The Face on the Shroud of Turin and on the Veil of Manoppello

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Abstract

The following article deals with the correspondences between the face on the Shroud of Turin and the face on the Veil of Manoppello as well as with the possible influence of both on the portrayal of Christ. The author tried to prove the correspondences by an especially elaborated sketch.

Keywords: Shroud of Turin, Veil of Manoppello, Image of Christ.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his research the author [1] came across the international symposion "La Sindone e le icone" held in Bologna on May 6–7, 1989, where in a comparative analysis the features on the Shroud of Turin were compared with the artistic, and in particular the Byzantine, portrayals of the face of Christ. G. Tamburelli and N. Balossino [2] compared the face on the Shroud with seven portrayals of the face of Christ from the 6th to the 12th century by translating them into a numerical form, thereby discovering corresponding features. Nothing was said about the Sudarium, however. This is why the author, inspired by the work of B. Schlömer [3] and H. Pfeiffer [4], felt induced to check the correspondences between the face on the Veil of Manoppello and the face on the Shroud of Turin as well as of several portrayals of Christ from the 3rd up to the 12th century.

2. EXPERIMENTAL METHOD

Material used in this research:

A photo of the face on the Shroud; photos of the obverse and the reverse side of the Veil of Manoppello, each taken by the author in order to guarantee an equal distance.

Photos of the portrayals of Christ in the catacombs obtained from the *Commissione di Archeologia Sacra*, Rome; photos of the images of Christ on the Reliquary Cross of Justine II purchased at the Tesoro di S. Pietro; some other photographs taken by the author as well as out of the personal archive.

Using Photoshop, the digitalised images of the face on the Veil were put on top of the photonegative of the face on the Shroud so that a significant level of congruence could be achieved in 6 common particularities of the two (see Fig. 2, points 5, 7, 13, 14, 16, 18). Twenty points of orientation were defined (it might also have been 100 or 1000) so as to make a sketch on the computer and check the correspondences between the two faces and the portrayals of Christ in the catacombs and in iconography.

The sketch (see Fig. 1) was made on the photonegative of the face on the Shroud and the front side of the Veil of Manoppello and checked with the original of the face on the Shroud as well as with the reverse side of the Veil.
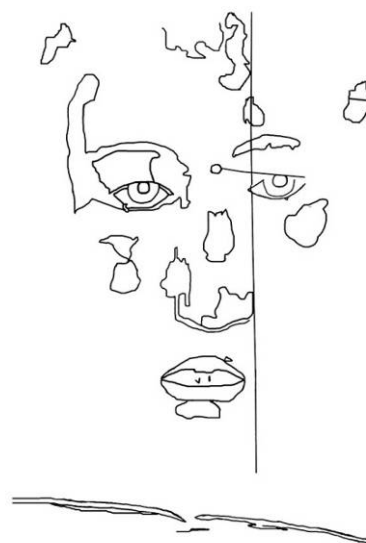

Figure 1. Sketch.

Points of orientation (S = Shroud, V = Veil) and points of congruence (V, S), see Fig. 2

1 Tuft of hair (V): The tuft of hair on the Veil has become an identification characteristic in the iconography of Christ.

2 Vertical line (S): The line runs across the whole face on the Shroud and serves as the basic orientation for the sketch.

