

# The Shroud of Turin in Constantinople? Paper I

## An analysis of the L Shaped markings on the Shroud of Turin and an examination of the Holy Mandylyon and Holy Shroud in the Madrid Skylitzes © Pam Moon

### Introduction

This paper begins by looking at the pattern of marks on the Shroud of Turin which look like an L shape. The paper examines [1] the folding patterns, [2] the probable cause of the burn marks, and argues, with Aldo Guerreschi and Michele Salcito that it is accidental damage from incense. [3] It compares the marks with the Hungarian Pray manuscript.

[4] In the second part, the paper looks at the historical text *The Synopsis of the Histories* attributed to Ioannes (John) Skylitzes. The illustrated history is known as the Madrid Skylitzes. It is the only surviving illustrated manuscript for Byzantine history for the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. The paper looks at images from the Madrid Skylitzes which relate to the Holy Mandylyon, also known as the Image of Edessa. The Mandylyon was the most precious artefact in the Byzantine empire and is repeatedly described as an image ‘not-made-by-hands.’

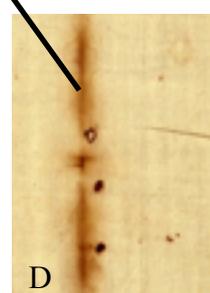
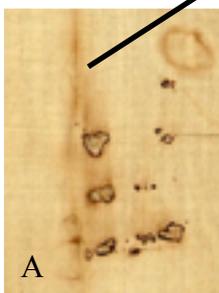
[5] The paper identifies a miniature in the Madrid Skylitzes (fol.26v; see below) which apparently shows the procession of a beheaded emperor Leon V in AD 820 and suggests that there could be a scribal error. The picture seems to show the Varangian Guard who arrived in Constantinople after AD 988, 168 years later. The picture may instead depict the procession of AD 1036, where the Holy Mandylyon (and in some translations Holy Shroud) were carried through the streets of Constantinople.

However, the image looks nothing like usual artistic depictions of the Mandylyon. It looks like the Shroud of Turin when folded in the same pattern in which the L shaped burns occurred. Is this image evidence that the Holy Mandylyon may be the Shroud of Turin? This final hypothesis may not be correct, but there are significant question marks about how the picture relates to Leon V. More research needs to be done in this area to provide a definitive answer.



### The L shaped patterns correspond across the cloth.

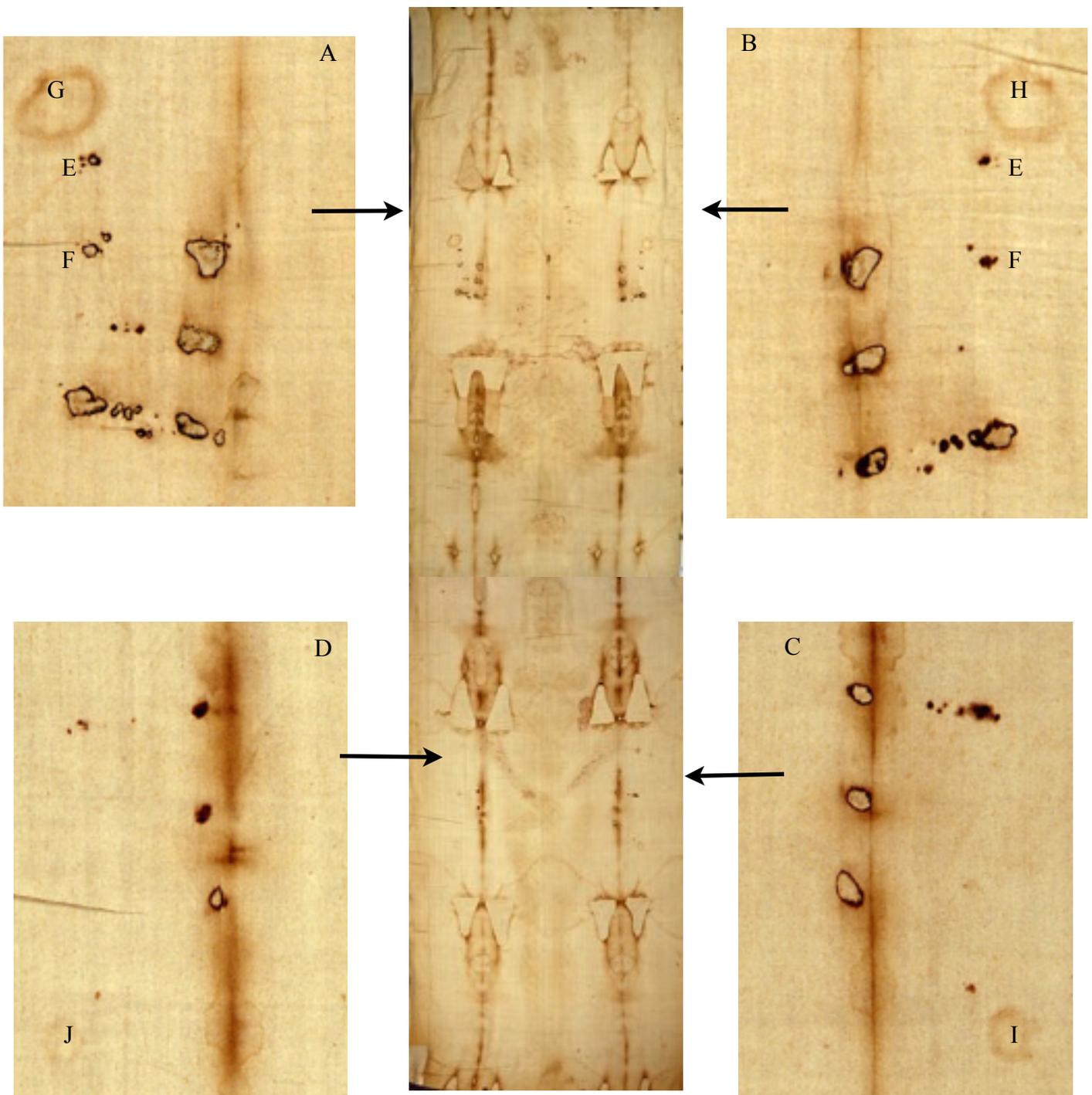
The four areas of burn damage observed as they appear on the cloth are shown below. The smaller holes, C and D, are on the front (ventral) side of the Shroud: A and B are on the dorsal. The images below have been reversed and rotated to illustrate that the L shape is consistent in all four areas of the cloth that are damaged. B has been rotated but not reversed or inverted while the others have been more noticeably manipulated.



