

# The Shroud revisited by Baima Bollone

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The history of the Sacred Cloth has been impervious and full of risks but since it was considered important since ancient times it has always been treated with respect

For prof. **Baima Bollone**, a Turin anatomopathologist who has dedicated a good part of his life to the study of the Shroud, the cloth is "truly the image of the son of God". He affirmed this, with the authority that distinguishes him, on the occasion of the event "**The day of the Shroud**" at the Centro Studi Sindone del Caravita in Rome.

The conference was strongly desired by the director and documentary maker prof. **Alberto Di Giglio**, artistic director of the international days of religious cinema - Medicinema - of Todi. Before the interview with Baima Bollone, an interesting video concerning the Shroud was shown. In his appreciated speech, the professor said: "Since I was a child, my mother often spoke to me about the Shroud. If at that time they had told me that I would become the **first pathologist in the world to analyze his blood**, I would never have believed it. It was 1978 and I was with other pathologists in the Library of the Royal Palace of Turin".

"The Shroud sheet was placed on a long table illuminated by a grazing light, to pick up fragments of cloth. I was looking at the linen from above when I had **the impression that the image took shape. I couldn't believe it, I saw it in three dimensions. At that moment I thought my eyes were playing a joke on me.**" The then young doctor saw what others also told having had the same feeling.

## **Blood tests detected by the Shroud cloth**

Baima Bollone had hypothesized, before approaching linen, that the **figure on the Shroud** was **produced from human blood**. The tests later revealed that it was **plasma from the AB group mixed with microscopic particles of myrrh and aloe**. After investigating the blood, she continued her studies, finding pollen on the cloth trapped in the weft of the fabric from which it is possible to trace places around Jerusalem.

## **The burial of Christ and the Shroud**

According to popular and religious tradition, the Shroud is the **funerary sheet that wrapped the corpse of Jesus after his crucifixion and death**. It is the apostle Paul in a letter written to Ephesus, to the Christians of Corinth between 54 and 56, which speaks of the death of Jesus in the year 30. All four of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

begin with the **request of Joseph of Arimathea to Pilate to obtain the body of the executed** by crucifixion. They also describe that it was Joseph who laid the corpse of Jesus off the cross and "wrapped it in a clean sheet." John also informs us that it was Nicodemus "the one who previously went to him at night" who carried thirty kilos of a **mixture of myrrh and aloe as it was custom for the Jews to prepare the burial.**

The corpse was placed in a tomb "dug into the stone" whose access was blocked by rolling a large stone. **All four evangelists agree on the story of the burial.** It is Luke who mentions the funerary fabrics in the story of the burial. John also speaks of **soudarion**, and it is he who describes what happened on Sunday morning when **Mary Magdalene and Peter** discovered the open tomb. "He saw nothing and found no one but they saw Jesus' burial cloths. He saw people dressed in white robes and spoke with them." Finally, Mary Magdalene "spoke to Jesus, but outside the tomb". **John is the only eyewitness.**

### **The fine linen of the Shroud**

According to the biblical scholar **Maria Luisa Rigat**, the linen in which Christ was wrapped came from the deposits of the Temple of Jerusalem. It was made of fine linen "fine **linen available in the Sanctuary for the needs of the priestly Levites, in particular the tents**". This identifies John as a priest of the Temple and of high rank with the willingness to take this fabric. According to the Jewish custom in the burials of the time a **cloth was used** as if it was a question of **apparent death**, upon awakening, the revived could free himself. **After three days they went to check the tomb.** This is supposed to be the meaning of the visit of the pious women on Sunday.

### **The history of the Shroud cloth**

The monk bishop **Epiphanius of Salamis** who lived between 315 and 403 wrote in 393 to the bishop **John of Jerusalem** that he saw in a **church in Anablata, hanging on the doors, a textile artefact** of considerable size **with the image of Jesus**. He also claims to have scolded the keepers as it would have been a sacrilege. **It could be the first trace of the Shroud.** What is certain is the fact that in 544 the Shroud cloth was in **Edessa**, a city in Anatolia, today **Urfa**.

In 639 the **Arabs** conquered Edessa and **allowed the local worship of the Christians** of the Mandylion with the effigy of Jesus. The **Roman emperor of Byzantium I Lecapeno** (920-944) **exerted strong political pressure** to give him the sacred cloth. As he failed to get it **he besieged the city** and the Arab **occupiers of Edessa surrendered the Mandylion**. In exchange they obtained the release of 200 Islamic prisoners and the sum of 12,000 silvers.

