

MORE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

King Edward I and the Shroud

From genealogist and BSTS member Noel Currer-Briggs. Noel is author of the book *The Shroud Mafia* reviewed in an earlier issue of this Newsletter

I was extremely interested to read what Sister Francis Agnes Onslow O.S.C. had to say about the piece of linen cloth which had touched the Sudarium Christi [see Newsletter 42, p.9] While Edward I was certainly in the Holy Land in 1271 and 1272, and in Sicily, Italy and France in 1273 and 1274, I think it highly unlikely that it was during this period of his life that he obtained his 'pannus linteus'.

Edward was betrothed to Eleanor of Castile, sister of Castile's King Alphonso X, in 1252, and they were married in Burgos late in 1253. As was usual on such occasions, lavish gifts were exchanged, and one of these could well have been the cloth which had touched the Sudarium Christi at Oviedo. This Sudarium, which has been extensively studied by Dr. Alan Whanger and others, was itself in contact with our Turin Shroud and has a well documented history. It arrived in Spain from the Holy Land in the 7th century by way of North Africa, and was kept in a closed chest in Oviedo Cathedral, which was opened in the presence of King Alphonso VI and others on 14 March 1075.

As regards Edward I, he sailed from Acre for Sicily on 15th August 1272, and reached Trapani in western Sicily seven weeks later. He then travelled by way of Apulia and Rome to Orvieto, where he arrived on February 14, 1273. He stayed there until the beginning of June, crossed the Mont Cenis Pass on June 7th., and arrived at St. Georges-des-Reneins near Mâcon, Burgundy on the 18th. He arrived in Paris on June 26th to do homage to the French king for his French lands, and left on August 8th for Gascony, where he stayed for nearly a year. He eventually landed in England on August 2nd 1274 and reached London on the 18th and was crowned at Westminster on the following Sunday.

It seems highly unlikely that he would have been presented with the relic while he was in Italy and France, because the Shroud was then in the possession of the Templars, who were notoriously secretive about it, nor does there seem to have been an appropriate occasion for such a gift. I am in correspondence with Mark Guscini, a Spanish historian who has made a detailed study of the Sudarium of Oviedo [see Guscini's article earlier in this issue, pp.17ff - Ed.], and I have asked him to see if he can find any record in Spanish archives of the gifts presented to Edward and Eleanor at their wedding in 1253, which might include the 'pannus linteus'.

Assuming that my guess is correct, this is another proof that the radiocarbon dating is wrong, for it follows that since the Sudarium of Oviedo, which was clearly in contact with the Shroud at the time the image was made, has been in Spain since the 7th century, and was not taken out of the chest in which it was kept until 1075, the two cloths must have been in contact with another long before the 7th century. If this reconstruction of events is correct, it is one of the most compelling pieces of historical evidence of the Shroud's antiquity so far.

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