## Part I [1] The folding pattern for the L shaped holes

It is possible to work out the folding pattern for the cloth when this damage occurred. The area below left at A must have been the top layer of cloth. This is evident by the size of the holes: the marks get progressively smaller at A, B, C and D. A and B look similar but A has slightly more damage. For example on A, in the areas marked E and F, the burn marks form holes. At the same area on B they are just black marks. By the time the agent that caused the fire had burnt to D what had been large holes on the top layer A, have become black marks on the lower layers.

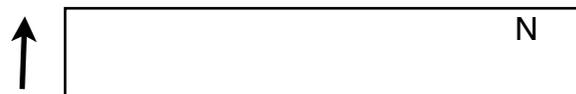
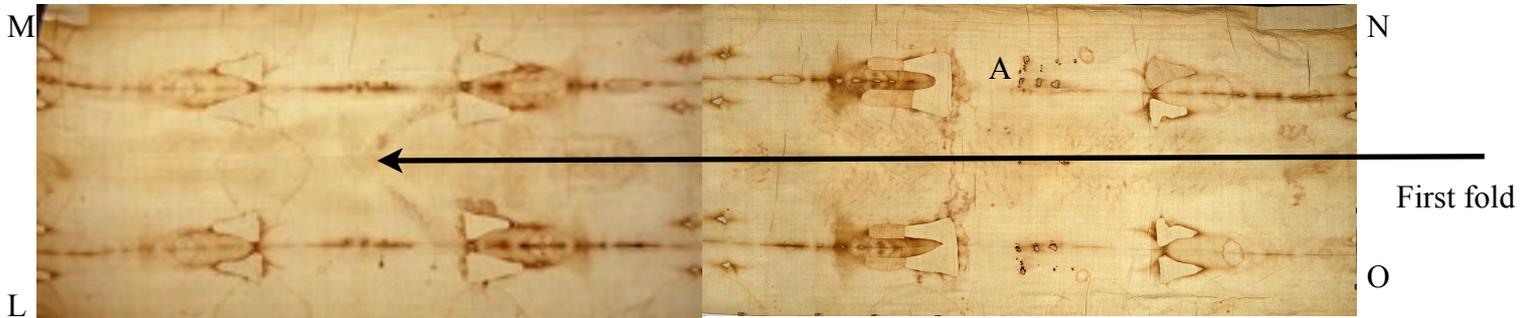
The folding pattern when the L shaped damage occurred was the same as the pattern when the water was applied in the AD 1532 fire (see the water stain at G, H, I and J in the CDOM paper). However, it is important to note that when the AD 1532 fire damage occurred the cloth was folded into 16 layers. In the incense pattern there are no further burn patterns, just the four noted burns at A, B, C and D. The marks at D would have gone through another layer, but there is no evidence of this on the cloth. So in this episode the cloth was folded only in four.



## Folding pattern for the L shaped damage

When the cloth was displayed to allow the L shaped damage to occur it was folded lengthways first and then in half.

**The first fold:** lengthways down the cloth. O to N, keeping N and A on top



**The Second fold: in half.** N on top, M at the bottom and L and O in the middle.

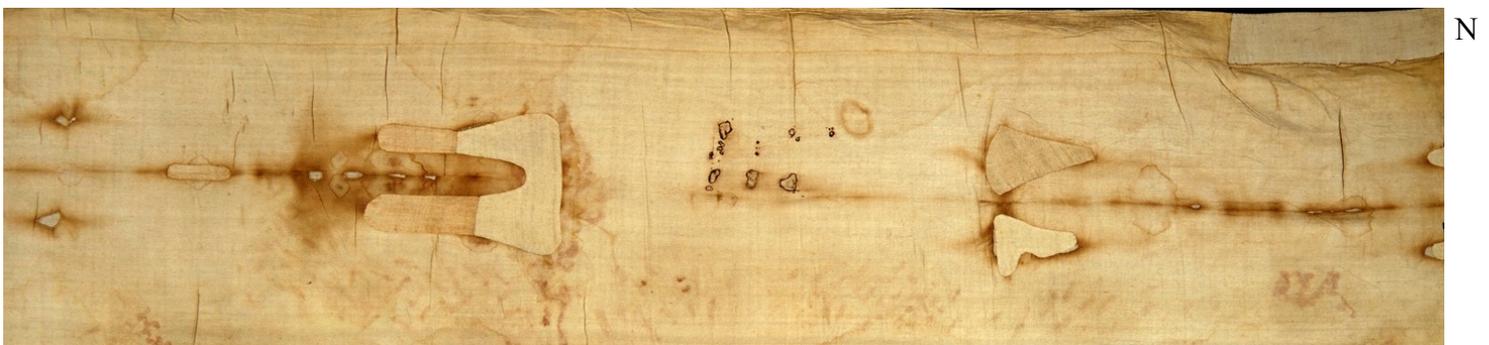
**A cross-section of this folding pattern**

N	N
	O
L	L
	M

## The dimensions and look of the cloth in this folding pattern

When the cloth was folded in the pattern which allows the creation of the L shaped burns the cloth would look as it does below. However, if the L shaped holes predated the AD 1532 fire, which is extremely likely, then when the holes were formed the rectangular patch at N and the triangular shaped patches would not have been visible.

The cloth would then be a quarter of its full size. The Shroud of Turin is  $4.4 \times 1.1$  m ( $14.3 \times 3.7$  ft). So when it was folded in this manner the cloth would be  $2.2 \times 0.55$  m ( $7.15 \times 1.85$  ft).

