

The Veil of Manoppello: work of art or authentic relic?

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Introduction

The purpose of this work is to study the authenticity of what is known as the Holy Face of Manoppello, in the light of some recent research which started in December 1999. Our aim is to present new documents and data, partly unpublished, which seem to lead to the conclusion that the precious veil might well be a Sixteenth Century pictorial work and not a relic after all, or an acheropite image, as many scholars have supposed so far. We have also analyzed the Veil's possible connections with the Shroud of Turin and the Veronica.

Manoppello and its Sanctuary

The town of Manoppello¹ is situated in Central Italy, in the Abruzzi region, 30 kilometres from Pescara. Archaeological findings show that it was part of an important Roman urban centre originally called Pollitrium, while the current name comes from the Italian "manoppio" which means "haystack". Its property passed under the feudal system from Pope Innocent III to Frederick II, and later on from Louis of Anjou to Louis of Savoy. It also belonged to the Orsini family, under whose rule local currency was coined. In 1423 the town was besieged and occupied by Braccio da Montone, who destroyed most of the buildings.

The Sanctuary of the Holy Face (**ph.2**), built between 1617 and 1638 and later restored, is now a popular destination for devout pilgrims. A veil showing the features of a human face is kept in a reliquary on the main altar. The pilgrimage takes place on the second Sunday in May and on the 6th of August, when the Transfiguration of Christ is celebrated. It is told that a mysterious pilgrim² who arrived in Manoppello one day in the year 1506, handed in a veil, which was said to bear the image of Christ's face, to Giacomo Antonio Leonelli. In 1618 the veil was purchased by Don Antonio de Fabritiis and twenty years later donated to the convent of the Capuchin Friars Minor. The mystery over the veil's background prompted a research on its origins, which the friars commissioned to theologian Donato da Bomba. Apart from the description and history of the veil, his work examines the basic theme of the Holy Faces and the Veronica. The miraculous quality of the veil is officially stated in a document, which was read, approved and endorsed on 6th April 1646 and still now kept in the Manoppello Historic Archives.

The Holy Face

The Holy Face³, (**ph.3**) worshipped as a relic in the Manoppello Sanctuary, traditionally represents the Face of Jesus Christ. It is currently kept in a solid silver monstrance decorated in gold and precious stones made by Nazareno Jotti. It is a well visible image on a veil placed between two ordinary glass panes measuring about 24 by 17.5 centimetres and enclosed in a walnut frame. The cloth itself exceeds the framed area of 5 millimetres. The straight and spotted nose looks as if broken. The open mouth shows some of the teeth in the upper jaw. A small lock of hair covers the forehead,

¹For all the historical and archaeological news concerning Manoppello and his territory I have widely documented on the following works to which I send again for the due widenings: **A.A.V.V.**, *Manoppello. Guida storico-artistica alla città e dintorni*, Carsa Edizioni, Pescara 2002 with remarkable bibliography; **Corsignani P.A.**, *Reggia Marsicana, ovvero Memorie topografico-storiche di varie Colonie e Città antiche e moderne della Provincia dei Marsi e di Valeria*, Napoli 1738; **Pansa G.**, *I Conti di Manoppello*, in *Gli Orsini Signori d'Abruzzo. Studio Storico*, Lanciano 1892.

² **P. Donato di Bomba**, *Relazione Historica*, L'Aquila 1646, Archivio Provinciale dei Cappuccini, 54pp.

³The existing bibliography on the Volto Santo is not very wide and in majority it is devotional character works. At the moment we are writings in, scientific publications do not exist on the subject. However some volumes are necessary for a serious approach to the problems of Veil Of Manoppello and to the few developed researches on the subject: **Da Serramonesca, P. A.**, *Il Volto Santo di Manoppello e il Santuario*, Pescara 1987; **Da Tussio, F.**, *Del Volto Santo. Memorie storiche raccolte intorno alla prodigiosa immagine del passionato volto di Gesù Cristo Signor Nostro che si venera nella chiesa de pp. Cappuccini di Manoppello negli Abruzzi in Diocesi di Chieti*, Tipografia Vescovile, Aquila 1875; **Di Giamberardino, E.**, *Il Volto Santo di Manoppello*, Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1998; **Gaeta, S.**, *L'altra Sindone*, Mondadori, Milano 2005; **Paschalis Schlöemer, B.**, *Der Schleier von Manoppello und das Grabtuch von Turin*, Innsbruck 1999; **Pfeiffer, H.**, *Il Volto Santo di Manoppello*, Carsa Edizioni, 2000; **Resch, A.**, *Das Antlitz Christi*, Resch Verlag, Innsbruck 2005; **Sammacciccia, B.**, *Il Volto Santo di Gesù a Manoppello*, 1a e 2a edizione, Pescara 1978. and two videos: **Falco, S./Console, S.**, *Il mistero del Volto Santo*, Mediacom, Pescara 2001, **Console, S./Stuart G.**, *Penuel. Il Volto del Signore*, 2004.

some facial hair is visible above the upper lip together with a little beard on the chin and a small bunch of hair framing the face. The veil is transparent **(ph.4)** and there are 26 warp by 26 weft threads in a square centimetre, not always at a regular distance from each other. Colours do not fill in the whole cloth and can be seen only from a certain angle or against a matt screen. The chromatic features are mainly shades of brown. The cheeks are uneven in size. Objects placed at a short distance behind the veil can easily be seen through it, and writings clearly read. The image is perfectly visible from the front and from the back. If observed at a short distance and from a three-quarter angle it gives the impression of a tri-dimensional image. Because of the extremely sparse fabric, the image disappears if looked at back-light.

