

## Unknown hideaway of the Holy Shroud?

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### Abstract

Data suggest that the Shroud, after its arrival in Turin in 1578 and before the siege of 1706, was secretly removed from the Savoy capital at the beginning of the seventeenth century. A tradition exists in the town of Maddalene, not far from Turin, that the Holy Shroud found shelter in the town at the beginning of the seventeenth century when Turin was threatened by Spanish troops. One can assume that the Holy Shroud was hidden in this place, which was the property of the Savoy family, with the purpose of protecting it from hazards of war.

**Keyword:** Maddalene, seventeenth century, Princes of Acaja, Savoy, Brotherhood.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is commonly accepted that once it arrived in Turin, the Holy Shroud left the town only in two occasions: during the siege of Turin in 1706 and during the second world war in 1939 [1].

In the small town of Maddalene, near Fossano, 80 kilometers south of Turin, there is a time-honoured tradition according to which the Holy Shroud found shelter in the palace of the town's local lord at the beginning of seventeenth century [2].

### 2. MADDALENE AND ACAJA PRINCES

Maddalene is a small village of around 200 people belonging diocese of Fossano. The feudal territory of Fossano during the seventeenth century was the property of Acaja's Prince.

The title of Prince of Acaja, created in 1204 after the Fourth Crusade [3], went to the Savoy family, after dynastic unions, in the fourteenth century. In 1301 Isabelle, heiress of that principality, married again, this time to Philip I of Savoy, son of Thomas III. Through this marriage he became Prince of Acaja and started the Savoy-Acaja branch. In 1314 Fossano was added to the Savoy-Acaja territories, becoming the second capital city after Pinerolo.

The Acaja branch in Maddalene descended from Thomas, count of Flanders (1177-1233). Their power in the territory ended in 1418, the year in which, with Ludovic's death, the Savoy-Acajas died out and their properties were returned to the principal branch of the Savoy family [4]. Amadeus VIII became lord of the territories of Acaja in Piedmont.

Under Acaja control, Maddalene's palace was built with great rooms in medieval style. It was used primarily as a hunting manor. The rulers lived there in autumn, the

season best suited for hunting [5]. During the rest of the year the family lived in Fossano's castle.



Figure 1. The Palace of Maddalene (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, some families clustered not far from the palace. They built, besides their houses, also a small church. Santa Maria Maddalena Church was converted to a parish on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1604 and was committed to Our Lady of the Rosary [6].



Figure 2. The Church of Maddalene (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).

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According to some researches of the 1990s, some signs lead us to presume that the Holy Shroud stayed in the Palace of Maddalene, which was the property of the Savoy in 1617 [7]. In that year a Spanish army, formed of 30,000 men led by Don Pedro of Toledo, entered Piedmont and besieged Vercelli, which fell on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July [8]. Charles Emmanuel I, Savoy's duke, who felt that Turin was being threatened, secured the family's treasures. This was a common custom in case of impending danger. Among the Savoy treasures was certainly the Shroud [9]. Displacements of the Shroud during periods of war are documented also during its stay in Chambéry [10].

One can assume that, as happened in 1706 and in 1939, the Holy Shroud had been hidden, this time in the Savoy palace in Maddalene, very close to French territories. Again, the purpose was to protect it from the hazards of war. Are there other data supporting this hypothesis?

In Maddalene in 1617 a chapter was founded of the "Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud", which was officially recognized two years later by local authorities and in 1668 by a papal bull of Clement IX [11]. A series of clues leads us to suppose that the Brotherhood was founded when the Shroud was in Maddalene [12].

### 3. THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE HOLY SHROUD

The first Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud was founded in Chambéry in 1506 when it was established that the Liturgy and Mass of May 4<sup>th</sup> would be the feast of the Holy Shroud. Charles III of Savoy and his wife subscribed to this Brotherhood [13]. In 1519 a plenary indulgence was granted to worshippers who, every year, on May 4<sup>th</sup> attended the Shroud exhibition. In 1530 it was announced that one could see the Shroud in the Ducal Chapel also on Holy Friday [14].