3 Traces of blood (S): There are four traces of blood which can only be located on the Shroud.
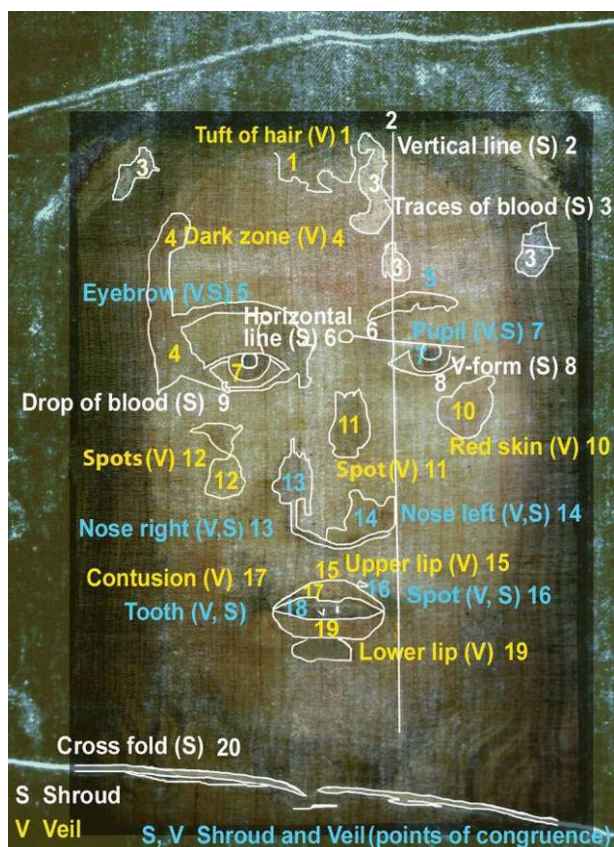
Figure 2. Shroud, photonegative, Veil, sketch, points of orientation and points of congruence.

4 Dark zone (V): at the side of the right eye on the Veil.

5 Eyebrows (V, S): Whereas the eyebrows are rather prominent on the Veil, only contours of them are visible on the Shroud. This detail is of special significance as far as a comparison with the images of Christ in the catacombs and in iconography is concerned.

6 Cross line (S): The white line across the left eye on the Shroud provides a very striking point of orientation.

7 Pupils (V, S): Whereas on the Veil the pupils come out very well, on the Shroud they are only indirectly visible because the eyes seem to be closed.

8 V-form (S): This refers to a triangular white spot on the lower lid of the left eye on the Shroud which enables a quite exact congruence with **9**.

9 Drop of blood (S): The drop of blood on the lower lid of the right eye on the Shroud together with **8** guarantees a significant congruence of the sketch.

10 Reddish spot (V): The reddish spot on the Veil facilitates the adjustment of the sketch.

11 Dark spot (V): On the left side of the nose (front side of the Veil) there is a dark spot which is not only of great significance for adjusting the face on the Veil to the sketch as well as to the Shroud, but also helps to distinguish the front side from the reverse side of the Veil. On the reverse side this spot is on the right.

12 Other spots (V): The right cheek of the face on the

Veil shows another dark triangular spot as well as a brownish one, which guarantees a further refinement when adjusting the sketch.

13 Nose right (V, S): On the right side of the nose on the Veil one can see a particularly dark spot which has only a vague correspondence on the face of the Shroud.

14 Nose left (V, S): There is a dark spot on the right side of the nose on the Shroud which also has a correspondence on the face of the Veil.

15 Upper lip (V): The upper lip on the Veil is very distinctive and makes possible a quite precise adjustment of the mouth section.

16 White spot (V, S): A small white spot on the upper lip of the face on the Veil helps to adjust this section to the corresponding white spot on the photonegative of the face on the Shroud.

17 Contusion (V): The upper lip of the face on the Veil apparently shows a contusion the contours of which are clearly visible.

18 Lines (S), tooth (V): Two white lines in the mouth section of the face on the photonegative of the Shroud – one of them V-shaped – are congruent with the lower end of the upper tooth section of the face on the Veil. This correspondence means a final help when putting the two images (Shroud and Veil) on top of each other.

19 Lower lip (V): The lower lip on the face of the Veil is quite distinctive, too, and also supports a precise adjustment of the mouth section.

20 Cross fold (S): The broad white cross fold below the face on the Shroud is indispensable for working out the sketch and bringing it into correspondence with the faces on Shroud and Veil.