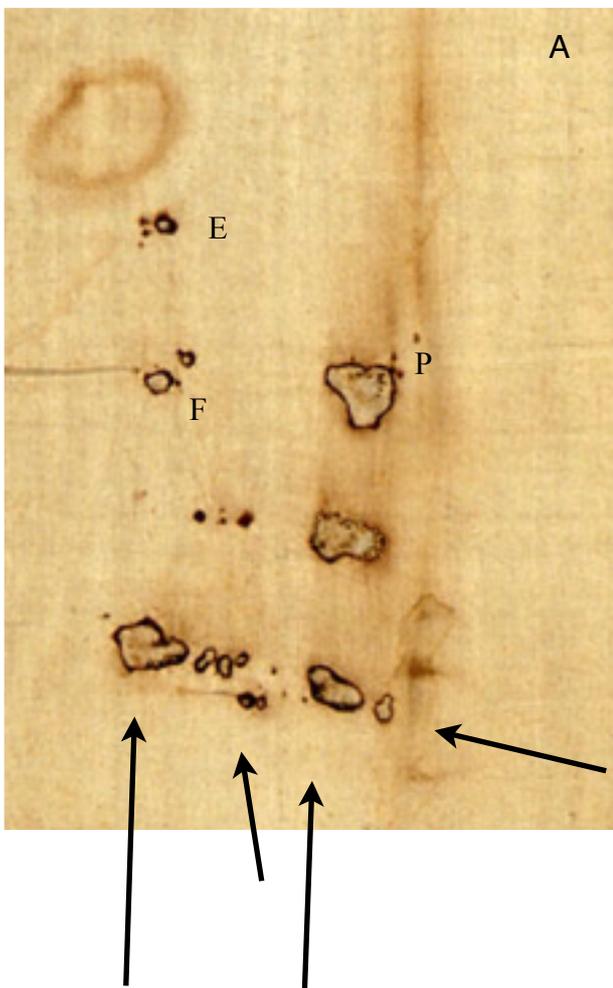


## [2] What was the cause of the L shaped damage?

There have been a few theories about the cause of the L shaped pattern of holes. Ian Wilson originally suggested that they were created by a poker, and they were a kind of trial by fire, done by Western Christians, to test the Shroud. <sup>1</sup> Dr Mechthild Flury-Lemberg suggested these could have been produced by an acid liquid. <sup>2</sup>

Aldo Guerreschi and Michele Salcito argue that they could have been caused by incense which spilled from a thurible or censer when it was swung to incense the cloth. They suggest 'a minor accident when the Shroud was being used as a Byzantine altar cloth during some solemn religious ceremony, preceding or following a public exposition.'<sup>3</sup>

A close up of the cloth at the area which received the most damage (A) suggests that it is unlikely to be poker damage. The largest hole seen here at P measures 2.6 by 2.5 cm, which may be big enough to support the poker theory but there are too many small burn holes, for example at E and F. It is more likely that this damage was caused by molten grains of resin from a incense censer, which accidentally fell on the cloth.



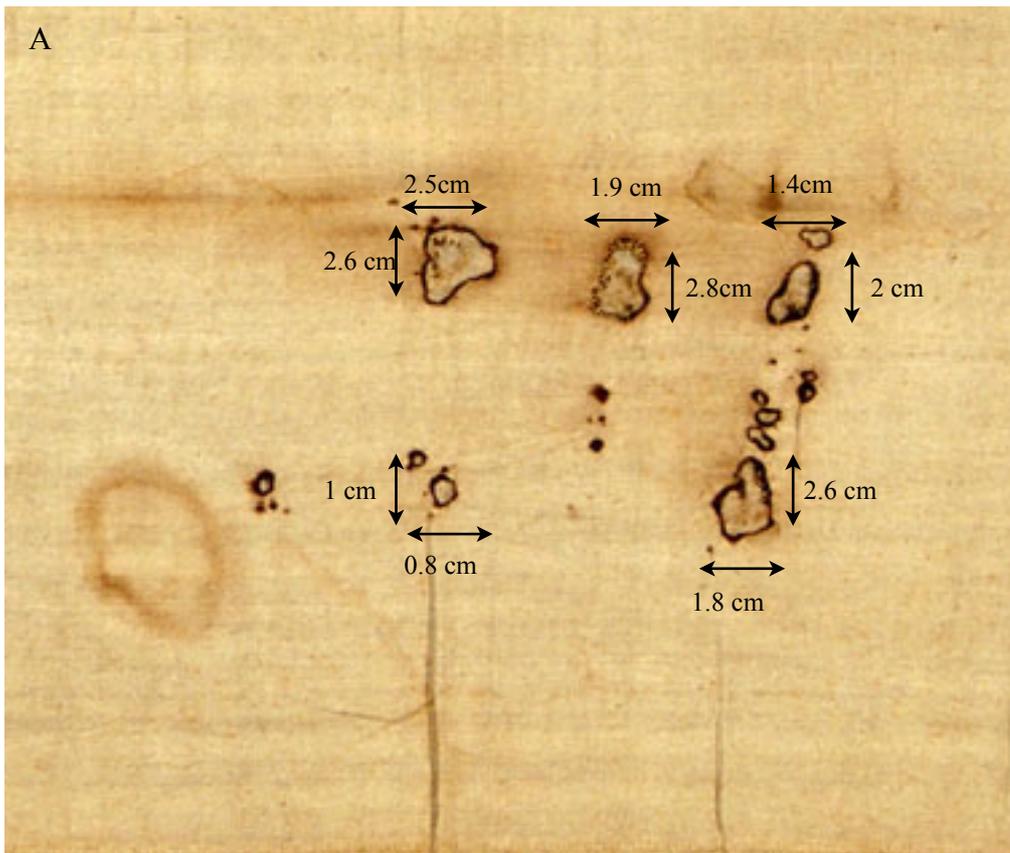
### The use of incense in orthodox worship.

The bowl below contains myrrh resin or gum,<sup>4</sup> which comes from the shrub or small tree *Commiphora*. Because myrrh was given by the magi, and used in the burial of Jesus, it is often burned, with frankincense in Orthodox churches. 'The priest places incense on the burning coals in the censer which the server swings to and fro ... causing clouds of smoke to go heavenward.'<sup>5</sup> A close up of the myrrh reveals that the resin comes in different shaped and sized gum grains. Some are very small, and others are much larger.

