

The face of Manoppello and the veil of Veronica: new studies

Roberto Falcinelli

Viale degli Astri, 59 cap. 00144 Rome-Italy email: coleridge@libero.it

Abstract

*In recent years, studies on the Holy Face have experienced substantial growth, although, up to date, no scientific study has been published in a peer-reviewed journal. Art-historical studies have suggested a possible identification of the Face of Manoppello with the Veil of Veronica kept in the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. But how far and how can you take this path of research? This study proposes to address this issue in the light of recent new studies carried out by the author on the original manuscript *Opusculum de Sacrosancto Veronicae Shroud (Code H3)* by Giacomo Grimaldi kept in the Vatican Secret Archives and repeatedly brought as a crucial document by supporters of that thesis. Further research has been effected on the frame of the Holy Face, dating back to the fourteenth century and now preserved in the Museo del Tesoro in San Pietro.*

Keyword: Giacomo Grimaldi, Manoppello, Veronica's veil, frame of the Volto Santo

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1999 Father Heinrich Pfeiffer [1] announced at a press conference in Rome that he had found the real Veronica's veil in a monastery in Manoppello (figure 1), a little town in Abruzzo. Pfeiffer believes that the Volto Santo was stolen from St. Peter's and was passed from family to family until it came to the monastery [2].



Figure 1. The veil of Manoppello.

In a contrasting story, André Chastel, in his book *The Sack of Rome 1527*, wrote that the Veronica's veil was put up for sale in the taverns of Rome by Lutheran soldiers of the imperial army. Of a similar opinion is the scholar Saverio Gaeta [3].

In this report I will not refute such studies but only make a contribution with my personal observations about some points in this exciting research. There is no denying that in

recent years interest in the veil of Manoppello has increased dramatically worldwide, although for centuries it had been only a local devotion confined in a remote village in the province of Abruzzo. In addition to Father Pfeiffer several other scholars are working on the study of the veil of Manoppello, to mention a few of them I can recall Sister Blandina Paschalis Schlomer [4], prof. Giulio Fanti [5], prof. Pietro Baraldi, Andrea Resch [6], Paul Badde and Saverio Gaeta.

I myself, as well as having made photographic analysis, suggested the identification of the veil with a portrait of Albrecht Durer donated to Raphael, which was remembered by Vasari [7].

2. VERONICA'S VEIL

The original ciborium for the Volto Santo (figure 2) was a marble parapet in the north aisle paved with porphyry and marble. It remained in this enclosure until Pope Clement III commissioned a new ciborium at the end of the twelfth century. The new ciborium, recorded by Giacomo Grimaldi, included [8] an altar table with an image of the Veronica displaying the veil above it. Four columns support a second story that covers the altar space. In the second register, there is another image of the Veronica holding the Volto Santo [9].

It too contains two columns that support a third story on which the reliquary is housed. The reliquary is contained within a tabernacle that has two twisted columns, a grille, and a small door, which presumably opened to the reliquary. On March 21, 1606 the Veronica was solemnly placed in a niche carved inside the pylon of the Veronica. But does it look like the relic of the Veronica preserved in St. Peter's?

Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Scientific approach to the Acheiropoietos Images, ENEA Frascati, Italy, 4-6 May 2010

Journalists Paul Badde [10] and Saverio Gaeta [11], who like me have had the opportunity to see it, tell in their publications about their encounter with the Roman Veronica [12], but they radically put into question its authenticity, describing it as a decaying object, an image "in ruins", which is sometimes impossible to identify [13].