Scientific Research

The first approach towards scientific studies on the veil was made in the early 1970s by a scholar, Bruno Sammaciccia⁴, a psychologist and writer, author of two publications which for several years were circulated around the sanctuary for the pilgrims' benefit. He analyzed the veil under Wood's Lamp: *"A few years ago, as I knew a technician who was professionally involved in studies on electronics applied in art and research in the antiques field, we decided to analyze the Holy Veil under polarized rays from the light generated by a device called Wood's lamp (named after the scientist who invented it). Well, with great amazement we found that everything reacted under the projection of such rays, everything but the veil itself, which left us rather puzzled. This proves that something in this veil does not follow the most common natural laws and it may be sensible to formulate an Acheropite theory"*. Sammaciccia asked photographer Gianni Cati to take some photographs of the veil. They are some whole and detail shots also taken under Wood's lamp. Professor Giorgio Baitello of the Art Institute of Chieti was asked to conduct an art survey on the veil: *"Professor Baitello's opinion about the Holy Face of Manoppello, after his careful and respectful examination, validates and supports our theory that, as the expert says, this face and this veil are together a true mystery, and that no certainty can honestly be stated, being this work of Acheropite nature or made by human hand; he repeated a few times with great emotion and sense of astonishment that it could not be said with certainty, as someone sometime dared to, whether this is a painting or not, only the mystery and the spiritual magnitude of this sublime face, beautiful and exquisite, of those piercing eyes, alive and pulsating. All this leaves us thinking that we truly are before a great mystery"*. Sammaciccia, anticipating future deductions by father Heinrich Pfeiffer, concluded: *"Today, after years of research and careful testing done on the Veil of Manoppello, which bears the sublime transparent image of Jesus, following other scholars' opinion and facts related to this sacred veil, after photographic tests and examinations under Wood's lamp, I should deduce and admit, even to someone's disagreement, that the Veil of Manoppello is in my opinion the shroud which was put on the Holy Face of Jesus when He was laid in His tomb. This statement of mine, even though personal, is endorsed by many people and is above all the result of study, thorough observations, and my inner feeling too"*.

Prof. Vittore's research

In 1999 the friar then responsible for the convent in Manoppello⁵ got in touch with the professor⁶ and asked for his help in order to acquire detailed photographs of the Holy Face **(ph.5)**. He combined the use of a digital scanner and a photographic optical machine to obtain high-resolution images⁷. The first impression he got when he stood in front of the Holy Face was as if looking at a painting. After having photographed it, he studied the images rendered at the computer and said that no traces of residual paint were visible in the spaces between the threads in the fabric **(ph.6)**. He also ruled out the possibility that it could have been watercolour, as the image's outlines are extremely precise around the eyes and the mouth, while watercolour paint would have unevenly soaked the fabric causing fuzziness in the details⁸.

⁴ **Sammaciccia, B.**, *Il Volto Santo di Gesù a Manoppello*, 1a e 2a edizione, Pescara 1978.

⁵ It is Father Germano di Pietro. The new friar is Father Carmine Cucinelli.

⁶ The Prof. Donato Vittore is traumatologist at the university of Bari (Italy). Following the photographic sessions on the Holy Veil of Manoppello a next publication has realized a Cd Rom.

⁷ The photographic material is still mostly unpublished. Few controlled photographs concerning the zone of the right eye to various enlargements and a total have only been published.

Cfr **Vittore, D.**, *Non può essere un dipinto!*, in AA.VV., *Il Volto Santo di Manoppello*, by care of **Di Pietro, G.**, Litografia Brandolini, Chieti 2000, pag.35.

⁸ This affirmation of the Prof. Vittore remains all to be verified.

Father Pfeiffer's research

According to important studies conducted by Father Heinrich Pfeiffer⁹, (ph.7) the veil of Manoppello is the Veronica¹⁰ itself, the veil with the image of Jesus Christ, once located in St. Peter in Rome, which has been mysteriously missing since the 17th century. Consistently with the research by Sister Blandina Paschalis Schloemer¹¹, it states that the face on the Shroud of Turin and that on the Veil of Manoppello tie in perfectly because both cloths were laid on Jesus' body. According to this research the features are the same: oval-shaped face, slightly round and asymmetrical, long hair, a lock of hair on the forehead, the mouth slightly open, the glance towards the top. These are the features which influenced Christ's iconography throughout the centuries¹². For Father Pfeiffer it all started in 1978, when he met his confrere Father Bulst, a scholar of the Shroud, at the International Congress on the Shroud of Turin. During their intense co-research, Father Bulst gave him the results of some studies by Trappist nun Blandina Paschalis Schloemer (ph.8), a keen iconographer, who started her own research in the Maria Frieden convent, between Cologne and Aachen in Germany, after reading about the Veil of Manoppello in a Christian newsletter. Through the superimposition of two images on slides and a transparent ruler she was the first one to declare that, according to her, the face of Turin and that of Manoppello tied in perfectly. Father Pfeiffer guessed this had to be a unique relic: the Veronica, the true image of

⁹For the remarkable existing bibliography of this author see: **Pfeiffer, H.**, *Una visita a Manoppello*, in Collegamento Pro Sindone, 1986 Marzo/Aprile, p. 21-34; *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, Emmaus 2, Roma 1982; *Il Volto Santo di Manoppello*, Carsa Edizioni, 2000; *Implicazioni teologiche delle immagini reliquie. La Sindone di Torino e il Velo di Manoppello*. atti del 3° Congresso Internazionale, 30-31 Ottobre 1999, Editrice Velar, Gorle (BG) 1999; *L'arte degli Anni Santi. Roma 1300-1875*, a cura di Fagiolo, M. e Madonna, M.L., catalogo della mostra, Milano 1984, pp. 106-126; *La storia delle Acheropite*, da "Il Volto Santo di Manoppello", anno 87, n.1; *Il Velo di Manoppello, la Sindone e l'immagine autentica di Cristo nell'arte: saggio di identificazione e di distinzione*, in AA.VV., *Identification scientifique de l'homme du Linceul: Jésus de Nazareth*, Symposium de Rome 1993, O.E.I.L. - F. X. de Guibert, Paris 1995, pp.81-84; *La Veronica Romana e suoi riflessi nell'arte*, in "Il Volto dei Volti", atti del 1° Congresso Internazionale, 12-13 Ottobre 1997, Editrice Velar, Gorle (BG) 1997; *Ragioni storiche, teologiche e politiche per la tradizione del volto di Gesù nei secoli*, in "Il Volto dei Volti", atti del 2° Congresso Internazionale, 24-25-26 Ottobre 1998, Editrice Velar, Gorle (BG) 1998.