The **transfer** of the Mandylion **to Constantinople** (the name of the city derives from Constantine the emperor who conquered it in 330) is mentioned in two liturgical books of the Byzantine church. In a manuscript kept in the Vatican library, discovered by a researcher in 1986, **Archdeacon Gregory**, an expert on the Byzantine imperial delegation, described him thus: "his facial features were formed in the linen fabric". He also narrated that during the transport from Anatolia to the capital there were **numerous miracles** including the healing of a possessed person. On August 15, the Mandylion arrived in Constantinople (today Istanbul in Turkey). This is reflected in numerous documents. Around 1150 an English pilgrim reported that **in the chapel of the emperor** there was the shroud of Christ.

### **The sacking of Constantinople**

The knight Robert de Clari, coming from Picardy following the fourth crusade, wrote that **in the conquest of Constantinople** in 1203 and then in 1204 **the city was completely sacked**. There great wealth had been amassed over the centuries. The conquest of the city **with the help of the Venetians** was followed by looting and killings. Important treasures were brought by the Venetians to the Cathedral of San Marco in Venice such as the Pala d'Oro and the 4 bronze horses that adorn the facades. **The Shroud** that was kept in the chapel of the Lighthouse of Constantinople **disappears**. It **reappears in Athens** but after a few years all traces of it are lost. The Latin Empire of Constantinople lasted until 1261 when Emperor Baldwin II Porphyrogenetus (1217-1273) was defeated by **Michael VIII Palaiologos**, who **resettled the Greek Empire with the help of the Genoese** rivals of the Venetians.

### **The Templars and the Shroud**

According to the scholar **Barbara Frale**, official of the Vatican Secret Archive (with whom the writer presented the book "The Shroud of Jesus Nazarene" in Rome a few years ago), it was the **Templar Warrior Friars who guarded the Shroud of Turin for a certain time**. They kept the folded cloth so that only the face was visible. The Templar order dispersed in 1307, for some time the Shroud may have been transferred to English territory, in a barracks of the Temple. In fact, in 1944 in **Templecombe, a small town in Somerset in south - western** England, an ancient and large oak panel with a keyhole was found, which bears a bearded face painted entirely similar to that of the Shroud.

The discovery happened by chance following a German bomb explosion. **It was in a sort of windowless warehouse that was formerly the home of a Templar chaplain**. The panel had been in the ceiling for over 600 years. **The dimensions of the panel correspond to that of the Shroud folded on itself in eight**. It could be the lid of a container of the Shroud. **Carbon dating has traced it back to 1280**.

## **Shroud reappears in Lirey**

150 years pass since the Shroud disappears in Constantinople taken by the Crusader knights and in 1353 a **Champagne** village **appears in Lirey** 100 kilometers from Paris. It is known that the knight of the King of France Geoffrey de Charny had a special church built in which he exhibited it. Geoffrey died in 1356 in a battle near Poitiers without having revealed to anyone how he had come into possession of the sacred linen. **In 1390 Clement VII authorized the display of the relic**, with a bull that granted the indulgence to all those who went to the church of Lirey to venerate it.

## **The transfer of the Shroud to the Savoy**

After the stay of the Shroud in Lirey, the last descendant of the **Charny** family, **Margherita, in Geneva** on 22 March 1453, gives **the sacred cloth to Anna di Lusignano** wife of Ludovico di **Savoia**. There is no written act as the Savoy family did not want to create friction with the Pope. The motivation is given by the **prohibition on the trade in relics established in the Lateran Council of 1215**. Once the Dukes of Savoy became owners and still not having a single permanent residence, they carry the Shroud with them on their travels until they **place it in Chambery**, their capital. **In an inventory** of the relics placed in the Ducal Chapel of Chambery dated 6 June 1493 **the inscription Sanctum Sudarium appears**. **In 1506 Pope Julius allows the public worship of the Shroud and fixes the feast of the Shroud on May 4th of each year**, the day after that of the Holy Cross.

## **The silver reliquary for the Shroud**

**Margaret of Austria**, who became Filiberto's widow, in 1509 ordered a **silver box - reliquary** to keep the Shroud, **where it will remain until 1998**. The cost was twelve thousand gold crowns.