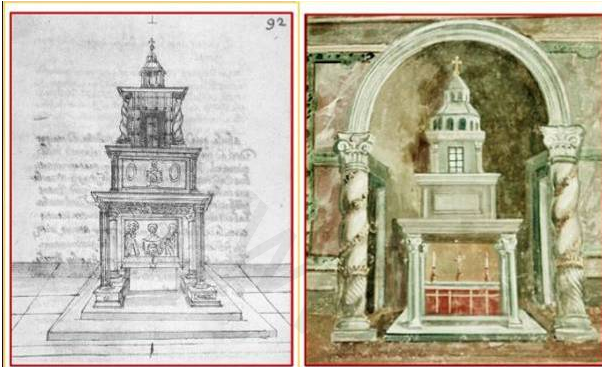


Figure 2. The ancient cyborium of the Veronica.

I can confirm that strongly, as in October 2005 I had a special permit to be able to closely observe it from the gallery where it is kept in St. Peter's [14]. The two authors above claim that we are faced with a false history. (figure 3).



Figure 3. Veronica's veil exhibition in St. Peter in Rome.

The description of the scholar De Waal, now from the last century, is revealing: "The beard is divided into three points ... and it is dark brown, the same color, for a length of about two fingers, can be found on the forehead; supposing it is hair, it is not possible to see or distinguish its pattern ... of the eyes, the nose, the mouth... you cannot

see anything at all...". It is known that nobody has ever been allowed to take photographs closely. Unexpectedly, however, a photograph (figure 4) of the relic has recently appeared on the website of the Holy Face of Manoppello [15]. Although technically bad (this is obviously a picture taken without permission) it confirms the current state of the relic.



Figure 4. Detail of the Veronica's veil.

3. GIACOMO GRIMALDI AND THE CODE H3

Some scholars like Saverio Gaeta have suggested that the Veronica was stolen during the sack of Rome in 1527. To support the theory of theft they propose that, since the type of representation of the Veronica changed from approximately that time, the original was stolen and replaced with a fake that shows a completely different iconography.

Saverio Gaeta has tried to emphasize this issue by proposing an intuition about a work of 1618 by Giacomo Grimaldi *Opusculum de sacrosancto sudario Veronice*. (figures 5 and 6).

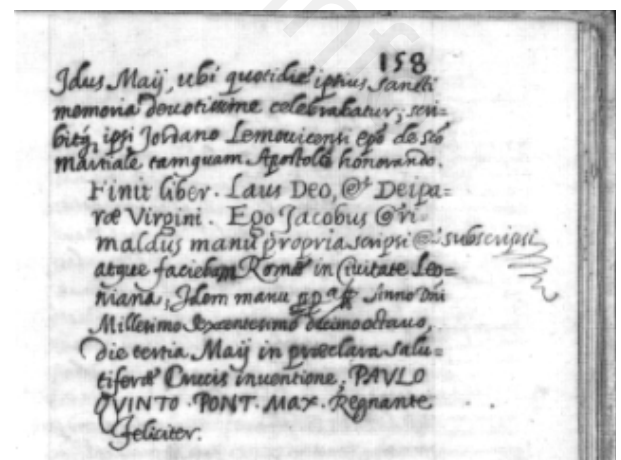


Figure 5. The unpublished book of Giacomo Grimaldi.



Figure 6. Cover of Grimaldi's book dated 1618.

He states that the date of 1618 present in the title was replaced with that of 1616 because it had to give the impression that, following the request for a copy of the relic by the Queen Constance of Austria, wife of the Polish king Sigismund III, everything was regular and that the original Veronica was still there. Without going into historical details here, the hypothesis proposed by Gaeta is rather curious.

Examining the original code H3 [16] preserved in the Vatican Library I could easily see the following: (figure 7).

1. The frame appears on the title of Veronica, prior to that of 1675, which had a plaque at the bottom where it was written that Peter Strozz said frame restored in 1617. This restoration is described on page 108 of the manuscript: "Instauratum cura Petri Strozae canonici anno d.ni 1617 Orate Deum pro eo".
2. The date of the manuscript is clearly stated by Grimaldi on page 158 stating: "Finit liber. Laus Deo, e Deiparae Virgini. Ego Iacobus Grimaldus manu propria scripsi e subscripsi atque faciebam Romae in Civitate Leoniana; idem manu propria Anno Domini Millesimo Sexcentesimo decimo octavo, die tertia Maiy in praeclara salutiferis Crucis inventione; Paulo Quinto Pont. Max. regnante feliciter".