¹⁰ Although the relic has not been directly observed for about a hundred years, we do have some descriptions Cfr. **De Waal, A.**, *Gli antichi tesori sacri della Basilica Vaticana*, in Dissertazioni della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Roma 1894: "Una cornica moderna d'argento, collo stemma di Gregorio XVI, alta cm 63 e larga cm 51 conserva sotto vetro un'antica lastra di metallo dorato, sopra la quale è una rete di filo d'argento finissima. La lastra dorata ha all'ingiro alcune piccole decorazioni...E' tagliato in questa lastra lo spazio del Volto Santo. La lastra è alta cm 31 e larga cm 20; il Volto Santo apparente di sotto è alto, dalla fine della barba cm 25 e largo cm 16; gli orecchi e forse una parte del volto e dei capelli sono coperti dalla lastra...cosicchè restano visibili del volto soltanto cm 21 per cm 12...La barba è divisa in tre punte...ed è di colore bruno scuro; quello stesso colore, per una lunghezza di circa due dita si ritrova sopra la fronte; fa supporre quindi che siano dei capelli, ma non si conosce ne si può distinguere l'andamento della capigliatura...Degli occhi, del naso, della bocca...non si vede affatto niente...".

¹¹ **Paschalis Schloemer, B.**, *La relique inconnue*, in AA.VV., *Identification scientifique de l'homme du Linceul: Jésus de Nazareth*, Symposium de Rome 1993, O.E.I.L. - F. X. de Guibert, Paris 1995, pp.73-79; *Der Schleier von Manoppello und das Grabtuch von Turin*, Resch Verlag, Innsbruck 1999 e 2001; *La bellezza del volto di Gesù*, atti del 5° Congresso Internazionale, 20-21 Ottobre 2001, Editrice Velar, Gorle (BG) 2001; *Le sindon et la Veronique*, in AA.VV., *ACHEIROPOIETOS* "Non fait de main d'homme" - Actes du IIIeme Symposium Scientifique International du CIELT, Nice 12-13 maj 1997, Edition du CIELT, 1998. pp. 151-164. In the sanctuary of Manoppello there is a permanent exhibition titled *Penuel. Il volto del Signore* about the researches of Father Pfeiffer and Sister Blandina.

¹² For a serious approach to this wide research field is still remains fundamental today the study of **Dobschütz, E. v.**, *Christusbilder, Untersuchungen zur christlichen Legende*, Leipzig 1899. Da consultare anche: **Gaffre, R.P.**, *Les portraits du Christ; etude d'iconographie religieuse*, Paris, Imprimerie des Orphelins-Apprentis d'Auteuil, 1903; **Millet, G.**, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'E'vangile aux XIV, XV et XVI siècles*, 1916, **Pfeiffer, H.**, *La Sindone di Torino e il Volto di Cristo nell'arte paleocristiana, bizantina e medievale occidentale*, Emmaus 2, Roma 1982; **Bulst, W.** - **Pfeiffer H.**, *Das Turiner Grabtuch und das Christusbild. Das Echte Christusbild*, Knecht, Frankfurt am Main 1991; **Wilson, I.**, *Holy Faces, Secret Places*, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1991; **AA. VV.**, *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation*, Papers from a Colloquium held at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome and the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1998, Nuova Alfa Editoriale, Bologna 1998; **Coppini, L.** - **Cavazzuti, F.**, *Le icone di Cristo e la Sindone*, Edizioni San Paolo, 2000; **AA.VV.**, *Il Volto di Cristo*, Electa, Milano 2000. The stances of the scholars opposite at this work's thesis, see: **Allen, N.**, *Dating the manufacture of the Shroud of Turin: an exercise in basic iconography*, Approfondimento Sindone, anno V, vol.2 (2001) pp. 29-46; **Papini, C.**, *Sindone. Una sfida alla scienza e alla fede*, Claudiana, Torino 1998. pp. 31-43.

Christ¹³. At that point it was necessary to start the research and find proof in archives and various sources. Since the 12th century and until 1608 the Veronica in St. Peter had been a worship destination for thousands of pilgrims; then came the time when they couldn't worship it anymore. In 1608, after the chapel that hosted the Veronica was demolished and the veil disappeared, never to be found again. Father Pfeiffer's discovery claims that the veil has been in Manoppello exactly since 1608. The story goes that a soldier's wife sold it to a nobleman in the town for 400 scudi in order to bail out his husband from jail. This nobleman, De Fabritiis, handed in the veil to the Capuchins with a legal act. Father Pfeiffer's research is based on the so-called Historic Report by Father Donato da Bomba, a Capuchin monk. But why, according to the scholar, was the veil hidden? Most likely because Pope Urban VIII had all the copies of Jesus' face painted on a veil destroyed, in order to eradicate the pilgrims' habit of ordering and buying images of Christ. The Veronica was kept in a chapel purposely built by Pope John VII and decorated with mosaics in the year 705. Oddly, in the same year in Constantinople an important relic, the Acheiropietos, went missing. The word Acheiropietos is found in the New Testament and in the Byzantine legend of Camoulia in two different editions: the first in the emperor Diocletian's period, the second during the reign of king Abgar of Edessa, who received the veil from Jesus. "As far as the imprint is concerned, the mystery stays, as for the Shroud. The images on the Shroud and the Veronica couldn't have been made by any known technique. We might therefore speculate that an unknown energy source left some marks on the veils, marks that the human eye perceives as an actual image". One of the Capuchins, Father Donato da Bomba began some studies in 1640 and drew up a "Historic Report" (Relatione Historica) which is at present kept in the Capuchins Provincial Archive in the Santa Chiara convent in L'Aquila¹⁴.