Correspondences between the faces on Shroud and Veil

The following figures illustrate the correspondences between the face on the Shroud (see Figs. 3-4) and the face on the Veil (see Figs. 5-6):

The photonegative (Fig. 4) of the face on the Shroud is better suited to illustrating the congruence between the face on the Shroud and the face on the Veil because the original face on the Shroud does not allow an exact congruence. For this reason it's quite improbable that the face on the Shroud served as a prototype for the images of Christ in the catacombs and in iconography.

As to Fig. 5 and 6, the sketch was adjusted to the remarkable features of the face on the Veil which come to full expression. Of course, some more points of orientation could have been chosen, but the ones shown here are absolutely sufficient to guarantee the correspondence.

The two images are based on two different photographs each taken from the front and the reverse side of the Veil. The one is not simply the inverse image of the other.

One of the most important features on the Veil is the *tuft of hair* which is particularly significant for the dating of the Veil and, thus, also of the Shroud (see Figs. 5-6).
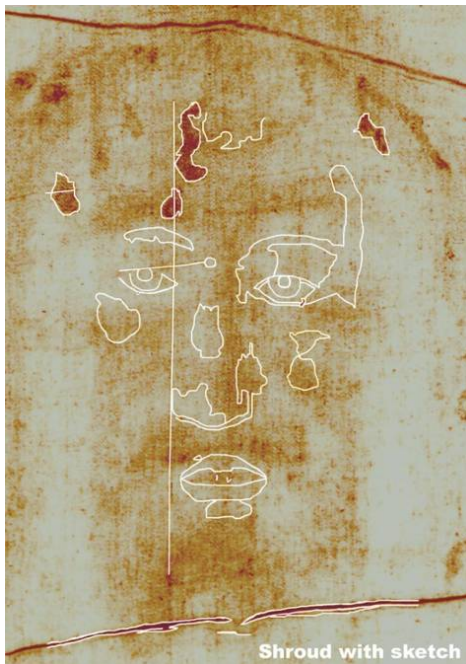
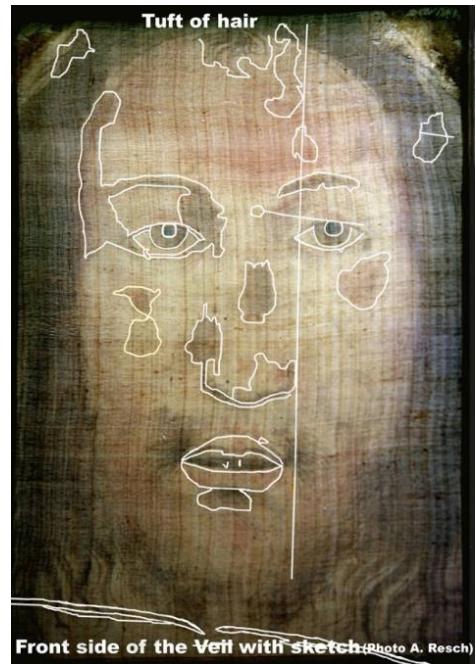**Figure 3**. Original face of the Shroud with sketch.

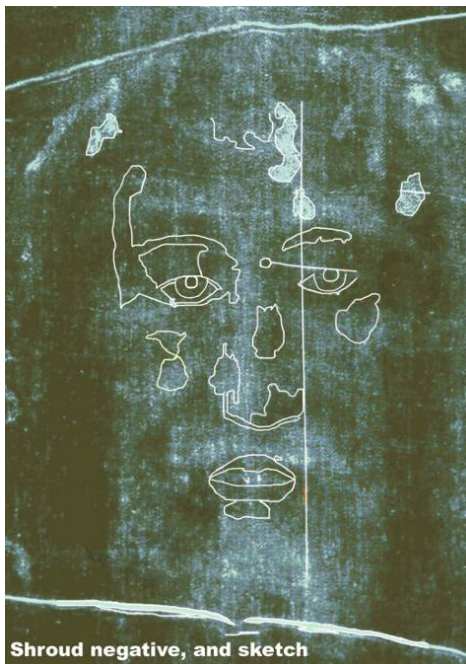**Figure 5.** Front side of the Veil with sketch.