## **The fire of 1532**

The precious box **in** the night between 3 and 4 December **1532 was severely damaged by a fire that** broke out around midnight. The combustion caused the melting of the upper part of the precious reliquary, some drops of incandescent metal fall inside the Shroud, carbonizing a corner. On this occasion, a parchment of the time tells us, **she was saved by four brave** men: the ducal councilor Lambert, the blacksmith Guglielmo Poussod and two unknown Franciscans. Word spread that the Shroud had been lost.

On April 28, 1533 **Pope Clement VII** (1523-1534) **commissioned** Cardinal Ludovico di Gorrevod, bishop of Maurienne (Savoy, France), to carry out a **survey** of the cloth. This was very accurate and was repeated three times. Although damaged, the canvas was not damaged at the level of the images. **Two years later the Shroud was brought to the**

**monastery of Santa Chiara where the abbess entrusted the repair of the cloth to four nuns.** The restoration lasted two weeks in which they worked kneeling all the time and with the constant surveillance of four guards who alternated day and night. At the end he was solemnly brought back to her chapel.

### **The Shroud transferred to Turin**

**In 1578 Emanuele Filiberto transferred the Shroud from Chambery to Turin,** the new capital of the duchy. This happened because the archbishop of Milan, **Carlo Borromeo,** had made a vow: **if Milan had been freed from the plague** that was raging in the city, he **would have venerated the Shroud by walking** to Chambery. Emanuele Filiberto had thus tried to alleviate the discomfort of the archbishop's long journey. **In 1713 the Duchy of Savoy became the Kingdom of Sardinia** and in 1717 the news of a **rare display of the Shroud** to celebrate the first four years of the Kingdom.

### **The first photographs of the Shroud**

**We arrive at 1898** when on the occasion of the **marriage between Vittorio Emanuele** son of King Umberto I and heir to the throne, **with Margherita di Savoia,** the Turin lawyer **Secondo Pia** , amateur photographer, on the occasion of an Exposition, took the first **photos** of the Shroud. These photos will give impetus to studies, research but also to controversy by scientists. The chronicles tell us of **800,000 pilgrims who came to Turin to venerate it** .

### **1918 The Shroud transferred to a safe place**

The first **aerial bombardments** suggested protecting the Shroud by **transferring it two floors under the Royal Palace.** It was placed in a box wrapped in heavy asbestos cloth placed in an iron box inside a safe.

### **Exposition of 1931 of the 1933 Holy Year**

On the occasion of the **wedding of the heir to the throne Umberto,** the professional photographer **Giuseppe Enrie** was commissioned, during the exposition, to take **new photographs** of the Shroud and so again for the **Holy Year of 1933.**

### **1939 the secret transfer of the Holy Shroud**

The problem of safeguarding the Shroud reappeared in **1939** at the first signs of the **Second World War.** **The removal of the Shroud from Turin** was decided, as the industries present in the city could be subject to bombing by the allies. **It was therefore thought at first of a transfer to the Vatican,** then to the abbey of Montecassino (if it had been it would have been destroyed by the senseless bombs of the allies), but **Cardinal Maglione**

with great foresight and **at the papal suggestion, decided to take it to the remote Sanctuary of Montevergine near Avellino.**

**On the night of September 7, 1939, the box of the Shroud was secretly loaded on a train like any other luggage and taken to Rome to the Quirinale** where it was placed in the Royal Chapel. In the following days, always in great secrecy, the transfer to the Sanctuary of Montevergine took place in a niche of the main wall that is against the mountain. **Only ten people were made aware.** Nobody, not even the friars, knew of what was in that niche, only the Father Prior was.

### **Seven years later the problem of returning the Shroud**

**After the conflict**, in October 1946, Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, who wanted to take the Shroud back from Montevergine, found himself faced with a **complex situation**. In the delivery report it was written that: "this relic will be returned as soon as it will be given order by HM The Emperor King". But things had changed, there was no longer an emperor or a king, **there was a Republic**. Vittorio Emanuele III had abdicated in favor of Prince Umberto who, defeated in the elections of 2 June 1946, had left in exile for Portugal. On **October 28**, when the box is recovered, having ascertained its good conditions, **it is brought back to Turin and relocated to its altar.**

### **1983 Umberto II King of Italy dies**

**The former King of Italy, owner of the Shroud dies in exile. By will he gives it to Pope John Paul II, who ordered that the cloth should be kept in Turin** over time, appointing as custodians the archbishops who would succeed one another on the chair of the Turin Church.