3. Note that the date of completion of the manuscript is written in Roman numerals, but not fully and that the calligraphy shows no remorse whatsoever. It is, moreover, questionable the observation of Gaeta that the title is drawn with formal care.

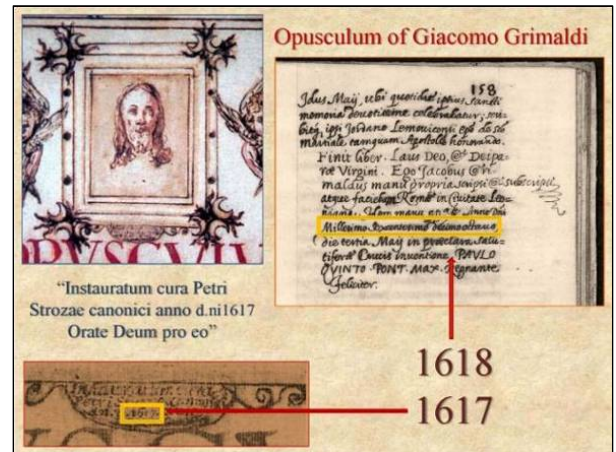


Figure 7. Dating of Grimaldi's book.

There are a number of designs that do not fall into double lines demarcating the page (figures 8, 9). It seems clear that these lines have been drawn after penned letters and drawings. The case however is not isolated.

On the frontispiece of the 1620 manuscript copy preserved in Florence it is clear that the writing of the date, even if this is penned in full, lacks lines of demarcation.

It is sure that the date of the work of Grimaldi was not counterfeited. How would it be possible to describe an operation taking place in 1617 in 1616? (figure 10).

I think that all scholars who hold this view have not bothered to study directly the original Giacomo Grimaldi, but instead have followed a line of research that is not documented or worse, not verified.

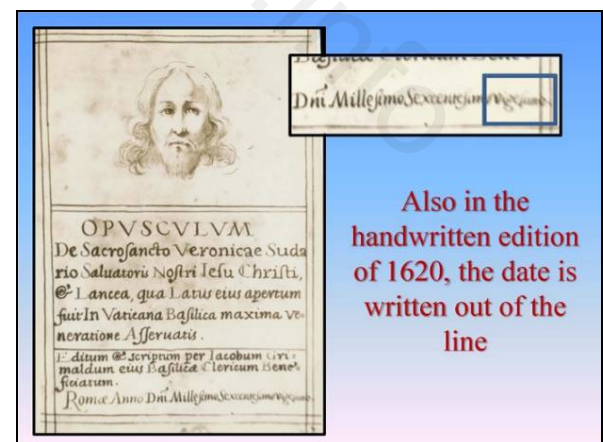


Figure 8. Edition of Florence.



Figure 9. Graphic imperfections.



Figure 11. Detail of coat of arms.

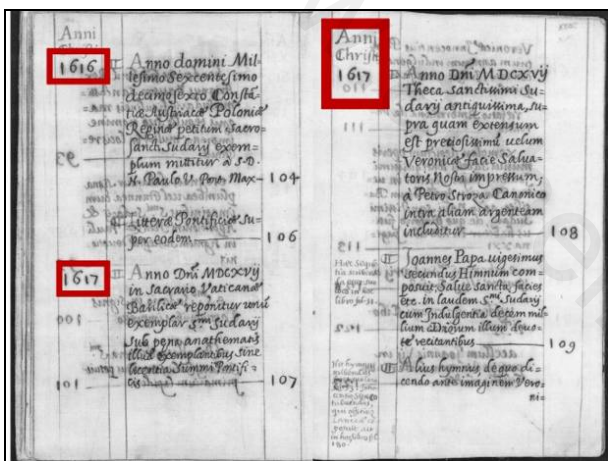


Figure 10. Table of contents.