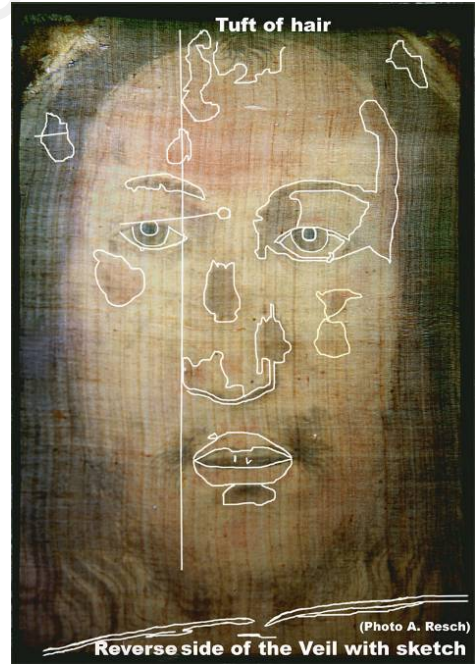**Figure 4.** Photonegative of the face of the Shroud with sketch.

Figure 6. Reverse side of the Veil with sketch.

What is particularly worth mentioning in this context is the double face image discovered by G. Fanti [5] on the reverse side of the Shroud (see Figs. 7-8). Whereas the sketch turns out completely congruent with the contours of the face, the traces of blood seem to have moved out of place because – when penetrating the linen – the blood went the usual way of the fabric. This is to say – and has amply been demonstrated by others – that the traces left on the Shroud by the corpse as well as the blood traces do not interfere with the image of the body. This is definitely shown by the sketch on the double image which turned out as a major contribution to the understanding of the Shroud of Turin. The sketch shows a very good correspondence with the faces on Shroud and Veil and clearly demonstrates the difference between body image and blood traces.
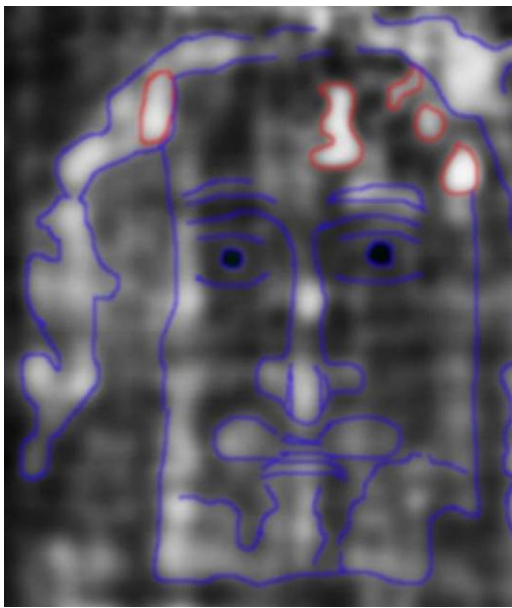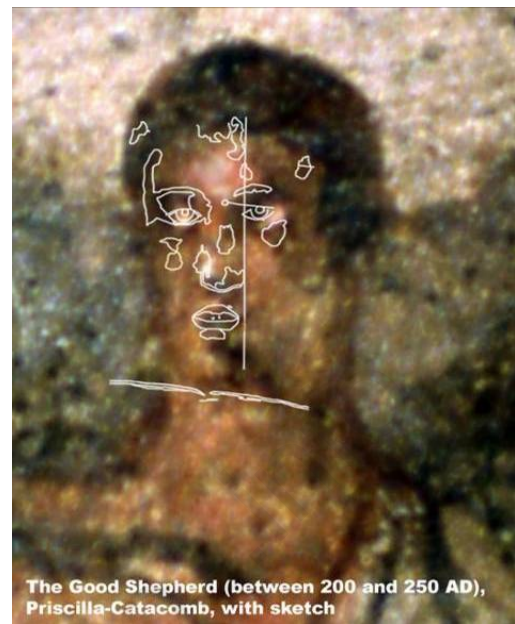
Figure 7. Double face image (Fanti).