The resin would be placed on top of charcoal, and when it is molten the censer was swung. Three swings of the thurible are used to incense. This pattern is particularly seen in relation to the 'Most Blessed Sacrament, a relic of the Holy Cross and images of the Lord exposed for public veneration.'<sup>6</sup> The typical pattern of swings was twice one direction and then the server or acolyte would make the sign of the cross with the third: two vertical swings and then one horizontal one. The trajectory pattern on the cloth may suggest two or more swings of the censer along the arrow lines. They may have been vertical or both vertical and horizontal. The arrows show the possible lines.<sup>7</sup>

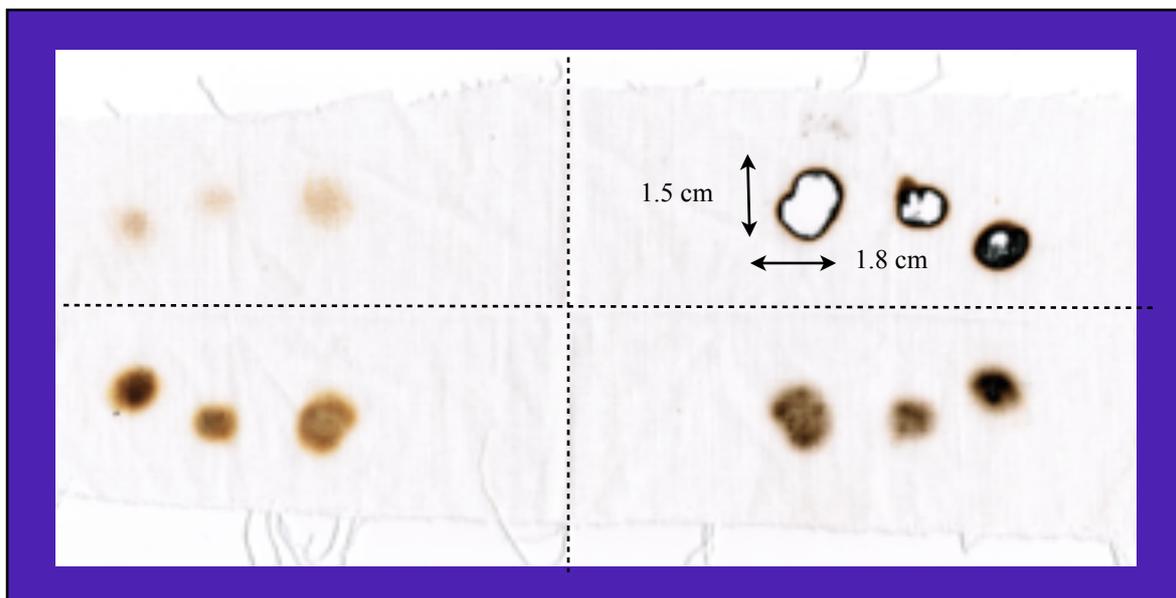
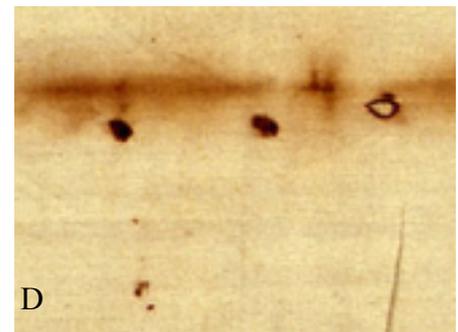
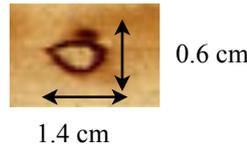


## The size of the burn holes



Using the life sized replica created by Barrie Schwartz as the model for these calculations, the dimensions of the largest burn holes at A are on the left.

The smallest hole at D is below

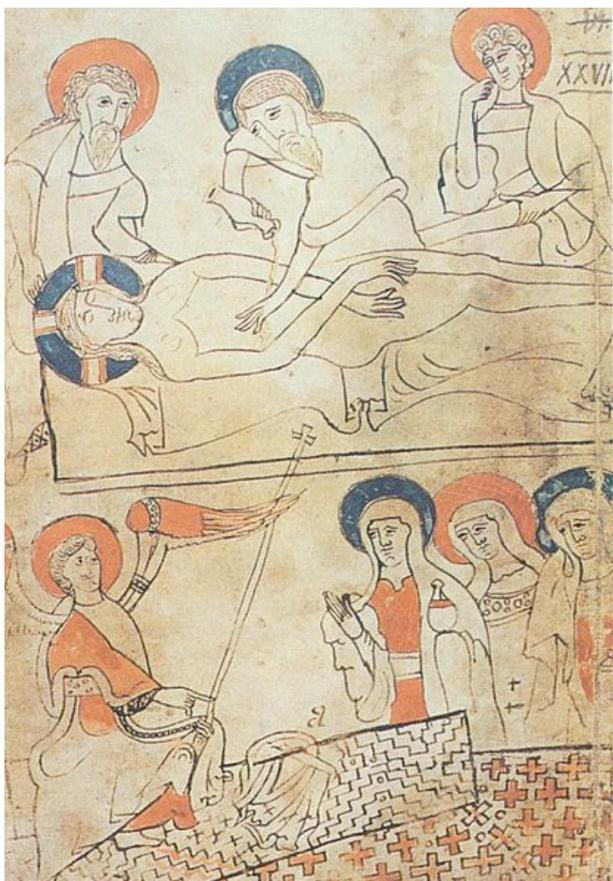


### Does the burning of linen by incense resin cause this pattern of burns experimentally?

The image shows the damage to linen cloth from myrrh and frankincense resin. The cloth was folded in four along the dotted lines and molten resin applied. It is clear that in the top layer holes have been burnt into the cloth. The damage gets progressively smaller as the fire burnt down through the four layers. It must be noted a modern cloth may have greater resistance to fire than a cloth that may have been 1,000 years old at the time it was damaged. If the Shroud is the burial cloth of Jesus and the damage occurred by AD 1192, the cloth would have been 1,000 years old and much more fragile and vulnerable to fire.