¹³An excellent introductory study with remarkable bibliography is: **Di Blasio, T. M.**, *Veronica, il mistero del Volto*, Città Nuova, Roma 2000 and **Kuryluk, E.**, *Veronica. Storia e simboli della "vera immagine" di Cristo*, Roma 1993 (good text but with many inaccuracies), **Wolf, G.**, *From Mandylion to Veronica: Picturing the "Disembodied" Face and Disseminating the True Image of Christ in the Latin West*, in A.A.V.V., *The Holy Face and the Paradox*, cit., pp. 153-179, **AA.VV.**, *Il Volto di Cristo*, a cura di Giovanni Morello e Gerhard Wolf, Electa, Milano 2000, **AA.VV.**, *Romei e Giubilei. Il pellegrinaggio medievale a San Pietro (350-1350)*, a cura di Mario D'Onofrio, Electa, Milano 1999, pp.309-353, **Pfeiffer, H.**, *L'iconografia della Veronica, in Roma 1300-1875. L'arte degli anni santi*, a cura di Fagiolo, M. e Madonna, M.L., Arnoldo Mondadori Editore 1984. pp.113-119, **Wolf, G.**, *'Or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra? Sguardi alla Veronica e alle sue copie artistiche*, in *Il Volto di Cristo*, cit., pp. 103-114. Dello stesso autore: *'Pinta della nostra effigie': La Veronica come richiamo dei romei*, in *Romei e Giubilei*, cit., pp. 211-218, **Van Os, H.**, *Gebed in Schoonheid. Schatten van privé-devotie in Europa 1300-1500*, Merrell Holberton, Amsterdam 1994 pagg. 40-46. I had the opportunity to take several photographs of the Veronica only on the 21st of March 1999, during a public Ostension from the Loggia of Relics. On this occasion professor Michael Hesemann was there too and took photographs and a video recording. The photographs of the author's of the present relation and the Prof. Hesemann have been published on Shroud Newsletter, n.52, November 2000 pp.13-16; besides see: **Hesemann, M.**, *Die stummen zeugen von Golgatha. Die faszinierende Geschichte der Passionsreliquien Christi*, Atlantis, München 2000 p. 187.

¹⁴Fundamental for this present paper. *Relatione Historica di P. Donato da Bomba (1640)*

"Se ne stava un giorno Giacom'Antonio Leonelli in pubblica piazza e quasi sulla porta della chiesa matrice il cui titolo è di S. Nicola di Bari, in onesta conversazione con altri suoi pari; nel più bello del discorso vi arrivò un pellegrino da nessuno conosciuto, d'aspetto religioso e molto venerando, il quale, salutato che ebbe una così bella corona di cittadini, disse con termini di creanza e umanità al Dottor Giacom'Antonio Leonelli di dovergli parlare di una cosa segreta e a lui di molto gusto, utile e profitto. Tiratoselo così da parte sin dentro i liminari di essa chiesa di S. Nicola, gli diede un fardelletto e, senza svolgerlo, gli disse che si tenesse molto cara quella devozione, perché Dio gli avrebbe fatto molti favori e avrebbe sempre prosperato e nelle cose temporali e quelle spirituali. Preso Giacom'Antonio il fardelletto, appartatosi verso il fonte dell'acqua benedetta, cominciò ad aprirlo. Vista quella Sacratissima Immagine del Volto di Cristo Signore nostro, restò, a prima vista, alquanto spaventato, prorompendo in tenerissime lacrime che poi raffreddò per non apparire così ai suoi amici. Ringraziando Dio di un tanto dono, riavvolse l'immagine come era prima, si rivolse poi allo sconosciuto pellegrino per ringraziarlo e accoglierlo nella sua casa, ma non lo vide più. Spaventato, quasi balbettando, domandò agli amici, i quali affermarono di averlo veduto entrare con lui in chiesa, ma non averlo visto uscire da essa. Pieno di meraviglia, lo fece diligentemente cercare dentro e fuori di Manoppello, ma non fu possibile rintracciarlo, onde tutti giudicarono quell'uomo sotto l'aspetto di pellegrino essere un Angelo del cielo o altro Santo del Paradiso. Con questo fermo e vivo sentimento di un angelo mandato da Dio a fargli tale dono, ringraziando Dio, accompagnato dai sopraddetti amici, pieno di estrema allegrezza, tornava a casa, accorrendo ogni sorte di gente di detta terra di Manoppello per vedere miracolo sì bello. Per riverire poi sì bella e santa immagine e, per quanto possibile, rendersi grato a Dio del beneficio ricevuto, fece subito il Dottor Giacom'Antonio aprire nella propria camera e luogo di studio una finestra nel muro in forma di armadio con le sue porticine e chiavi ben aggiustate e ivi la pose e tenne con grandissima devozione e riverenza, facendovi ardere sempre di giorno e di notte una lampada; e con tanto gran zelo, acciò non gli fosse rubata, che mai vi faceva entrare persona alcuna, neanche la propria moglie e i figli se non quando vi era lui; e per meglio assicurarsene, uscendo di casa, serrava detta camera, e portava con se sempre le chiavi di quella. Lo stesso fecero poi i suoi eredi e discendenti per lo spazio di cent'anni e poco più. Accadde poi che i pronipoti di Giacom'Antonio, volendosi dividere i beni di quello, essendovi delle controversie, un certo soldato e uomo d'armi chiamato Pancrazio Petrucci, il quale aveva preso per moglie una donna discendente della famiglia Leonelli, chiamata Marzia, ancora vivente, prendendo come pretesto i diritti della moglie, entrò violentemente in casa Leonelli e prese la Ss. Immagine da lui tanto desiderata. Presa che l'ebbe, non la ripiegò con quella diligenza e devozione come si doveva a una cosa tanto miracolosa e divina, ma tutta strapazzata e malamente ripiegata se la portò nella propria casa, ivi tenendola con tanta poca riverenza e stima. Ciò nonostante si conservò tutta bella e intatta, benché molto agninzita e denigrata; cosa che dovette molto dispiacere a Dio. Ma poiché le cose di questo mondo sono più variabili della luna, accadde che il detto Pancrazio che aveva sottratto la Ss. Immagine, ritrovandosi carcerato nella Regia Udienza della Città di Chieti, bisognoso di denari, scrisse alla moglie Marzia che vendesse o impegnasse qualsivoglia cosa di casa, in particolare gli accennò la Ss. Immagine (diceva questo perché sapeva che molti la desideravano), e gli mandasse denari per uscire dalle carceri. Andò dunque la buona e semplice donna al Dottor Donat'Antonio De Fabritiis della medesima terra di Manoppello (uomo non meno dotato di religiosa pietà che il sopraddetto Giacom'Antonio Leonelli), e portandogli la Ss. Immagine lo pregò da parte di suo marito che se la comprasse, o se la pigliasse in pegno finché suo marito ritornasse, ponendo in sua podestà il prezzo e la quantità di ciò che dare gli voleva; il quale, desideroso di avere in casa sua sì grande e prezioso tesoro, diede alla Donna quattro scudi corrispondenti a circa lire venti correndo gli anni del Signore 1618, e prese la Santissima Immagine senza vederla, né svolgerla. Partita poi la donna con i quattro scudi, e, disbrigato gli affari in cui era occupato