Other Brotherhoods were founded in subsequent years: in Ciriè in 1521 and in Rome in 1578. In Rome it was founded in the church where people from Savoy, Nice, and Piedmont assembled [15]. In 1598, twenty years after the arrival of the Shroud in Turin, the Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud and of Our Lady of Graces was created in the Savoy's capital city [16]. On April 17<sup>th</sup> during the 2010 exhibition of the Shroud, the Brotherhoods were in Turin for veneration.

Evidence of the link between the Brotherhood of Maddalene and those of other towns is a painting gifted at the end of the 1970s from the Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud of Turin to the local people. On this one can read: "To the Maddalene community, witness and soul of the memory of the Shroud, a Christian greeting from the Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud of Turin, in union of prayer and friendship, June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1979" (see Fig. 3).

The Brotherhood of Maddalene, as said before, was endorsed in 1668 by a papal bull of Clement IX. In 1668 this pope drew up a Summary of Perpetual Indulgences granted to the members of this Brotherhood and to the



Figure 3. Painting gifted from the Holy Shroud Brotherhood of Turin to people of Maddalene (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).



Figure 4. Summary of Perpetual Indulgences granted to the members of The Brotherhood of Maddalene. (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).

faithful [17] (see Fig. 4).

In fact, it was Clement IX who in 1669 founded a Congregation whose duty was to regulate indulgences. In 1908 this responsibility was shifted to the Holy Office and in 1918 to the Apostolic Penitentiary [18].

As in Turin, also in Maddalene every year on May 4<sup>th</sup> the Holy Shroud and the Brotherhood were honoured [19].

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## 4. THE CHURCH OF MADDALENE

The inside of the church is enriched by symbols of veneration, either coeval or subsequent to the event; particularly interesting are the standards of the Brotherhood (see Figures. 5, 6, 7).

Besides these objects, there are two Shroud-related paintings, each representing a Shroud exhibition. Most interesting for our research is the painting located at the entry of the church, just opposite to the altar (see Fig. 8). This one, dating from the seventeenth century, represents three bishops holding the Shroud. The Shroud exhibition portrayed in this painting probably occurred during its sheltered presence in that small town.



**Figure 5.** Banner of the Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).



**Figure 6.** Carved wooden stick used by the Brotherhood's guide during the processions. (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).



**Figure 7.** Another banner of the Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).



**Figure 8.** Painting of a Shroud exhibition: entry of the church (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).

At the moment it is not possible to affirm whether the bishops holding the Shroud in the painting preserved in Maddalene are the same depicted in prints of that period. We need further research in this direction.

It is, in any case, very interesting to emphasize that in the period between 1614 and 1618, critical political years in Turin, there was no news regarding public exhibitions of the Holy Shroud in Turin [20].

The second painting is located in the apse to the left of the altar and depicts a Shroud exhibition in the presence of the Virgin Mary (see Fig. 9).

In the twentieth century, priests devoted to the Shroud and its assumed sojourn in this site have placed a set of Shroud references in Maddalene.

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**Figure 9.** Painting of a Shroud exhibition: left of the altar (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).



**Figure 10.** Paint of the twentieth century: two angels hold the Shroud. (Ph. © Alessandro Piana).

## 5. TWO CURIOSITIES

Before concluding, I would like to relate two curiosities. First, it was one of the first bishops of Fossano [21] who wrote one of the first books about the Holy Shroud [22]. In 1621 Father Agostino Solaro [23], priest of Moretta in the Saluzzo surroundings and commander of the Maurician Order, was named as the fourth bishop of Fossano. He wrote an historical and theological treatise on the Shroud, published after his death by his nephew in Turin in 1627. We do not know if the book was written also in memory of the Shroud's stay in Maddalene.

Second, Severino Poletto, archbishop of Turin, was bishop in Fossano between 1980 and 1990.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, though without absolute certainty, all these data suggest that the Shroud, after its arrival in Turin in 1578 and before the siege of 1706, was secretly removed from the Savoy capital at the beginning of the seventeenth century to stay in the town of Maddalene, part of the family's property.