### [3] How old is the L shaped damage to the cloth?

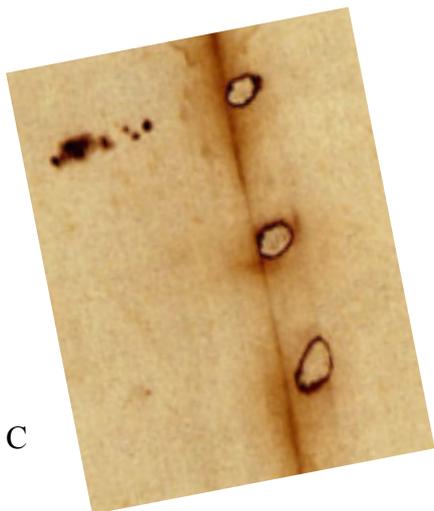
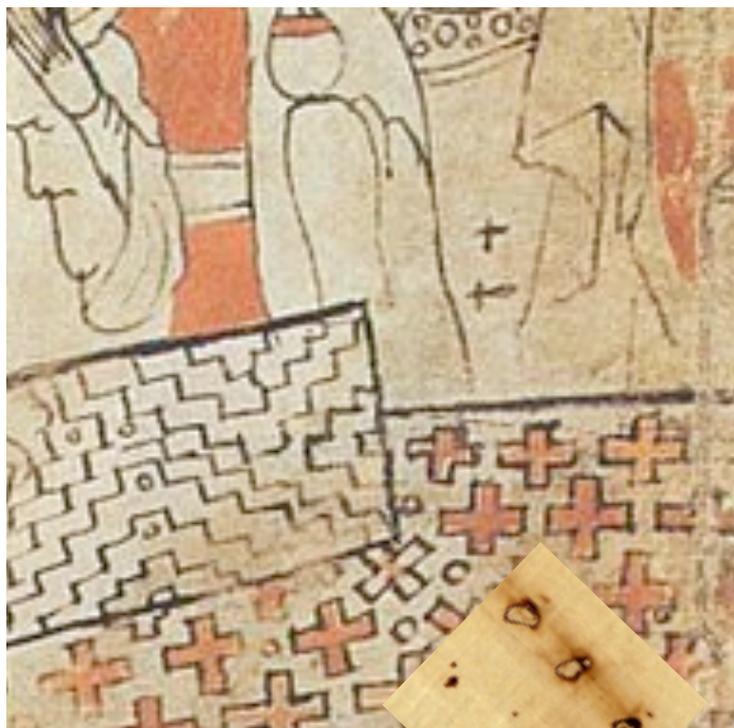
From the *Leirre Shroud*, the pre 1516 copy of the Shroud of Turin, we can determine that the damage predated the AD 1532 fire. <sup>8</sup> The four L shaped marks are very obvious and even the fact the fourth hole is missing at D is noted. There are many dark shadows across the cloth, which are probably due to the fact the cloth was not flat when it was photographed.



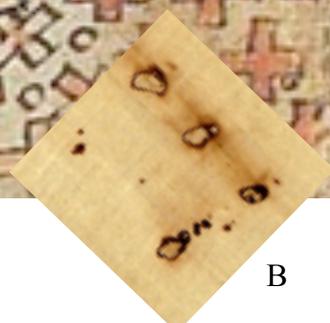
### The Hungarian Pray manuscript

The Hungarian Pray Manuscript has an image that shows Jesus being prepared for burial in a cloth which has a herringbone weave, similar to the Shroud of Turin. In the detail four L shaped holes are visible and the overall similarity of the hole marks to the Shroud of Turin damage is notable. They were originally identified by Fr. A. M. Dubarle. The finished Pray Manuscript was bound in 1192, and the significance of that is that it undercuts the oldest carbon-14 date on the Shroud by 70 years.

Like the Shroud, in the top (ventral image) layer of the cloth the holes look smaller than on the bottom (dorsal image).



C



B

## A Shroud in Constantinople:

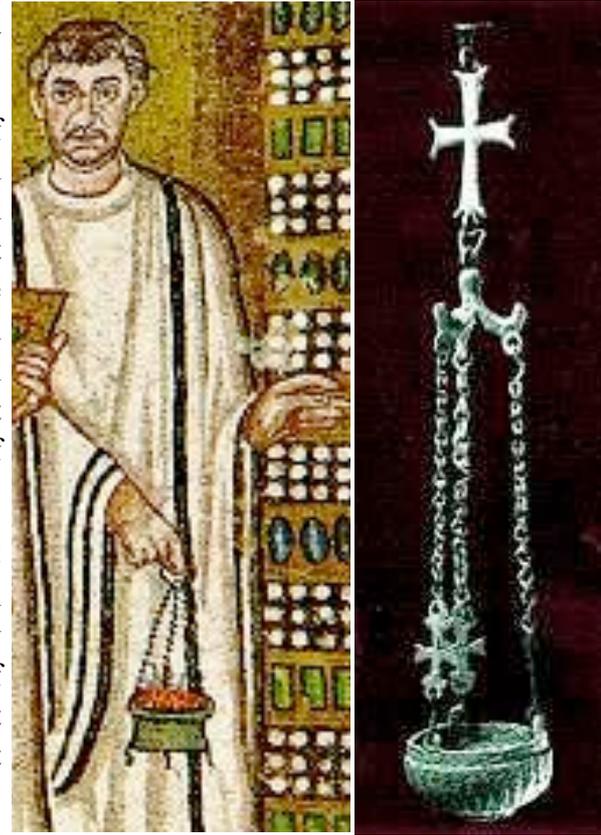
If the information in the Pray Manuscript is correct then the Shroud as we know it, with the incense holes, was in existence in AD 1192. This is endorsed by eyewitness accounts of Crusaders who wrote about a Shroud in Constantinople.

In 1201 Nicholas Mesarites, described the Shroud he saw as ‘of linen.... of cheap and easy to find material, still smelling of myrrh, and defying destruction, since they wrapped the uncircumscribed, naked body after the Passion.’<sup>9</sup> Uncircumscribed, literally meaning without a line drawn around is a remarkably accurate description of the properties of the image of the Shroud of Turin. In 1203, A French Crusader, named Robert de Cleri, wrote about the *sydoines* in which our Lord had been wrapped, which he had seen at the church of St Mary at Blachernai. He described how every Friday this ‘raised itself upright so that one could see the figure of our Lord on it.’<sup>10</sup>