Both the donation act and the report were authenticated, according to the Capuchins' will, through public reading by a notary in the Town Hall in 1646. In this report it is told that the Veil was brought to Manoppello by a stranger in 1506 and given to a local notable, doctor Giacomo Antonio Leonelli, who then unwrapped the parcel in St. Nicholas church to find the Veil in it. As he turned to thank him, the stranger had vanished. The Veil with the image was passed down in the Leonelli family for about a century, until it was chosen as a wedding present for a female member of the family, Marzia Leonelli, although never actually given to her. In 1608 her husband, a soldier, stole it from her father's house. A few years later the woman sold it to doctor Donato Antonio De Fabritiis for 400 scudi, in order to free her husband, jailed in Chieti. The Veil was then donated by the De Fabritiis to the Capuchins. According to Father Pfeiffer it is likely that the Veronica, that is the Veil, was stolen at the time of Pope Paul V and brought to Manoppello¹⁵. **(ph.9)**

In 1618 the St. Peter librarian Jacopo Grimaldi made a list of all objects moved to the archives and previously located inside St. Peter's basilica in the Vatican, among which was the Veronica reliquary, whose glass panes he reported broken, probably due to the keeper's carelessness. This reliquary of the 1350 Jubilee is still preserved and can be seen in St. Peter's treasure. Pfeiffer states that if looked at carefully, a piece of glass is stuck on the veil¹⁶. The same librarian is the author of the "Opusculum de sacrosancto Veronicæ Sudario", which was written in the same year, in 1618; some think the date might have been counterfeit, or at least the last three digits of the Roman year, which might have been added later; so MDCXV (1615) might have been changed to MDCXVIII (1618). On the front page there is a drawing by Grimaldi himself depicting the Veronica in its reliquary still intact. It corresponds, according to Pfeiffer, exactly to the Holy Face of Manoppello, because of the open eyes glancing slightly towards the top in an oblique direction, the wavy hair at the sides and the beard, the shape of the face, the open mouth.

Roberto Falcinelli's research

In December 1999 I went for the first time to the Sanctuary of the Holy Face to observe and photograph the veil **(ph.10)**. In the little time I was allowed, my photographic session was limited to a few black and white and colour shots in 35mm format. My direct observation of the Holy Face confirmed the particular optical quality of this object, as I had learned in the bibliography I had studied **(ph.10bis)**. Father Pfeiffer's research, above all, had intrigued me and driven me to start my own research to try to establish the true nature of that veil. I had the opportunity to personally verify those known features, such as the extreme transparency of the fabric, the details of the face, and the tri-dimensional impression **(ph.11)**. On 27th October 2001 I went to Manoppello once again for more photographs and observations of the veil. On this occasion I took shots with colour film, slides and black and white film in 6 by 6 format. I was also allowed by the Sanctuary's rector, Father Germano Franco Di Pietro, to observe the Holy Face through a portable microscope, for a more detailed approach. I could see diverse features on the veil's surface **(ph.12)**. In some spots the presence of pigment-like material was quite evident. After analyzing my photographic shots and observing the veil up-close I was convinced that the Veil of Manoppello is probably a pictorial artwork of 1500.