Figure 12. Comparison with 1350 frame and the 1635 edition of Grimaldi's book.

4. THE 1675 FRAME

In the frontispice of Grimaldi's volume of 1618, Veronica's veil is represented within a frame that he considers very ancient. The occasion was its restoration carried out by the canon Pietro Strozzi. Could it be the 13th century frame used again, adding an outer clothing with crescents? (See figures 11, 12). This particular decoration with crescents at the sides was interpreted by some scholars as belonging to the coat of arms of the Piccolomini family.

Instead I think I can state with certainty that this symbology belongs to the family Strozzi, whose coat of arms shows this graphics.

The present frame (pictures 13, 14) was made by the goldsmith Carlo Spagna by request of Cardinal Francesco Barberini and dates back to 1675 [17].

Let's start examining if the measurements of the 16th century frame, reported by Badde and Gaeta, as well as by De Waal, have been taken precisely. Badde writes he has been able to measure the relic: cm 32 x cm 20 inside the golden frame, while the "face" alone is cm 28.5 long.



Figure 13. Front of 1675 frame.

My personal measurements of the frame are: 34.4 x 23.3 for the gold leaf and 29.7 x 19 for the face area. Badde's figures would seem therefore unreliable.



Figure 14. Back of 1675 frame.

De Waal says: “A modern silver frame with the emblem of Gregory XVI, cm 63 high and cm 51 wide, keeps under a glass an ancient plate of golden metal, on which there is a very fine net of silver thread. The golden plate is surrounded by some small decorations...In this plate the space for the Holy Face was cut. The plate is cm 31 high and cm 20 wide; the Holy Face appearing below is high, from the end of the beard cm 25 and cm 16 wide; his ears and maybe a part of the face and hair are covered by the plate...so that only cm 21 × cm 12 of the face are visible...” [18].

5. THE 1350 FRAME

In November 2007 I got a special authorization to study at close range the 13th century frame (figure 15) kept in the museum of the Treasury in the Vatican Basilica. Also Paul Badde took some measurements. According to him the frame is cm 25 × 25 in the area we are interested in.

It is necessary to stress that these measures were taken by Badde empirically from outside the museum glass case and not directly on the frame.

Even in this case I think his figures are wrong. I could observe and measure the frame (figure 16) outside the glass case and it measures 40 × 38 in the outer part and 31.7 × 29.5 inside.

Something doesn't correspond. Another important point to analyze is whether the frame had crystal on both sides to favour the veil transparency, as many scholars have taken for granted. We can quote Grimaldi: “A beautiful plate of pure white and transparent rock crystal, still kept in the

same Archive, adorned with a frame of fine silver and images engraved all around, split into two parts probably because of the carelessness of its attendants” [19]. In conclusion it seems obvious that Grimaldi is speaking of one crystal, (figure 17) but he doesn't say if originally the frame had crystal on both sides.

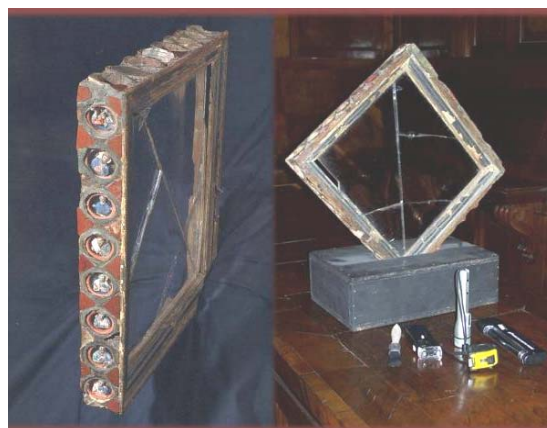


Figure 15. Analysis of the frame.