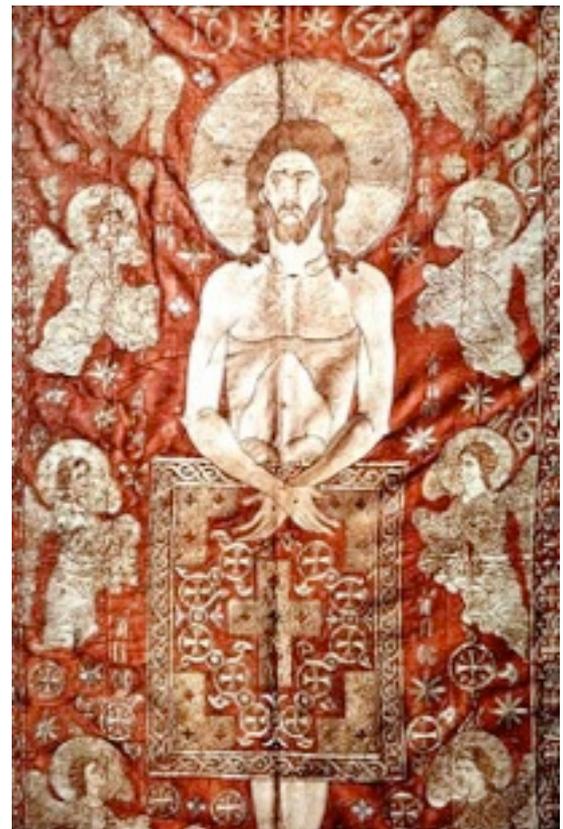
In *The Shroud of Turin* documentary by David Rolfe for the BBC (Performance films, 2008), presented by Rageh Omaar, Dr John Jackson identified a folding pattern on the Shroud which was probably caused by the mechanism that facilitated this mysterious ‘raising’ of the cloth on a Friday night at the church at Blachernai. There are what Dr Jackson calls a ‘F block,’ of folds which are found in the area just below the folded hands along with a missing fold across the chest.<sup>11</sup> The record that the cloth was displayed in a way in which it was ‘raised up,’ the later Byzantine period (AD 1203), makes sense of the burial images like the Pray Manuscript and the image below right which emerged.<sup>12</sup>

As Jack Markwardt notes prior to 1192, the Mandyllion theory places the Shroud ‘in the possession of devout Edessan and Byzantine Christians who venerated it as both a holy relic and a mighty palladium.’<sup>13</sup>

The image below is from the Madrid Skylitzes (fol. 43r, top) and shows the emperor Theophilos (AD 829-842) riding to the church at Blanchernai.



The images above right shows a Byzantine censer<sup>14</sup> and an open topped censer in use, from a 6th century Justinian mosaic at San Vitale, Ravenna<sup>15</sup>



## Part 2 [4] Another historical manuscript: the Synopsis of the Histories, Ioannes Skylitzes.

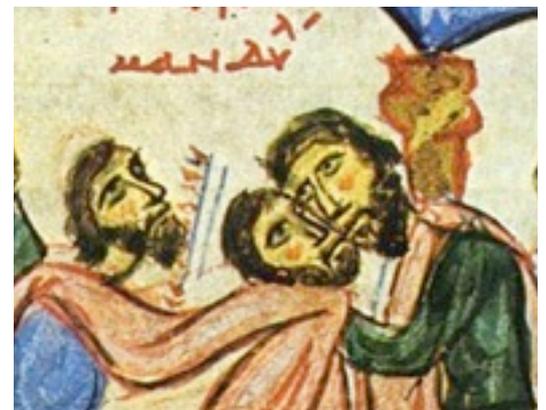
The Pray Manuscript goes back to AD 1192. However, there are very early images that may show the Shroud of Turin and point to its history before AD 1192. The image below is from the *Synopsis of Histories* also known as the Madrid Skylitzes (from the city where it is now kept). It is the major text of the Byzantine period, created by the Sicilian Ioannes (John) Skylitzes. This surviving illuminated manuscript was probably copied from the lost original in the twelfth Century and much of the historical knowledge of the Byzantine period comes from this seminal text: it is the only illuminated historical record of the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries in Constantinople. The text covers the reigns of the Byzantine emperors from AD 811 to 1057 (see Appendix I, for the dates of the emperors). The following information relies heavily on the excellent work of Vasiliki Tsamakda 'The illustrated chronicle of Ioannes Skylitzes in Madrid.'<sup>16</sup>



The image is from fol.131r, top and it shows the 'arrival and veneration of the Holy Mandylyon in Constantinople.'<sup>17</sup> The text of the *Histories* reads: the city of Edessa was besieged by Roman forces, and when the people were oppressed by the privations of the siege they sent a delegation to the emperor asking for the siege to be lifted and promising to hand over the sacred *mandylyon* of Christ as a ransom. The siege was lifted, and the likeness of our God was brought to our capitol where the emperor had it ceremonially received by the *parakoimomenos* Theophanes with impressive and fitting pomp.'<sup>18</sup> Romanos I was Emperor from AD 920-944 and Theophanes was his chief adviser. The image may show Theophanes and Romanos holding the Mandylyon.

The Mandylyon was of enormous importance to the Byzantine emperors and particularly to Romanos I, who had waged various wars with John Kourkouas as general. The Byzantine army had made advances into territory they had not controlled for 300 years: Edessa had been captured by Sassanid Persia in AD 609 and then conquered by the Rashidun Caliphate in AD 638 when it came under Islamic rule. By the summer of AD 944 the army which faced Edessa was described as 80,000 strong and the emir agreed to peace. 'The solemn entry of the Mandylyon from Edessa (15th August 944) was one of Romanos' major triumphs.'<sup>19</sup>

The Holy Mandylyon was primarily displayed as a face image, like the Veronica. In this miniature there is a white cloth resting on the extended cloth and probably this white cloth is the Mandylyon. What is interesting is that the head image on the cloth is three dimensional but the cloth is two - dimensional. This appears to be a stylistic device adopted by the artist. Also the cloth which veils the hands of the emperor and Theophanes is exceptionally long and can be seen through the white of the Mandylyon.