nell'ora del contratto, tutto allegro e festoso l'avventurato Donat'Antonio per sì bella compra, spiegò l'Immagine la quale era nel mezzo di un velo quadrato e tutto trasparente per la rarità della tessitura, dalla grandezza di quattro palmi da ogni lato, trovò che il velo, per essere stato malamente tenuto e conservato, dopo che fu pigliato dalla casa Leonelli, era tutto stracciato, lacerato, e da tignole e tarli mangiato, totalmente corrotto, che quasi era ridotto tutto in polvere; e quelli pochi stracciarelli rimasti pendenti, non aspettando esser toccati, da se stessi cadevano in terra, fuorché la SS. Immagine, la quale sebbene era alquanto denigrata, e molto aggrinzata, era nondimeno nel resto tutta bella, intatta, e senza corruzione alcuna. Restò quasi attonito lo spirituale mercante a prima vista, e non poco nincredimento ebbe per la perduta spesa dei quattro scudi che aveva fatto in cosa così corrotta e mal tenuta; e postala da parte, come cosa inutile e da niente, pensava (come se fosse stato burlato) di restituirla a chi venduta glie l'aveva, e riavere i suoi danari. Stando dunque in simili pensieri, vi capitò il Padre Presidente del convento dei PP. Cappuccini, che allora si fabbricava in detta terra di Manoppello, il P. Clemente da Castelvecchio Sacerdote, persona molto sagace e accorta, col quale dolendosi di sì bella mercanzia che fatto aveva, gli scopri anche i pensieri che aveva di restituirla, per riavere i suoi denari. Il Padre, inteso il caso, e vista la bellezza e la qualità dell'Immagine s'intenerì tutto di dentro, s'inginocchiò, l'adonò, e con molta efficacia esortò Donat'Antonio a non restituirla, che se quella persona avesse voluto più denari più glie ne avesse dato, non trovandosi al mondo prezzo equivalente per pagana; e che il restar la Ss. Immagine così bella e dalla corruzione intatta era stata cosa miracolosa e particolare provvidenza d'Iddio. Per lo cui sano e spirituale consiglio, quietandosi il Dottore, si chiamò contento, e poco ancora gli parse il prezzo delli quattro scudi. Onde l'istesso P. Clemente, pigliate le forbici, tagliò via tutti quelli stracciarelli d'intorno, e punificando molto bene la Ss. Immagine dalle polveri, tignuole e altre immondizie, la ridusse alla fine come adesso appunto si trova. Il sopraddetto Donat'Antonio, desideroso di godersi quella Ss. Immagine con maggior devozione la fece stendere in un telaio di legno, con cristalli dall'una e dall'altra parte, ornata con certe cornicette e lavori di noce da un nostro Frate Cappuccino chiamato Frate Remigio da Rapino (non fidandosi di altri maestri secolari)".

¹⁵ **Di Pietro, G., 'E' a Roma la Veronica?**, in *Il Volto Santo di Manoppello*, Bollettino n.1, anno XC, giugno 2004. The same paper exists also in different paper. Fundamental the works of **Wolf, G., 'Or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?'** *Sguardi alla Veronica e alle sue copie artistiche*, in *Il Volto di Cristo*, a cura di Giovanni Morello e Gerhard Wolf, Electa, Milano 2000, pp. 103-114; *Schleier und Spiegel: Traditionen des Christusbildes und die Bildkonzepte der Renaissance*, Wilhelm Fink, Munchen 2002 (amazing work).

¹⁶As we will aheader see our research has given instead to different conclusions..

Prof. Giulio Fanti's research

In April 2001 professor Fanti undertook some research that he described in a report from which we have the kind permission to quote some relevant passages¹⁷. *“The cloth is made of very fine fabric, probably linen, and is made up of threads of about 120nm on average, but the size of them can vary even more than 50% from area to area. (ph.13) The weaving, quite rough and irregular, is in a traditional style: the cloth was made on a one-heald loom and the weft is perpendicular to the warp; along the horizontal direction 27 (+/- 2) threads can be counted per centimetre of fabric. The threads' interaxis is 370 nm on average, which leaves a gap between them of about 250 nm (+/- 100 nm), making the cloth unusually semi-transparent, hence the name of “Veil”. Each thread is made of about 60 fibrillae (+/- 35) 14 nm in diameter (+/- 6 nm) twisted around each other. The cloth shows clear signs of restoration in two points, on both right and left top corners, such repairs were made using different materials. There are also several red marks, which many scholars have identified as being blood, especially at the sides of the forehead and nose. (ph.14) The image is visible looking at either side of the cloth and shows different configurations according to the type of light shed on it. Judging by the dark, roughly linear marks, due to folding, it appears that the cloth was folded in 12 parts before being stored in the reliquary. On the bottom right we can see a glass fragment which was probably left entangled with the cloth by the same person who framed it. A thorough analysis of the glass type (even without removing it from the container) might give us further historical clues. The following tests were carried out as a preliminary study of the features of the image on the cloth: -a) microscopic test; -b) UV light test; -c) infra-red light test; -d) spectrophotometric test in the visible;*

-e) tri-dimensionality test. Various researchers, among whom Sister Blandina Paschalis Schloemer and Father Heinrich Pfeiffer, have verified the striking similarities between the Holy Face and the face on the Shroud of Turin, establishing 10 points of consistency. The image of the Holy Face doesn't have a marked tri-dimensional quality, unlike the body image on the Shroud of Turin, from which we manage to get important information on the distance between the body and the wrapped shroud itself.. The image of the Holy Face does show some physical similarities with the face on the Turin Shroud, notably the swelling in the cheek and nose. One of the features of the Sindonic image is its extreme superficiality, in that the linen threads, being made of about a hundred fibrillae, show the typical dark brown colouring from the image on the first 3 to 5 surface fibrillae at most. (ph.15) The image of the Holy Face, instead, seems to involve all the linen fibrillae; it is therefore visible from both the front and the back side. A feature of the Sindonic image is its chromatic regularity, where the different shades of colours depend only on the number of fibrillae involved. The image of the Holy Face on the other hand seems to carry different actual shades of colour. No chemical tests have yet been carried out on the image of the Holy Face, which makes it impossible to draw certain conclusions; however, in some areas, like around the pupils and the hair, the presence of pigment has been ascertained; the paint is possibly due to some Middle Ages retouch. For the moment we cannot rule out that the whole cloth was painted in watercolour technique. The fibrillae's surface appears quite smooth. The Sindonic image takes on a yellowish-brownish colouring owing to the oxidation and dehydration of the cellulose contained in the linen fibres. Furthermore, the fibrillae bearing image marks show a more rugged surface than those with no marks at all. The image of the Holy Face shows abrupt variations in contrast which allow us to get accurate details even at a medium enlargement. The Sindonic image on the contrary is not distinguishable by an observer placed at a distance of less than 1 or 2 metres from the cloth. In some spots, due to possible retouches in medieval times, some of the fibrillae of the Holy Face image clearly appear clinging together as if cemented. (ph.16) To further elaborate this aspect, it would be necessary to take microphotographs with much higher enlargements. While the Sindonic image does not display signs of attachment among threads or fibrillae bearing marks of the image, as the pigmentation is of a chemical nature, we notice a clear cementation among the fibrillae soaked in blood. Neither the Holy Face image nor the Sindonic face show the usual “cylindrical distortion” due to the wrapping of a cloth around the face”.