### **The 1997 fire in which the Shroud risked being burned**

The Shroud **in 1993 was transferred** to the Turin Cathedral, behind the main altar. In **1997**, during the restoration works, a terrible fire broke out and the Shroud was in danger of burning. **It was rescued by a team of firefighters.** In the following days a Commission certified that the sacred cloth had not suffered any damage.

### **Conservative intervention in 2002**

In the months of June and July, the Holy Shroud underwent an important intervention as **the ancient patches put by the Poor Clares and that covered the burns of 1532** were removed. Over the centuries, the patches had become real pockets full of dust and fragments of charred fabric that was removed. The Shroud was then **freed from the Dutch cloth that had strengthened the Shroud for five centuries.** The restoration made it

possible to carry out new photographic surveys and collect Shroud fragments for new studies.

### **Hypothesis on the formation of the Sindonic image**

The presence of pigments was absolutely **excluded from the** examinations, that is, that the cloth was painted but we do not know how the Shroud image on the cloth was formed. In this regard, several hypotheses have been advanced: an irradiation, a flash of light or a beam of particles (protons or neutrons). Until now, no one has explained the cause that would have given off this radiation. There has also been talk of the "**corona effect**" or a particular type of electric discharge, but it is not clear how this electric field could have been generated.

### **The stature of the man of the Shroud**

Since the past centuries, attempts have been made to measure the stature of Christ through the Shroud. It is known that the Savoy family used to give their guests ribbons with a length corresponding to the **height of the man on the Shroud, 183 cm**. Same height indicated, in the fourteenth century, by the Byzantine historian Callisto Niceforo. Which means that the height of the man of the Shroud was **significantly higher than the standards** of the Jewish race of the **time**.

### **The medical-legal examination of Prof Baima Bollone**

According to what prof. Baima Bollone in his speech at the Caravita oratory: "The figure imprinted on the Shroud is that of a crucified **body stiffened by rigor mortis (...)** **the cloth was stretched as a bridge over the** stiffened corpse **in the attitude of slight bending of the head**. The marked rigidity of the mimic muscles and of the neck is noted, evidenced by the position of the head permanently flexed **towards the chest**. Corpse rigidity is also shown by the large muscle masses of the chest and thighs".

"In correspondence of the scalp, **numerous punctiform marks can be seen from which blood flows originate**. This identifies that **a crown of thorns was placed on the head of the Man of the Shroud**. There is no historical information of other cases of crowning with thorns in crucifixes, this confirms that it was an **impromptu find of the soldiers to mock Jesus 'king of the Jews'**. It has been ascertained that the nails were not driven into the hands but **into the wrist**, only in this way is the body held back by the skeleton and ligaments that can support the weight of the crucifix. **A nail driven in this position** it injures the median nerve (this is the same nerve affected by carpal tunnel syndrome) and **causes flexion of the thumb**. In fact, the thumbs of the man of the **Shroud are not visible**". The iron nails, it was calculated, had a length of about 11.5 cm.

## Coins on the eyes

By carefully examining the photos taken of the cloth, **two small objects** were observed **in correspondence with the eyes of the Man of the Shroud** identified as coins with coins dating back to the first century.

It would be two coins minted by Pontius Pilate in the years 29-32 and placed on the eyes of the corpse probably to keep the eyelids closed. **They have a close chronological agreement with the burial of Jesus that specialists believe to be placed on 7 April of the year 30.**

"The professor Baima Bollone stated that in his **blood tests** on the cloth he identified that the Man of the Shroud belonged to **the AB group**. In Europe, - said the professor - **it corresponds to 5% of the population while in Jews it is present in 18%**. Still to be clarified, because the **blood stains on the Shroud retain their original carmine red color**, while the blood traces blacken rapidly due to the degradation of hemoglobin. **The explanation could be the presence of aloe and myrrh**".

At the end of the address, we asked prof. **Baima Bollone** if the Shroud he was able to view was really the one that wrapped Christ. **"After so many years I am firmly convinced that the Man of the Shroud identifies himself with Jesus**. All my investigations have subsequently been confirmed by great researchers, and I am greatly satisfied with this".