

# The Mandylion Or The Story Of A Man-Made Relic

10-Oct-2014

7:30-8:00 pm

## Authors

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## Abstract:

In 1978, Ian Wilson suggested that the Mandylion was in fact the Turin Shroud folded in such a way that only the face of the man of the Shroud was visible, like the Mandylion. The Abgar Legend provided a link between the Mandylion and the Shroud at the time of Christ.

This hypothesis is supposed to explain : 1) how this linen (the Shroud) came from Jerusalem to Constantinople via Edessa 2) its first appearance in History in the 6th century, 3) why it was considered as bearing a non man-made image 4) how, why and when the Mandylion had been “rediscovered” as a true burial sheet “tetradiplon” with blood smears and the entire image of a body 5) and finally, because of the sac of Constantinople in 1204 AD, its disappearance from Constantinople and its reappearance in France during the 14th century.

At the first look, this very attractive theory explains why there is no historically documented evidence of the existence of the Turin Shroud before the 14th century: it was simply “hidden” below another relic whose history was known: the Mandylion.

The main problem with Wilson’s hypothesis comes from the fact that each of the above key-points, when reviewed in their historical, political and religious context tells us a rather different story.

Our own rereading allows us to state that the Edesse image was very likely a « relic » made by the Church in Edesse in the 5th century in the context of a theological dispute. Likewise the evolution of the Abgar legend, closely related in Wilson’s hypothesis to the Edesse image/Mandylion, are much more easily explained by circumstantial rewritings of the Legend to justify religious dogma or the political interest of the Byzantine emperors.

Therefore, it appears that the Edesse image/Mandylion cannot be the Turin Shroud. Our presentation will propose another hypothesis based on the study of the “epitaphios”. This is a preliminary hypothesis, or more exactly a new track that needs to be further investigated.

The « epitaphios » are embroidered or painted clothes depicting generally the deposition from the Cross or the burial of Christ. During the Holy week, this large cloth is placed on the altar

table in the Eastern Orthodox Churches and those Eastern Catholic Churches which follow the Byzantine Rite.

The tradition of the «epitaphios» dates back to before the 13th century. However, we know that in the 7th century in Jerusalem a Shroud of Jesus was already worshiped as well as another sheet bearing the image of Christ. In the 10th century in Hagia Sophia in Constantinople an image on a sheet was still worshiped.

It's difficult to know exactly what exactly these objects were. We will present some clues showing that they might be logically linked to the Turin Shroud.

Finally, thanks to the Pray Codex, it seems possible to demonstrate the relationship between a sheet bearing the image of Christ and the “epitaphios”.