Figure 16. The author analyzes the frame.

6. VERONICA'S VEIL COPIES

Between 1616 and 1617 Pietro Strozzi painted at least four or five copies of the Veronica. Besides the one for the Vatican vestry and the one for the Queen of Poland, the others were destined to the Pope, the grand duke of Tuscany and the bishop Roberto Ubaldini di Montepulciano.

Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Scientific approach to the Acheiropoietos Images, ENEA Frascati, Italy, 4-6 May 2010



Figure 17. Damaged glass.

On 7th September 1616 a peremptory letter was written on behalf of Pope Paolo V, who forbid any new copy under penalty of excommunication.

In the first months of 1628 the new Pope Urbano VIII gave even severer provisions, as documented by two circular letters sent to all archbishops by cardinal Bernardino Spada on behalf of the Pope, where all faithful were ordered to hand in any copy representing “*the real sacred Image of the Holy Face*” under penalty of excommunication (figure 18).



Figure 18. Copies of the Veronica's veil.

An important copy of the Veronica is kept in the Schatzkammer in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna (picture 19). It dates back to 1617 and belonged to the family Savelli until 1720, when Caterina Savelli gave it to the Emperor Charles VI.

Another copy dating back to 1617 has been found in Chiusa Sclafani, (figure 20) a small centre near Palermo in Italy. Pope Clemente VIII gave it to a Franciscan friar, Innocenzo, who was his personal counselor in Rome.

The copy kept in the Chiesa del Gesù in Rome (figure 21) was donated by the Pope Gregorio XV to the Duchess

Sforza in 1621. Finally the copy kept in Venetico in Sicily (figure 22) dates back to the time of di Urbano VIII.

It seemed that other copies have not been available until recently. During archival research, I was able to find a copy of the Strozzi Veronica from 1617 in Bologna, in the church of St. Jerome, known as the Certosa [20].



Figure 19. Copy of Wien.

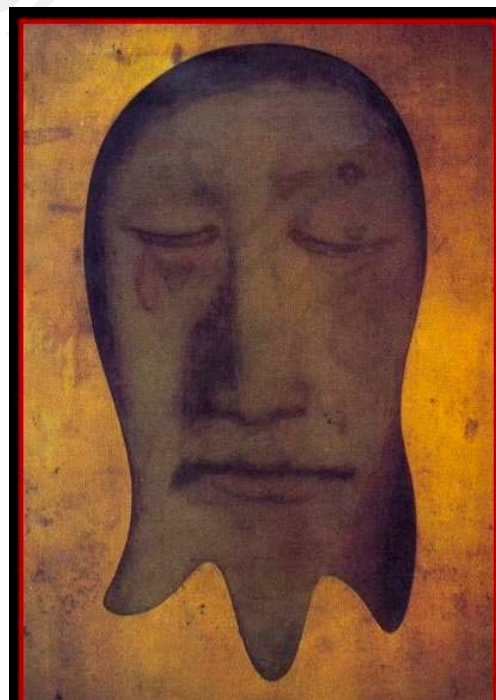


Figure 20. Copy of Chiusa Sclafani.



Figure 21. Copy of Chiesa del Gesù in Rome.

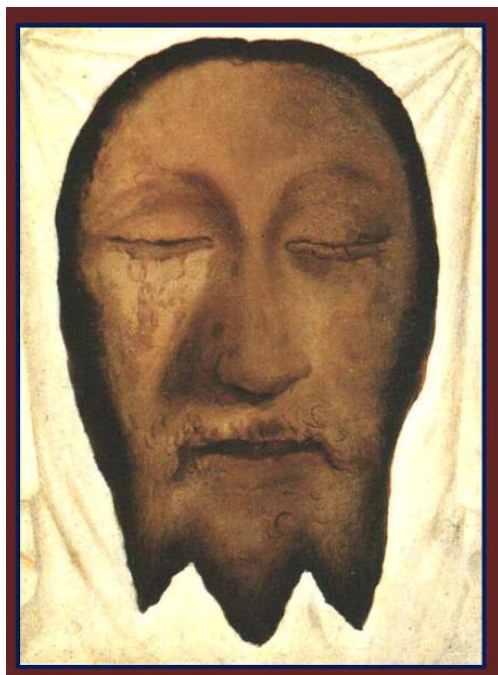


Figure 22. Copy of Venetico.