Figure 9. Good Shepherd with sketch (Priscilla Catacomb).
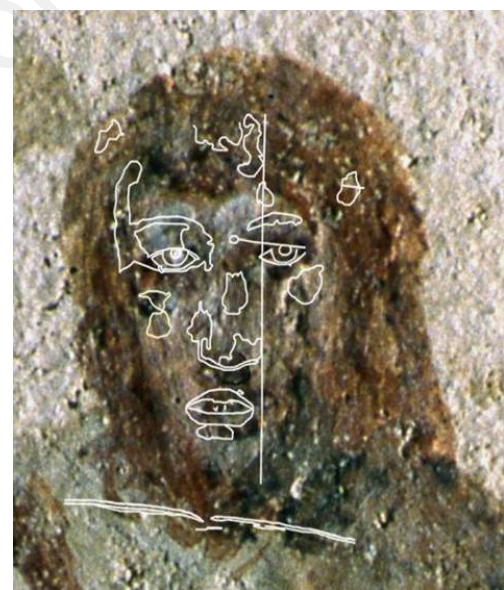

Figure 8. Double face image, sketch.

Figure 10. Good Shepherd with sketch (Aurelian hypogeum).

Correspondences with images in the catacombs

Amazingly, it turned out that even with the image of the Good Shepherd (200–250 AD) in the Priscilla Catacomb [6] the proportions are almost perfect (see Fig. 9).

The image of the Good Shepherd, portrayed as a Cynic philosopher [7] in the hypogeum of the Aurelians (before 270), shows a significant degree of correspondence, too (see Fig. 10).

The fresco „Christ with disciples" in the Domitilla Catacomb [8] dates back to between 330 and 340. The young Christ on the chair in the centre takes more than a quarter of the painting and – as the sketch shows – proves an impressive degree of correspondence with the face on the Shroud and on the Veil (see Fig. 11).

It should be pointed out that the sketch only adjusts in the way it does on the original face on the Shroud (see Fig. 3).

Particularly impressive is the correspondence of the sketch with the first portrayal of Christ, i.e. Christ Enthroned in the catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus [9], Via Labicana, Rome (see Fig. 12). Again, the correspondence of the sketch is like the one on the original face on the Shroud. The imposing painted ceiling showing Christ between the apostles Peter and Paul dates back to 375.

Figure 11. Christ among the disciples, with sketch

Figure 13. Image of Christ, Comodilla Catacomb, with sketch

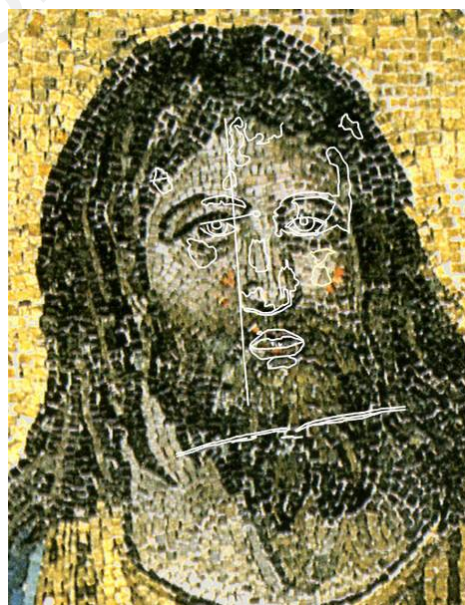**Figure 12**. Christ Enthroned with sketch

Figure 14. Christ among the apostles, with sketch

Also the splendid image of Christ in the Comodilla Catacomb (375 AD; Fig. 13) shows a significant correspondence with the original face on the Shroud and, thus, with the reverse side of the face on the Veil of Manoppello [10].

