (NinerOnline.com - Jerusalem shroud discovered in 2000, presented at UNCC); another one in the daily newspaper *Haaretz*, English edition, dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003 (p. 10) and a third one online since the beginning of this year (TFBA - Directory of Projects: Jerusalem Shroud).

The human remains from the largest grave present some exceptional aspects: the illness that seems to have caused the death of the man (the gender seems to have been identified with certainty thanks to the DNA analysis) was tuberculosis (such clear and ancient traces of tuberculosis had never been found before), but traces of leprosy were also present. This illness might be the reason for the burial in a separate sepulchral space (that was fortunately neglected by thieves). The hair that has been found was cleaner than expected: there was no trace of lice, a frequent scourge of the period and environment. On the other hand, the location of the grave, on the slopes of the so-called «Christian Zion », a site for the wealthy classes, makes us think of a high elevated social class.

The cloth is the most exceptional aspect of the discovery. «Shrouds» of that period had never been found in Jerusalem. The person who has analysed it refers to a

woollen cloth (more expensive and more exceptional than the linen, at that period), structured in a one by one scheme, but so atypical as to make one think that it might have been imported (and so even more expensive than usual).

Even though **the condition of the cloth is very precarious**, it is astonishing that a part was preserved, given the flimsiness of the material in contact with the decaying human body and with the water that usually deposits in the caverns. What might have happened is that a crevice in the ground might have channelled the rivulets of water and kept them far from the organic finds.

The importance of the discovery for the researchers of the Holy Shroud is considerable because, for the first time, it offers a model for comparison present in the area around Jerusalem and apparently of certain age. It is undoubtedly necessary to consider the difference of the material of the cloth, that the fragment seems burnt, and that what traces may have been left by contact with the corpse have still to be established. Besides, the data released up to now, which I have summarised in this note, are only the results of interviews. It will be possible to begin to work scientifically only when a strictly scientific report comes out. A report that can also eliminate the discrepancies already present in the three sources I have mentioned, supplied with photographs and with any other information.

The reporter of this note has met Dr. Gibson in Jerusalem, but for so short a time that he was not able to complete this piece of information.

*Giuseppe Ghiberti*

*From the February 2004 newsletter*

## **NOTE ON THE PRESERVATION OF THE HOLY SHROUD**

As everybody knows, in the 2000, in the Chapel of the Dome, where the shrine of the Holy Shroud is placed at the end of the exhibitions, significant work was carried out. It had been requested by the Preservation Commission, with the aim of guaranteeing the observance of important parameters, such as the steady temperature inside the shrine.

For this reason, two air conditioning systems were installed (working in turns), a set of control and alarm detectors, managed by a computerised system which registers the running of all the equipment. For each parameter the lowest and the highest limit

was defined: if they are exceeded, it provokes the intervention of the technicians in charge.

The experience of these years has shown that the most significant remarks come from the sensors applied to shrine (the measurement of the internal temperature and the pressure differential) and from the environment of the Chapel (temperature and atmospheric pressure).

This data, under constant measurement, is saved every 15 minutes in the computer's memory and every weekend it is stored in a file with time and recording data. The files are then copied and registered on CD-ROM for the Conservation history archives. In normal operating conditions, it is interesting to check the changes of the values during the day, depending on the change of the atmospheric conditions.

Since it was very difficult to examine the numerous weekly numeric data, we have entrusted the supplier of the monitoring system with the development of a program to transform the values read from the file stored in the archives into a more easily viewable graph.

After some improvement, the new program, developed on a standard platform, has been installed in the operating computer. This program allows us to create charts in order to compare different data, such as the state of the atmospheric pressure with the one inside the shrine, and the state of the internal temperature of the shrine with the temperature in the chapel.

*From the April 2004 newsletter*

***HERRINGBONE TWILL CLOTH***  
**(AT LEAST 500 YEARS B.C.)**

*We announce in advance to the readers of «Sindone News» very important news that will be published in «Sindon» by Mechthild Flury-Lemberg (excerpt).*

It is very difficult to find, in ancient times, patterns that can be compared, for, to what is found on the linen of the Holy Shroud, as far as the 1/3 herringbone twill weave is concerned. So, as always happens in Shroud research, we have to accept signs, inserting them scrupulously into the mosaic of knowledge already existing. A small tessera of this mosaic is represented by the mountain leggings that have been recently

discovered, after the melting of a snowfield on the Vedretta of Ries in the Trentino Alto Adige.

The finding in 1994 concerns something going back to the Iron Age and it is dated between 795 and 499 B.C. The leggings are made of natural goat wool and manufactured with a 2/2 herringbone weave (warp colour beige, weave colour brown and dark brown). They have no soles and are 54.6 cm long and 15.7 cm wide. They are made from a piece of fabric 31 cm wide, with selvage to the two ends, which are bound by a seam on the inside.

An interesting link between the Shroud of Turin and the leggings is represented by the mutual pattern of the herringbone. This is proof that we can find this technique of weaving in ancient times, even though in the case of the leggings it is a very rough woollen cloth. The woollen cloth was manufactured on a more primitive loom than the Shroud of Turin, but the technique was already known in the pre-Christian era and is not limited to a specific region.