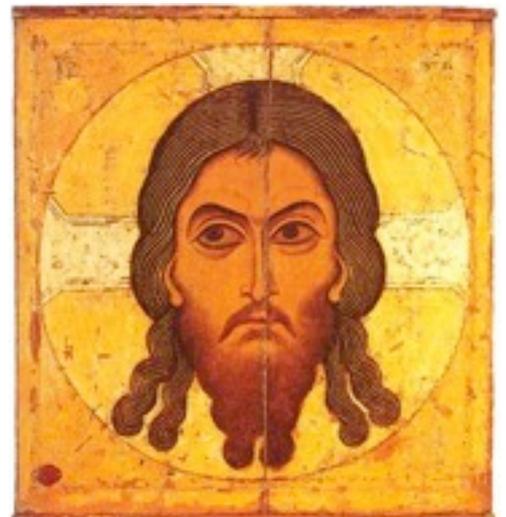
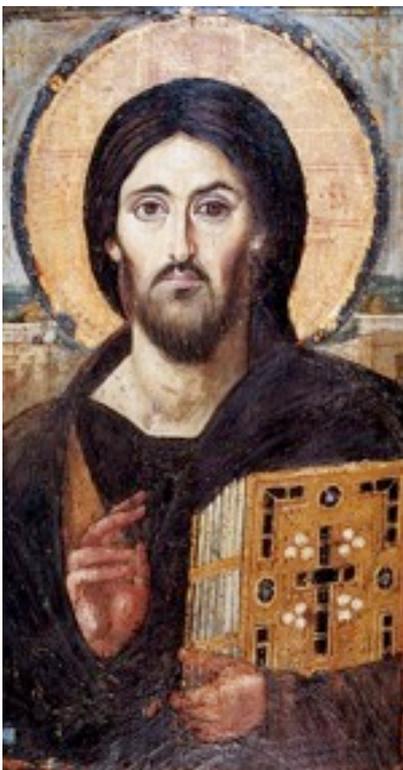
The Holy Mandylyon arrived in Constantinople from Edessa on 15th August 944, in the last year of Romanos I's reign. On August 16th it was carried in a casket around the city and taken to Hagai Sophia. At the cathedral the Archdeacon Gregory, preached a sermon in which he said the Holy Mandylyon showed 'the drops of sweat from the agony [from Gethsemene] which flowed from [Christ's] face like drops of blood but also 'blood and water' [*haima kai hudor*] from his very side.<sup>20</sup> From this we can deduce the Mandylyon was not just a face image. Ian Wilson has argued convincingly for many years that the Holy Mandylyon *was* the Shroud of Turin. He found in historical records that it was also described as *tetradiplon* 'doubled in four,' indicating it was not just a small cloth with a face image but a large cloth folded in eight.<sup>21</sup>

### Why was the Holy Mandylyon so important?

The Holy Mandylyon was believed to be the 'true image' of Christ because the image was put on the cloth by Jesus himself. It is therefore the first Icon and the origin behind all Icons of the Holy Face of Christ. The Holy Mandylyon of Edessa was described as a 'divinely wrought image' '*theoteukon eikona*' and one 'which human hands have not made' '*Acheiropoieta*.'<sup>22</sup> One of the first writers to describe it in that way was Evagrius Scholasticus, writing in AD 600.<sup>23</sup> The scriptural origin comes from the testimony at Jesus' trial that he is reported to have said: "I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands" (Mark 14:58).<sup>24</sup>

The Pantocrator image (below left) is in St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai and is dated to AD c 600.<sup>25</sup> The image below far right is the Mandylyon (Image of Edessa),<sup>25</sup> in the Tretyakov Gallery dating to the second half of the twelfth century. It is an early version of the Mandylyon image in the Russian Orthodox tradition. The face of Christ in both images is remarkably similar to the face on the Shroud of Turin. The Pantocrator image shows more than just the face: Jesus holds a book in his left hand and raises his right hand in blessing. In other traditions, most notably the Russian Orthodox iconographic tradition, the Holy Mandylyon appears to be an image on cloth, and is usually just the face.

There are important stylistic devices that artists used for the Christ Pantocrator and the Holy Mandylyon. Significantly they are resurrection image at hearts. The head of Christ was surrounded by a halo and the halo was intersected with a cross; so although this is an image of Christ in glory, the cross was not forgotten.





The miniatures above (fol. 205r top) describe two geographically inter-connected events which occurred almost a century later. The top image shows the seizure of Edessa by a Byzantine army led by George Maniakes and the Arab counterattack on the city of Edessa in AD 1031. The bottom image illustrates ‘Maniakes sending Christ’s letter to Romanos III.’<sup>27</sup> Romanos III was emperor from AD 1028-1034. The text reads, ‘And finding the autograph letter of the Lord and Master Jesus Christ which was sent to Abgar, he dispatched it to the emperor in Byzantium.’<sup>28</sup> The servant with veiled hands carries the letter between Romanos III and Maniakes. The letter mentioned is believed to be the response of Jesus to the first century King of Edessa Abgar V. Abgar was sick and sent to Jesus asking for a cure. Jesus wrote back saying that he would send a disciple. The legend in the city of Edessa is that King Abgar was miraculously healed after the disciple Addai (Thaddeus) arrived.

Abgar V is associated with the image known as the Holy Mandylion: this 10th century image (right) shows Abgar with the cloth. Notice that the cross surrounds the head, and that there is more material to the right and left of the head than you would expect to see. It is from the Mandylion image in the Madrid Skylitzes - although there is no fringe at the top. The following description was given by St John Damascene after he was sent from Nicaea (AD 787) to Edessa to examine the Mandylion: ‘a certain tale, told by the king (Abgar V) was king over the city of the Edessenes, he sent a portrait of the Lord, and when the painter could not paint because of the brightness that shined from the Lord Himself put a garment over His own divine and life-giving face and sent this to Augarus, to satisfy thus his desire.’<sup>29</sup>



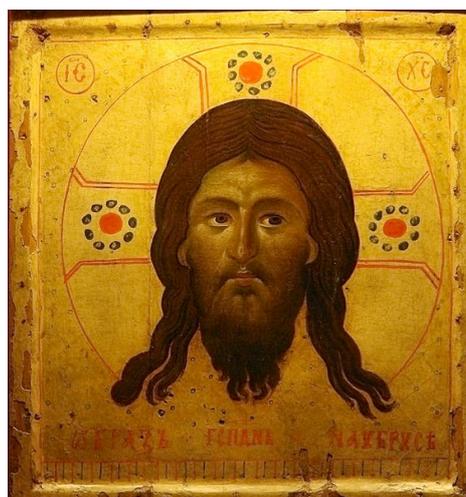
## Another earlier artistic version of the Mandylion?: The Baptism of Boris 1, the Bulgarian AD 864