Even the proportions in the large mosaic painting in the apse of the Basilica of Santa Pudenziana in Rome (see Fig. 14), dating back to between 401 and 417, correspond to those of the sketch and, thus, to the face on the Shroud and on the Veil [11].

Of particular historical interest is the correspondence of the sketch with the medallion of Christ on the Cross of Justin II (see Figs. 15-16) given by him to the Pope John III in 570 AD, which can still be admired in the Treasure of St. Peter in Rome [12].

Besides other points of congruence, it is the tuft of hair which deserves a special attention and which also appears on the Veil of Manoppello (see Figs. 5-6). The author is therefore convinced that the Veil had served as a model in the portrayal of Christ.

Figure 15. Medallion of Christ, Cross of Justin II

Figure 16. Medallion of Christ, Cross of Justin II, with sketch

Correspondences with images in iconography

The Santo Volto (see Fig. 17) was made in Constantinople, brought to Genoa by Leonardo Montaldo in 1362 and donated to the Church of St. Bartholomew of the Armenians in 1384 [13]. Its style is similar to that of the Vatican Mandylion; the time of origin may have been the same, too.

The sketch can only be fitted in like on the photonegative of the face on the Shroud resp. on the front side of the Veil.
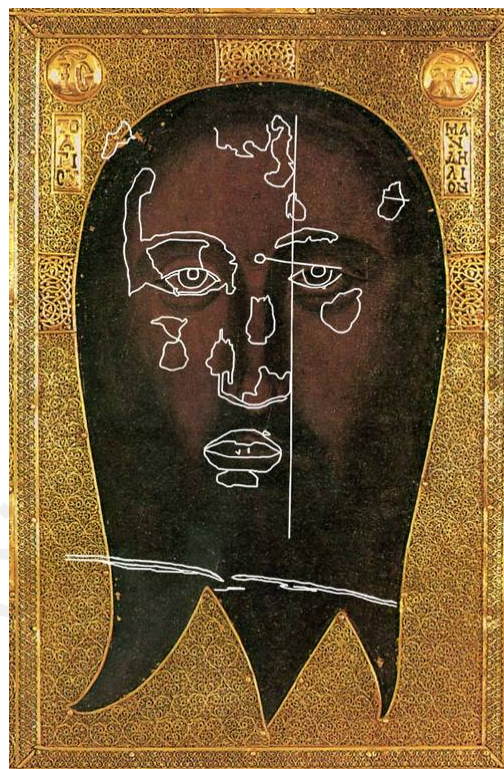

Figure 17. Santo Volto of Genoa (St. Bartholomew of the Armenians)

The Vatican Mandylion (see Fig. 18) was also made in Constantinople and its style virtually corresponds to the style of the Santo Volto of Genoa. Even the holes for suspending them correspond to each other [14]. It is assumed to have reached the Occident at the same time. The sketch can only be adjusted like on the original of the face of the Shroud and on the reverse side of the Veil.

The representation of the image of Christ on the famous icon of the Novgorod School [15] exactly follows the Byzantine tradition (see Fig. 19), showing enlarged eyes and a sharply pointed nose. The tuft of hair is of particular importance.

The sketch fits in the image in the same manner as it does on the Shroud original.

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that there are also well-known images of Christ with which the sketch as used above does not harmonize in an appropriate manner [16].

The famous image of Christ Pantocrator may serve as an example (see Fig. 20).

