

# The Sindone Sample from Constantinople in Toledo (Spain)

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King Louis the Ninth, of France, or Saint Louis, received towards 1238 a group of relics from Constantinople that included a piece of a Shroud. The French King had the Sainte Chapelle of Paris built to house these relics. Very often the piece of cloth of Saint Louis has been thought to belong to the Shroud today kept in Turin<sup>1</sup>. The two fabrics have not been compared until now because the Sainte Chapelle of Paris was plundered in 1789 during the French Revolution and its contents were destroyed.

But St. Louis sent samples of his relic collection to the cathedral of Toledo in 1248<sup>2</sup>.

Among them there were: some wood from the cross, a thorn from the crown of thorns, milk from the glorious Virgin Mary, a part of the tunic of the Lord, a part of the towel that the Lord wrapped..., a part of the *Shroud* with which Jesus Christ's body was wrapped in the tomb, a part of the Saviour's nappies. Moreover, a very important thing is that he also sent a letter in which he said: "... de thesauro imperii constantinopolitani..." (from the Constantinople imperial treasure). Thus we can believe that parts of the relics, which were first in Constantinople and then in the Sainte Chapelle of Paris, arrived in Toledo. In fact, Baldwin the second, Latin emperor of Constantinople from 1228 to 1261, sold the collection that survived the crusaders' looting during the fourth crusade. His relative, Saint Louis, bought it<sup>3</sup>. Among the French king's collection the crown of thorns was the most popular, but he received also part of the cross, the cloth for drying the apostles feet and many more too. Some time later, he sent minor parts of them to several famous churches. The shipment to Toledo is the best documented. Daniel Duque, César Barta, José Sancho and Felipe Montero, members of Centro Español de Sindonología (CES), studied all these relics in June 1998. The finding was announced in Argenteuil, near Paris (France), last November during the meeting of COSTA and in Getafe, near Madrid (Spain), last December, during a meeting of the CES. Three of the relics were in their own specific reliquary and the rest were in the reliquary identified in several inventories as the Saint Louis reliquary. In this latter one was the Sindone sample. It is a taffeta of 26 threads/cm in weft and 33 threads/cm in warp and S spin, made of linen. It could not be a piece of the Italian Shroud which is a herringbone 3:1, 26x39 threads and Z spin<sup>4</sup>. It does not come from the Sindone kept today in Turin. Because of this finding there is now no reason to say that Baldwin the Second had the Sindone of Turin still in Constantinople in 1238. We do not know when the missing rectangles in the Shroud of Turin's corners were cut off. It is just as possible that they were cut before 1238 as more recently. Baldwin in 1238 not only had a shroud but also many others relics, which he sold. They were probably all preserved in the imperial Palace of Bucoleon during the attack in 1204. There are previous references about this relic collection housed in the Pharos Chapel inside the palace complex. If all the references are put together the whole list of relics fits very well with the collection of the Sainte Chapelle of Paris and that of Toledo. What were the relics in this collection?

Since the cross, coming from Jerusalem, arrived in Constantinople in the year 638 many other relics of Christ joined it as time passed. The "Mandylion", coming from Edesa in 944<sup>5</sup>, had a place of honour in the middle of this sanctuary, in a vessel hanging from two thick silver chains. In a very similar arrangement was a tile, reputedly having the face of Christ too, that came from Hierapolis in the year 966<sup>6</sup>. In 975, John Tzimisces obtained Christ's sandals<sup>7</sup>. In 1171 William, archbishop of Tyre, gives the most complete list of this collection<sup>8</sup>. So, by the time the crusaders attacked the city, in the Pharos Chapel there

were a cloth and a tile, both with the face of Christ and nearby, but in a different place, was the rest of the most famous assortment of Christ's relics: the cross, the nails, the sword, the sponge, the cane, the crown of thorns, the shroud, the sandals, the towel for drying the apostles' feet, the purple tunic, the sepulchre stone and a sudarium. We note that the burial cloths (sindones and sudarium) are mentioned in the inventories as different pieces of the Mandylion and systematically among a list of relics without saying anything about images on them. Baldwin would sell this shroud 40 years later to Saint Louis. The chapel where this collection was stored was not public. Because other churches in the city were more accessible, they became easier to loot, such as the Blachernae church, for example. In this last sanctuary we read about a sindone with the image of Christ for the first time in 1203<sup>9</sup>. It is odd that before this date no mention of it could be found and however, in 1205, it is called "the most sacred relic among them"<sup>10</sup>, when the nephew of the Byzantine emperor demanded the restitution of the Shroud stolen by the Crusaders. When did this very important relic come to Constantinople? A short time before the conquest of the city the group of the most valuable relics consisted of: the Cross, the Mandylion and the Virgin's icon<sup>11</sup>, but there was nothing about a shroud. However, the Mandylion had an image of Christ, like the Blachernae Sindone. The Wilson hypothesis gives a good explanation of this question, because both would be the same cloth. We do not have references of the Mandylion's being in the city after 1204. We suppose that every Friday the Mandylion was taken from the Pharos chapel and brought to Blachernae by galley as it was on the day of its arrival in the city on 15/8/944<sup>12</sup>. It would be returned after every exposition. On Friday 9 April 1204, when the crusaders were already besieging the city with their fleet, the Mandylion could be intercepted by surprise. Moreover, we have another reason to accept the Wilson hypothesis: In the text dated about 630 AD<sup>13</sup> where the Mandylion is described as a "tetradiplon", we found a very interesting word which we have never heard mentioned in any study of this text. It is in the following sentence where the same cloth with the Lord's image is called "Sindone". It is just the word used in the gospels, and 570 years later to name the Blachernae cloth.

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<sup>1</sup> Raffard de Brienne D. *Le Secret du Saint Suaire*. Chiré 1993.p.52  
Solé M.. *La Sábana Santa de Turín* p.61

<sup>2</sup> Cardenal Lorenzana. *Patrum toletanorum quotquot exstant opera*, t. III. Madrid 1793

<sup>3</sup> De Gail. *Histoire du Linceul de Turin*

<sup>4</sup> Schwalbe,L.A. and Rogers, R.N. *Physics and Chemistry of the Shroud of Turin*. Analitica Chimica Acta. Vol 135,1982. p41

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, Ian *The Turin Shroud*. P171 y183

<sup>6</sup> Cambridge Medieval History, t IV. Cambridge University Press. 1966

<sup>7</sup> Riu M. *Historia de las Religiones Hispania Sopena*. 1965. p.604.

<sup>8</sup> William of Tyre. In Savio. *Sindon* n. 3. p29

<sup>9</sup> Robert de Clary. *La Conquete de Constantinople*. Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age. París 1924. p81-82 y 90.

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Angel nephew of Isaac II Angel. *Letter to Pope Inocencio III. Cartularium Culisanense*. Translated to French in *Le Secret du Saint Suaire*. Raffard de Brienne D. Chiré 1993.

<sup>11</sup> *Suite de l'histoire de Geoffroi de Ville-Hardouin. Observations*

<sup>12</sup> Constantine VII Porfirogeneta. *History of the Edesa Image*. Original in Greek. Translated to English in Ian Wilson *The Turin Shroud*.

<sup>13</sup> The Acts of Tadeo. In Gonzalo Aranda et all. *La Leyenda Del Rey Abgar y Jesús*. Ciudad Nueva. Madrid. 1995. p163-170