Currently it has not been exposed to the public for several years and perhaps for this reason it has not been reported (figure 23). I state that I am gathering more historical references as the discovery is very recent.

In the back of the complicated outer frame there is a scroll that describes briefly the origin (figure 24).

The image is in all respects equal to the copy of Vienna. We find, in addition to engraving on gold plate, even the exact same frame (figures 25, 26) and the same engraving by Pietro Strozzi. This copy [21], which was not known to exist, was donated by Pope Paul V to Apollonia Maria of Savoy [22] who in turn gave it to the Capuchin convent in Bologna in 1647 (figure 27).



Figure 23. New discovery: the copy of Bologna.

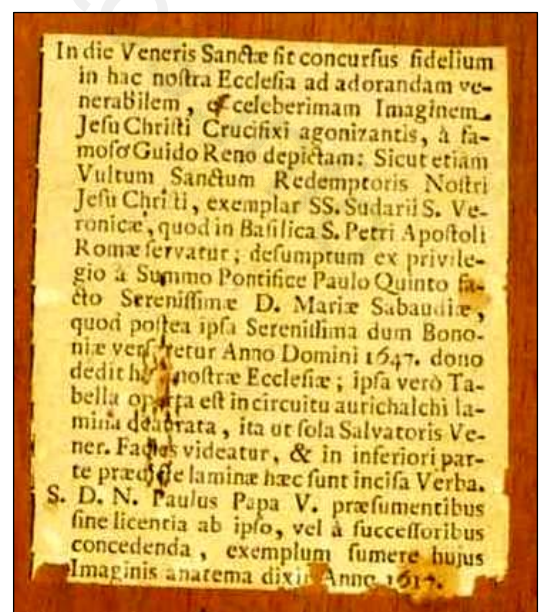


Figure 24. Scroll in the back of the frame.

Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Scientific approach to the Acheiropoietos Images, ENEA Frascati, Italy, 4-6 May 2010



Figure 25. Wien and Bologna: the same frame.



Figure 26. Detail of the inscriptions of Strozzi.



Figure 27. Mary Apollonia of Savoy.

7. CONCLUSION

In this research I attempted to clarify whether the current veil of Veronica, preserved in the basilica of S. Peter's in

Rome, is still the original or has been replaced in an unspecified date unknown to us. My careful study of the code H3 of Giacomo Grimaldi, who is still unpublished, allowed me to shed light to determine the exact date of the manuscript. The direct study of the two frames of the relic has clarified many doubts and uncertainties. The error in dating the manuscript by some scholars shows that the documents should always be studied directly, especially if unpublished. I think that the exploratory path on history and iconography of Veronica's veil will be in future still full of surprises. I left open the various hypotheses proposed relying on a clear comparison with the other scholars involved.

REFERENCES

1. For 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.

2. Fr Heinrich Pfeiffer: "Is becoming more consistent the hypothesis that the Veil was stolen at the time of Pope Paul V and brought to Manoppello. If the soldier held prisoner in Chieti, husband of the woman who sold the Velo with the figure of Christ in 1618 to Dr. De Fabritiis, is the same thief who stole the sacred relic in Rome, it is not established."

3. Gaeta, S., *Sparì la "Veronica" durante il Sacco di Roma?* Relazione Convegno "Il Volto Santo di Manoppello e l'iconografia dell'immagine di Cristo" Venerdì 10 - Sabato 11 febbraio 2006 Aula Magna del Rettorato - Università "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti.