New investigation

Our new research on the Veil of Manoppello rises as the product of an intuition. Towards the end of 2001 I was working at a paper which I then brought to the International Congress of Sindonology in Paris on the 25th and 26th April 2002 organized by the CIELT. The title of this essay was “*Sindonic evidence in the works of Albrecht Dürer*”

¹⁷ Some steps and photographs of this confidential relation have been arbitrarily published by the Prof. Resch and from dr. Gaeta in their recent publications. I thank the Prof. Fanti for the controlled concession of a few removals and photographs of his work.

(*Testimonianze sindoniche nelle opere di Albrecht Dürer*)¹⁸. While doing some research for the essay, I needed to deepen my knowledge of the artist's biography and this led me to browse an extensive bibliography in different languages. As my essay examined the connection between Christ's iconography and Dürer's self-portrait dated 1500, I sought information on this specific topic (ph.17-18). One of the most interesting pieces of information I managed to find was in a chapter of Giorgio Vasari's book¹⁹ on Raphael Sanzio's life. There he tells of Raphael sending some of his drawings to Dürer, who promptly reciprocated: (ph.19)

"By these and other works the fame of Raphael spread to France and Flanders. Albert Dürer, a remarkable German painter and author of some fine copper engravings, paid him the tribute of his homage and sent him his own portrait, painted in water-colours, on byssus, so fine that it was transparent, without the use of white paint, the white material forming the lights of the picture This appeared marvellous to Raphael, who sent back many drawings of his own which were greatly valued by Albert..."

After reading this passage I felt quite surprised as the description of the self-portrait which Dürer gave to Raphael matched in an amazing way the image on the Veil of Manoppello. Knowing the organoleptic uniqueness of the Holy Face, which according to current studies appears to be the only one in the world, I was rather astonished. Nevertheless, after this initial clue, I kept looking for more detailed information on the subject. As I needed the authoritative support of an expert, I sought the advice of Professor Rosella Gallo²⁰ of the Academy of Fine Arts in Naples, and I informed her about my findings. She got back to me after a couple of days telling me that there was a further mention of the self-portrait in the second edition of Vasari's "La Giuntina" in the chapter on the life of Giulio Romano. Here is the text: (ph.20)

"Among the numerous treasures in his house there was a portrait of Albert Durer, by himself, on fine cambric, sent by him to Raphael, diligently executed in water-colours, and finished without using white lead, the fabric itself serving for the whites and the fine threads being used to represent the hairs of the beard, and when held up to the light it was transparent all over. Giulio, who valued it highly, showed it to me himself as a miracle once when I was on business at Mantua"

This new passage by Vasari strengthened my belief that the object he described was none other than the Holy Face of Manoppello. I immediately started looking for further clues to corroborate my intuition. First thing, I needed to find out whether more detailed reference to this object existed in the work of Dürer. I perused all the most authoritative biographies of the artist and also catalogues of all the major museums and worldwide art collections containing works by Dürer, but the search was vain. None of the works by the artist matched Vasari's description. Then there was a chronological issue. According to Father Da Bomba's historical report, the veil landed in Manoppello in 1503. Father Pfeiffer believes, after his studies on the Roman Veronica, that it arrived there in 1608. Dürer was born in 1471 and died in 1528, while Raphael was born in 1483 and died in 1520. In 1515 Raphael sent him a drawing he made for the Battle of Ostia, on which Dürer himself noted down: "*Raphael from Urbino, who was so highly regarded by the Pope, made these naked figures and sent them to Albrecht Dürer in Nuremberg, to show him some work by his hand*". I then tried to match the features on the veil with those in Dürer's self-portraits, comparing the one made in 1500, and also the ones made in 1493 and 1498, but I found some discrepancies. After this careful iconographic analysis, I started to consider the possibility that Vasari might have made a mistake and the picture was actually a portrait of Raphael rather than Dürer's self-portrait. I got hold of all the portraits and self-portraits of Raphael and I tried a new comparison. The first work I analyzed was the "Double Portrait", kept in the Louvre in Paris (ph.21). The results of the comparison were astonishing. The consistency points between the two images were numerous: the hair, the beard, the shape of the eyes and the eyebrows. Carrying on with my research, I came across an essay on Dürer by Wolfram Prinz. Here there is a paragraph about self-portraits in the introduction, where I found this rather interesting passage:

"The importance that Dürer gave to self-portraits as a statement of his own personality is also proved by the numerous accounts on the portrait that went missing. Vasari claims to have seen it in Mantua at Giulio Romano's, who inherited it from Raphael. Raphael was in turn given it by Dürer and later sent him his drawing of the Battle of Ostia in exchange. According to Vasari, Dürer's self-portrait was painted in watercolour on a canvas so extremely fine that it could be seen from both the front and the back side. It was truly a piece of virtuosity, which beside immortalizing the artist's features was clearly intended to show his painting skills. Dürer presumably painted it between 1510 and 1515.

¹⁸ See **Panofsky, E.**, *Albrecht Dürer. His work & his life*, Princeton University Press, New York 1943; **Huchinson, J.**, *Albrecht Dürer: a biography*, Princeton University Press, 1990; **Strieder, P.**, *Dürer*, Milano 1992.

¹⁹ **Vasari, G.**, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri*, Bellosi L., Rossi A. (a cura di) 1991 Einaudi.

²⁰ Prof. Gallo is working, after a journey to Manoppello, on an artistic examination which will be soon edited.