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2. AA. VV., *Maddalene una parrocchia e la sua gente 1604-2004*, Tip. Gengraf, Genola, p. 18 (2004).
3. First recipient is Guillaume de Champlitte.
4. Princes of Savoy-Acaja are: Philip I (1301-1334), James (1334-1367), Amadeus (1367-1402), Ludovic (1402-1418). For the link among families one can look at P.L. Datta, *Storia dei principi di Savoia del ramo d'Acaia*, Torino (1832).
5. AA. VV., *op. cit.*, p. 53 (2004). From 1870 to 1930 was used as state school. Today it is used as a housing project.
6. Parish archive of Maddalene.
7. C. Griseri, *Le immagini della Sindone nel Cuneese con notizie e curiosità storico ambientali*, Bollettino della Società per gli Studi Storici, Archeologici ed Artistici della Provincia di Cuneo, n. 106, p. 181 (1992). *Ibid.*, *La S. Sindone sostò a Maddalene di Fossano?* Bollettino della Società per gli Studi Storici, Archeologici ed Artistici della Provincia di Cuneo, n. 104, p. 101-102 (1991). *Ibid.*, *Iconografia della S.Sindone nel territorio del Cuneese e nell'esilio in Liguria del 1706* (VHS).
8. According to an agreement stipulated in Pavia on October 9<sup>th</sup>, Vercelli was to be given back to Charles Emmanuel by the end of the month, but was in the end given back in the summer of 1618.

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9. C. Griseri, *op. cit.*, p. 101 (1991).
10. For the displacement of the Shroud in 1478 and 1535, one can read Fossati, *La sacra Sindone. Storia documentata di una secolare venerazione*, Elledicì, Leumann, pp. 54-55 and 83-86 (2000).
11. Parish archive of Maddalene. For the establishment of the brotherhood see AA. VV., *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13 (2004). Authentic parchment with a lead seal with the writing "CLEMENS PAPA IX".
12. C. Griseri, *op. cit.*, p. 101 (1991).
13. In the same period was founded a Brotherhood in Bourg-en-Bresse for weavers and fabric merchants. G. M. Zaccone, *Sindone, reliquie e immagini di Cristo. Pietà e devozione nel basso medioevo*, in *Guardare la Sindone. Cinquecento anni di liturgia sindonica*, Effatà Editrice, Cantalupa, p. 122 (2007).
14. P. Savio, *Ricerche storiche sulla S. Sindone*, S.E.I., Torino, pp. 292-294 (1957).
15. L. Fossati, *op. cit.*, p. 136 and note 25 (2000).
16. G. B. Artuffo, *La Regia Confraternita del SS. Sudario e B. V. delle Grazie*, Torino (1898).
17. Parish archive of Maddalene. Also, Canonical Act in Rome, December 15<sup>th</sup> 1668.
18. Clement IX (Giulio Rospigliosi: born in Pistoia, January 28<sup>th</sup> 1600; died in Rome, December 9<sup>th</sup> 1669; reigned 1667-1669). Pope Paul V (1605-1621) prohibited exhibition of a copy of the Veronica, which had been stolen in Rome in 1527 and then, probably, had reappeared in Manoppello.
19. Parish archive of Maddalene. Document of June 20<sup>th</sup> 1890, relating the history of the Duty and Legacy of the Brotherhood.
20. L. Fossati, *op. cit.*, p. 139 (2000).
21. Fossano diocese was founded in 1592.
22. A. Solaro, *Sindone Evangelica, Historica e Theologica*, Torino (1627). Agostino Solaro was bishop of Fossano from 1621 to 1625; see Zaccone G.M., *Contributo allo studio delle fonti edite sulla Sindone nei secoli XVI e XVII*, in *La Sindone. Nuovi studi e ricerche, Atti del III Congresso Nazionale di studi sulla Sindone Trani 1985*, Edizioni Paoline, Rome, pp. 54-56 (1986).
23. Elected bishop under Pope Gregory XV on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1621, he governed his diocese from 1621 to 1625. See C. Morra, *La Diocesi di Fossano e i suoi Vescovi*, Edited by Archivio Vescovile di Fossano, Fossano (1995).