4. Paschalis Schlömer, B., *La relique inconnue*, in *Identification scientifique de l'homme du Linceul: Jésus*

Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Scientific approach to the Acheiropoietos Images, ENEA Frascati, Italy, 4-6 May 2010

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 *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.

5. Fanti, G., *Relazione tecnica sulle indagini eseguite in data 15-16 aprile 2001 sul Volto Santo di Manoppello*, Archivio Santuario del Volto Santo.

6. Resch, A., *Das Antlitz Christi*, Resch Verlag, Innsbruck (2005).

7. Falcinelli, R., *Il Volto Santo di Manoppello: è Raffaello?*, dossier in *Hera*, num. 68, september 2005 with bibliography.

8. Grimaldi, G., *Liber de sacrosancto sudario Veroniceae salvatoris nostri Gesu Christi ac lancea quae latus eius aperueit in Vaticana Basilica maxima veneratione asservatis*, 1618 Cod. H3. See also: Niggl, R., *Giacomo Grimaldi 1568-1623*, inaugural dissertation, Munchen 1971, Muntz, E., *Ricerche intorno ai lavori archeologici di Giacomo Grimaldi*, *Rivista Europea*, Firenze (1881).

9. 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. See also: 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'Evangile 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.

10. Badde, P., *Das Muschelseidentuch*, Ullstein, Berlino 2005, id., *La seconda Sindone*, Newton Compton Editori, Roma 2007.

11. Gaeta, S., *L'enigma del volto di Gesù*, Rizzoli, Milano 2010.

12. 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). See also: Belting, H., *Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, Beck, Munchen 1990.

13. "Es ist ein Objekt in Auflösung: ein fleckiger dunkler Stoff ohne jede Kontur ... Ich tastet mit dem Strahl meiner Stablampe das Gewebe ab: doch es ist kaum auszumachen, daß es überhaupt Gewebe ist. Das Bild ist eine Ruine", in: Badde, P., *Das Muschelseidentuch*, cit., pag. 259

14. I was also allowed by the Sanctuary's rector to observe the Holy Face through a portable microscope, for a more detailed approach.

15. <http://holyfaceofmanoppello.blogspot.com/>

Picture, in all probability, taken by Mr. Raymond Frost.

16. A very special thanks to Mons. Dario Rezza, dott. Mirko Stocchi and dott. Vincenzo Piacquadio for helping me in Archivio Capitolo di San Pietro.

17. See: Montagu J., *The frame of the Volto santo*, in *Bollettino Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie Pontificie*, XIII, Città del Vaticano, 1993, pp.39-48.

18. De Waal, A., *Gli antichi tesori sacri della Basilica Vaticana*, in *Dissertazioni della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, Roma 1894. The translation is mine.

19. Grimaldi, G., *Liber de sacrosancto sudario Veroniceae*, cit., fol. 53 recto.

20. A warm thanks for helping me to Father Mario Micucci, Prior of the Chiesa Monumentale San Girolamo della Certosa di Bologna.

21. n° catalogo E 2877 Avanti: lamina dorata: 19,5 x 29,8. Cornice con madreperla: 30,7 x 41. Cornice dorata teca: 31,5 x 42,4 (all'interno). Cornice dorata teca: 35,6 x 47,1 (all'esterno). Retro: solo tavoletta: 35 x 38,2. Con striscia tavola superiore e striscia tavola inferiore: 35 x 50. Quadro complessivo con fregi: 74 x 89.

22. Daughter of Duke of Piemonte Carlo Emanuele I of Savoia (Rivoli, 1562 - Savigliano, 1630) and of Caterina d'Asburgo (1567-1597) daughter of the king Filippo II di Spagna, Maria Francesca Apollonia was born in Turin in 1594 and dead in 1656.