Assuming that Raphael wanted to portrait Dürer (ph.22-23) as one of the Pope's porters in the Eliodoro Room, and supposing he used Dürer's gift as a model, we could restrict the date of that self-portrait to sometime around 1514"²¹. Further and unexpected support to my theory came in September 2004, when the worldwide press released the results of a research by Paul Bladde, a journalist of the German newspaper DieWelt based in Rome. Encouraged by Sister Blandina, who firmly believed the cloth was made of cambric, he invited for a survey on the cloth Mrs Chiara Vigo, from Sardinia, who is one of the last people still to weave this type of fabric using traditional methods. She confirmed that, seen with the naked eye, the cloth was indeed made of cambric. This amazed her since, to her experience, it is impossible to paint on it. Vasari expressly mentions cambric when describing Dürer's portrait (ph.24-25). I also analyzed the glass fragment which is found at the bottom of the veil and which, according to Father Pfeiffer, is a proof of it being the Veronica stolen from its frame in St. Peter's basilica. After close observation (ph.26), I can say with reasonable confidence that the fragment is not internal to the veil, but rather a small damage to the glass that encloses it. This is easily verifiable and can in my opinion be ascribed to forcing the frame in a point where we can see a bit missing, as if cut off. Another important clue (ph.27): in Dürer's self-portrait dated 1500 we can observe a detail in the left pupil, which seems to show the artist's intention to draw the straw mentioned in the Gospel; by the right eye of the Manoppello face exactly the same sign can be found. Could this be Dürer's signature? Comparative studies have been done on the fabric with the assistance of Prof. Piero Vercelli, and are still ongoing. It is quite surprising that there are still written reports claiming the absence of pigment on the veil, while a simple microscopic observation clearly proves the opposite (ph.28-29). I believe we are not talking about an acheropite image, but rather a 16th century painting, that the Veil of Manoppello is the very portrait given by Dürer to Raphael, as it is known in the bibliography and believed missing. If my theory were proved, this would be an important discovery in art history. The track I am following at the moment leads to Giulio Romano. As Vasari wrote, the painter received Dürer's portrait as a gift after Raphael's death. He had met Raphael in Mantua while working at the court of the Gonzaga. We also know that after Giulio Romano's death his children sold some of their father's drawings to the antique dealer Jacopo Strada. Could the veil have been among those objects? The missing link is now to find out how this veil could have ended up in Manoppello from Mantua.

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²¹ An important and recent study, with remarkable bibliography, owes himself to **Preimesberger, R.**, "...Propijs sic effingebam coloribus...". Zu Dürers selbstbildnis von 1500, in **A.A.V.V.**, *The Holy Face and the Paradox*, cit., pp. 278-300. **Kehrer, H.**, *Dürer's Selbstbildnisse und die Dürer Bildnisse*, Berlino 1934; **Ochenkowsky, H.**, *Die selbstbildnisse von Albrecht Dürer*, Diss., Strassburg, 1910; **Winzinger, F.**, *Albrecht Dürers Münchener selbstbildnis*, in Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft, VIII, 1954, pp.43-64; **Didi-Hubermann, G.**, *L'autre miroir. Autoportrait et mélancolie christique selon Albrecht Dürer*, in *Il ritratto e la memoria. Materiali 2* a cura di Gentili, A., Morel, P., Cieri Via, C., Bulzoni Editore, Roma 1993 p.234; **Townsend, C.**, *Transcendent replication: Self portraiture, Verae icones and Photography*, pro manuscripto, University of Sussex 2001; **Lange, G.**, *Dürers christomorphes Selbstbildnis von 1500 und sein Widerschein in der frühen Moderne*, in Katechetische Blätter, 5/2000, pp. 328-335.

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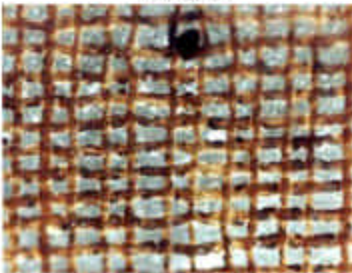
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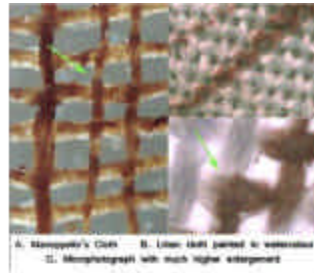
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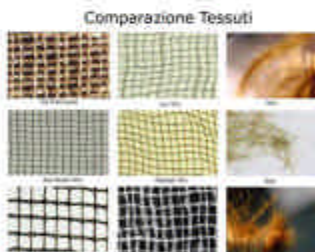
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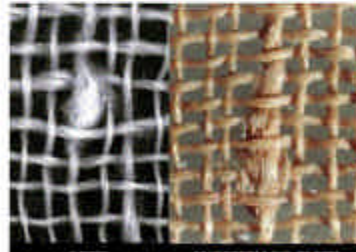
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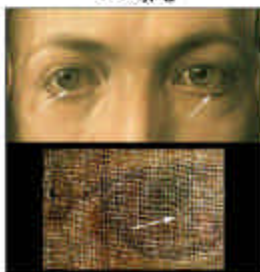
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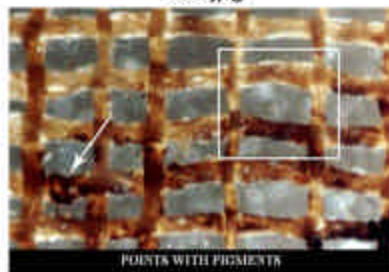
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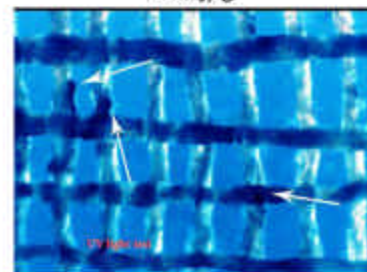
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