In any case, apart from the different artistic representations, the icons showing the tuft of hair are most impressive from a historical point of view.
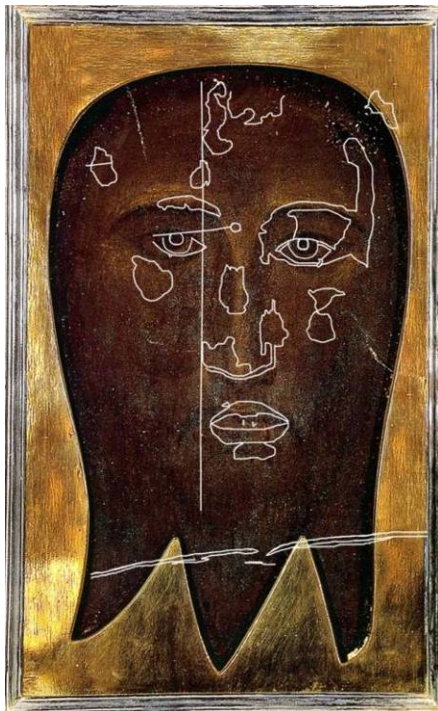
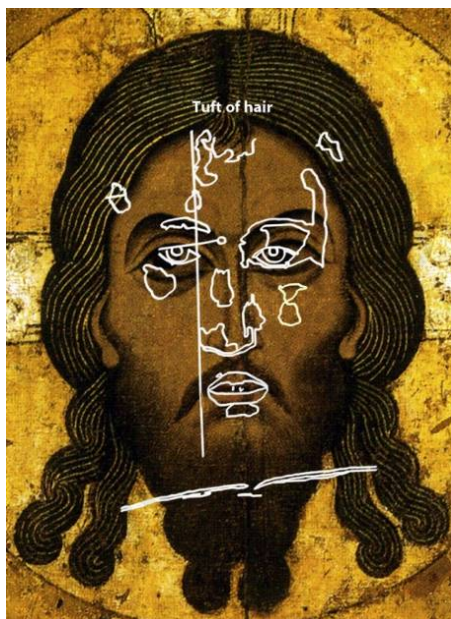**Figure 18.** Vatican Mandylion (Galleriola del Romanelli)

Figure 19. Mandylion of Novgorod (Tretajakovskaja Galeria, Moscow)

3. CONCLUSIONS

Since the face on the Veil of Manoppello seems to be congruent with the face on the Shroud of Turin (see Fig. 21), it may be concluded that both faces refer to one and the same person.
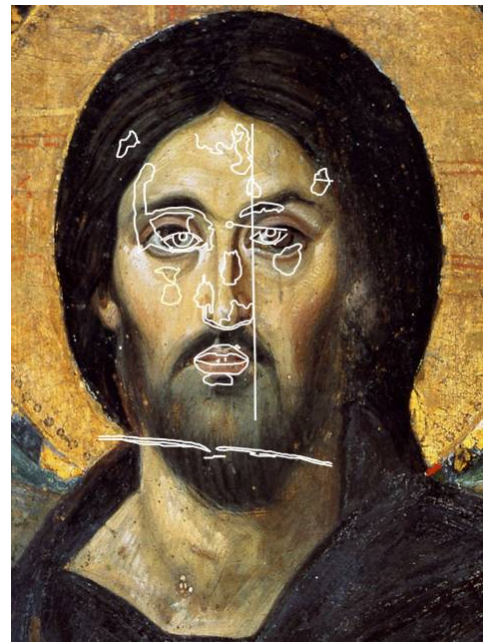

Figure 20. Christ Pantocrator, St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai

The correspondence with the face of Christ on the Cross of Justin II (see Fig. 22) by the characteristic tuft of hair is a very convincing proof of the face on the Veil having served as a model. This detail is quite significant so that any counterargument becomes superfluous. Because of the correspondences described above this fact is also important as far as the dating of the Shroud is concerned.

That the person on the Shroud of Turin might be Jesus Christ can only be deduced from the correspondence of the Gospels with the specific features of the body image on the Shroud. The face on the Veil alone does not suffice.