## **FIRST DVD ON THE HOLY SHROUD**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

In the prestigious venue of Atrium (a new structure in the centre of Turin built on the occasion of the Olympic Games, and heart of the activities of the city), on the 28th of April *Sindone*, the first DVD on the Holy Shroud, with the exclusive pictures of the Shroud as it looks after the restoration work performed in 2002, was previewed. The DVD has been co-produced by the Diocesan Commission for the Shroud of the Archdiocese of Turin, NOVA-T and Artexe, in close collaboration with the Holy Shroud Museum and the support of Telesubalpina and Euphon.

«The Archdiocese of Turin – said Monsignor Guido Fiandino, Auxiliary Bishop of Turin, during the presentation – has in the Holy Shroud a precious object that we must go on increasing in value. This DVD is a very useful tool, that can closely investigate the scientific, artistic, pastoral aspects, separating and at the same time binding them».

Father Mario Durando, Capuchin Friar, Manager of NOVA-T Television Studios, expressed great satisfaction; "we are proud of having made this product with the Archdiocese of Turin, because of both the final result and the importance of the

object. In this DVD on the Holy Shroud we have invested our experience of over twenty years in the production of documentaries, films and videos of a religious, social and artistic nature. With this work we wanted to take a step forward, thanks to the use of DVD, that would give us the possibility of including not only the official filmed sequences of the exhibitions, but also some studies and interviews, which make the product more comprehensive".

Gian Maria Zaccone, Scientific Director of the Holy Shroud Museum, declared that "the essence of the Shroud is the image. So it is an object to be seen: DVD, modern media of images, becomes a privileged tool for spreading knowledge of the Holy Shroud". Summing up, Nello Balossino, Vice-Director of the International Centre of Sindonology of Turin, has reasserted the "significance of the image of the Holy Shroud in scientific research: the Holy Shroud is important because it has an image. New and important discoveries have just been made trying to understand how this image could have been formed and by studying its features: the three-dimensional effect, the behaviour like a photographic negative...". Professor Balossino, lecturer in Image Processing at the University of Turin, also lingered over the latest news regarding the presence of a mark on the back of the Shroud, declaring that "as far as the hidden side of the Holy Shroud is concerned, looking directly at the linen the total lack of marks attributable to the body and particularly to the face is evident. On the face, on the contrary, spots due to the spread of blood both on the forehead and on the hair, are present. The possible noticing of the vague structure of a face may be due to the psychophysiology of the vision. The spots of blood which surround the face behave exactly like focusing points that create, at the cortical level, the formation of the image of the face based on the well-known image on the frontal side, stored in the memory for a long time. From an objective point of view, the methodology of image processing connected to the recognition of shapes enabled us to exclude that there is a body print on the back of the sheet.

The news that recently came out about the supposed proof of the presence of the print of the face on the back has to be considered unfounded for two basic reasons. First of all, the researchers who published it have never seen the Holy Shroud directly, and so they lack the essential component of the visual interpretation. Secondly, the prints analysed are not split into the two main components, i.e. one due to blood and those of another nature, among which is also the possible body contribution. It follows that the

process is a free interpretation of the bloodstains, of the folds and of the chromatic variation due to the weave and to pollution”.

Showing the structure of the DVD, with its menus and images, Roberto Vogliolo, Director of Artex, said that the DVD, "the result of long and intensive planning, fully exploits the power offered by this means, because it includes shots, graphical navigation and texts, besides an ROM section to use on a PC".

*From the September 2004 newsletter*

With the latest publication *Sindon* says goodbye to its subscribers. Obviously it is not a real goodbye. *Sindon* is the oldest scientific publication on the Shroud: both the Confraternity of the Holy Shroud and the International Centre of Sindonology feel the deepest responsibility and the duty to carry on what the distinguished predecessors started almost fifty years ago. However it is this sense of responsibility and the value of the publication which call for serious reflection. The Shroud has not been the object of direct research for many years. The investigations on the material in 1978 are known thoroughly and a lot has been written on the more recent restoration work on the cloth. It is quite difficult to grant the continuity a six-month review needs without new scientifically correct material. The review does not want to follow the ephemeral news on the Shroud which is regularly in the mass media. We think it is quite hard to keep up with the publication, as you can see from the irregularity of the issues over the last few years – and before then too – and also unfair for our subscribers.

We have realised over the years how the monographic issues of “*Sindon*”, such as the acts of the 2002 symposium and the volume *Le due facce della Sindone e Sindone 2002 la conservazione*, (The Two Faces of the Holy Shroud, and Holy Shroud 2002 The Preservation) have been appreciated. As a result we have decided to suspend the periodicity of “*Sindon*” by transforming it into a series with the same name: the series will be composed by volumes on specific Shroud subjects published when there are events, materials and themes of a certain scientific interest.

The function of “*Sindon*” was also to connect the scholars of the Shroud in the world and to express the official position of the CIS on the Shroud. This function is not so important today, as the news is better diffused over Internet. The web site [www.sindone.it](http://www.sindone.it), which will be up and running in a few days, meets these requirements and will make the figure of the CIS more immediate and incisive. The publication of “*Sindone News*”, edited by the Diocesan Commission for the Shroud, has the same role

and informs the reader about what happens in Turin and also on the activities of the CIS.

We are sure that our readers will understand this decision and that when they are informed on the issue of new books, they will maintain the trust they have shown us in the past.