The investigations also made clear that – if the face on the Veil of Manoppello dates back to Jesus Christ – the impregnation is likely to have occurred between the flagellation and the crucifixion, because the image is that of a tortured (nasal bone fracture and lip contusion) but living and self-assured man.

The fact that the face on the Veil, by means of the sketch, may at least be dated back to the Cross of Justin II if not even to the Good Shepherd is also a point in favour of the age of the Shroud. It also appears that the proportions used in the iconography of Jesus Christ were taken from the Veil, as the original face on the Shroud would not deliver such exact measures.

In addition, the correspondence of the sketch sometimes only with the front side and sometimes only with the reverse side can just be explained by the fact that because of the peculiarity of the Veil one did not exactly distinguish between front side and reverse side.

Still, as regards the mode of expression in the iconography of Christ, the influence of the face of the

Shroud is not to be excluded.

Finally, the significant correspondences of the face on the Shroud and the face on the Veil with images of Jesus Christ dating back to the third century prove that even in those days there existed stringent norms concerning the proportions when portraying Jesus Christ.
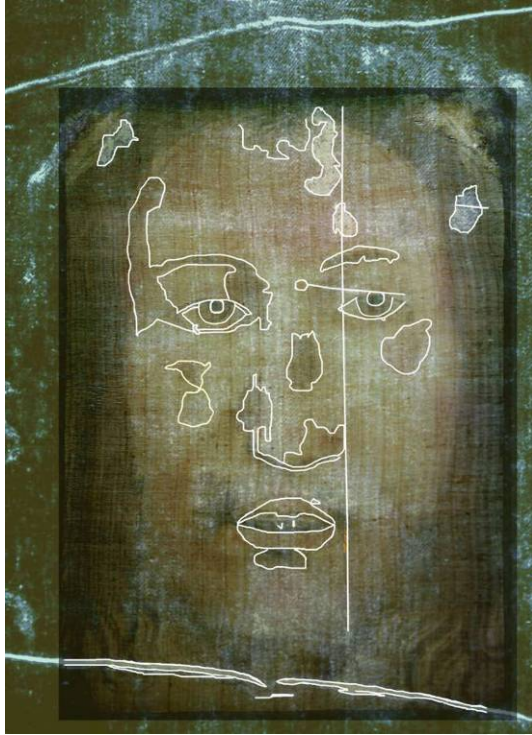

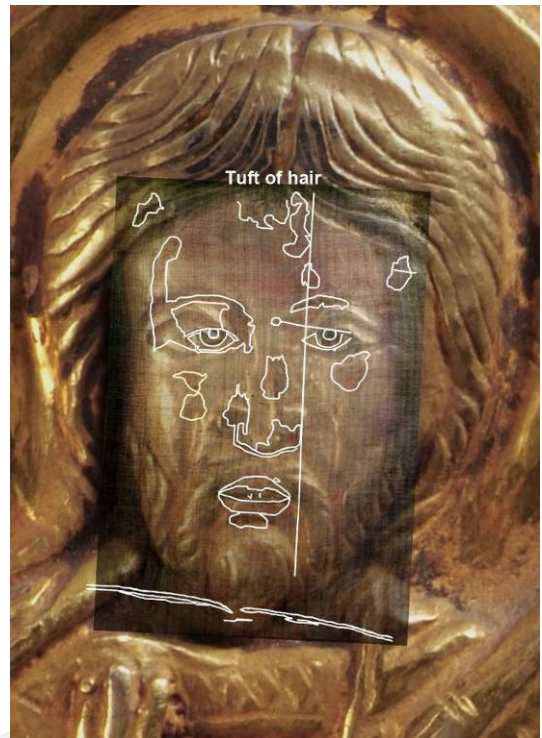**Figure 21.** Shroud, photonegative, Veil, and sketch

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Figure 22. Medallion of Christ, Cross of Justin II, Veil, and sketch

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