There is another image in the Madrid Skylitzes which may also show an artistic impression of the Mandylion, but it is not credited in the description. The image below shows the baptism of the Bulgarian ruler Boris I (baptised AD 864) from fol. 68v.<sup>30</sup> The text reads ‘following the salvation of the Bulgarians, Boris was baptised by a bishop sent to him, who christened him Michael, after the Byzantine emperor Michael.’<sup>31</sup>



The image on the right could very well be an artistic depiction of the Mandylion as it was displayed in Edessa. It is an image of a man whose hair colour, beard and features fit the images of the Holy Mandylion. The figure emerges from a pattern work that is seen in some of the artistic depictions of the Mandylion - for example the image below on the left is in Alexandria and dates to the eleventh century.<sup>32</sup> The image below right is the Laon Mandylion which originated in Bulgaria and was sent from Rome to Laon, France in 1249 (the lettering IC XC indicating it is an image of Jesus Christ).<sup>33</sup> The pattern work in the corners which has an angled square with a spot in the middle is notably similar. However if the figure on the right of the Madrid Skylitzes image is the Mandylion it shows the image vertically rather than horizontally: the Christ figure is standing.

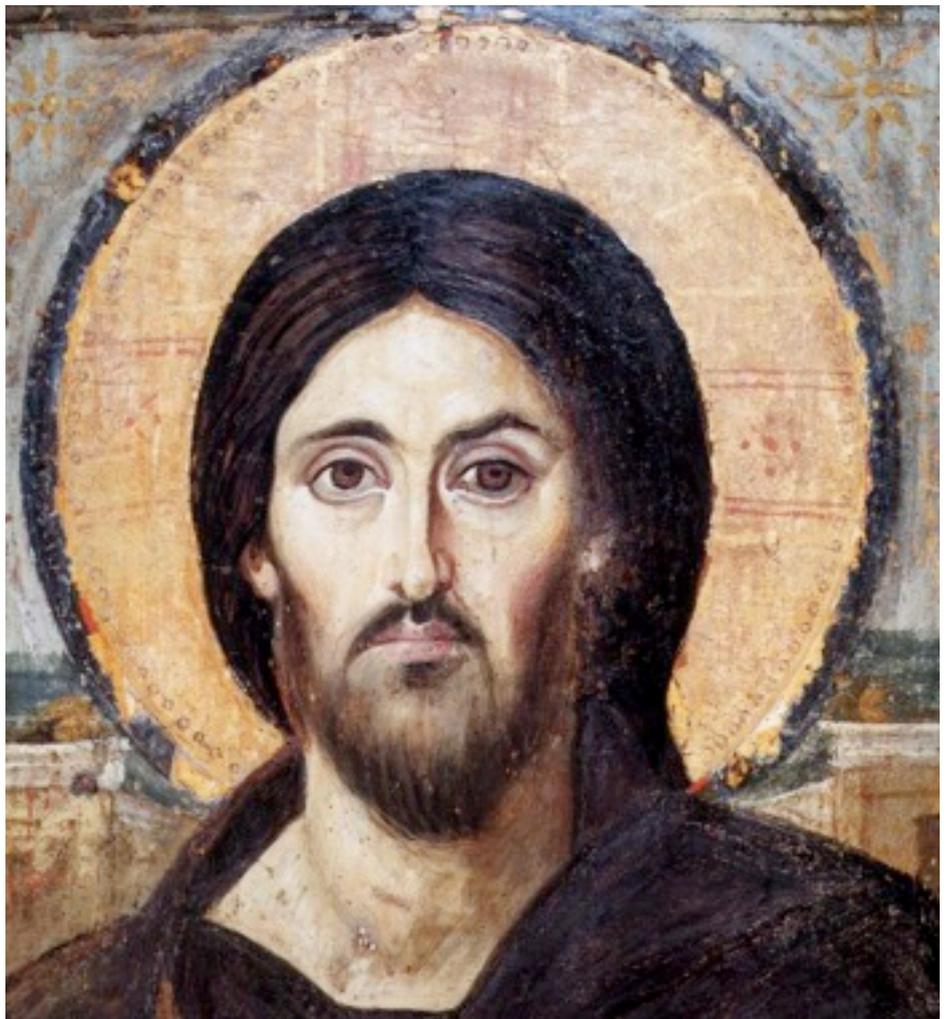
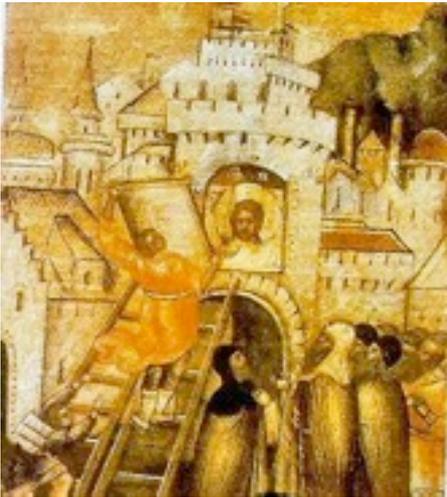
A second aspect of this miniature which deserves some attention are the pink and blue tent like structures in the background. They are shown as the backdrop of a religious scene and are very similar to the backdrop of the image which shows the procession of Leon V or the Holy Mandylion identified in the introduction.





The same red square like patterning is seen in the Fresco of the Holy Mandylion in the Gradac Monastery, Serbia dating to the twelfth century.<sup>34</sup>

It is also possible to see the same red coloured patterning in the areas of the cross on the Icon from St Catherine's Monastery. There are two red lines top and bottom of the arms of the cross and a trellis looking pattern within the lines.



Before it arrived in Constantinople the Mandylion was probably never on display for very long. It was discovered hidden in a niche in the city gate in AD 525, (see the painting below left)<sup>35</sup> and within 84 years Edessa was out of the control of the Byzantine emperors. Given the Islamic prohibition of figurative images, coupled with the period of iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries it is unlikely the Holy Mandylion was shown regularly. The images that exist may primarily have derived from public showings between the period AD 525 and AD 638. When it was shown it was probably displayed with just the face image on view, surrounded by a trellis type structure which may have been patterned with red and gold.

## The Keramion in the Skylitzes *Histories*

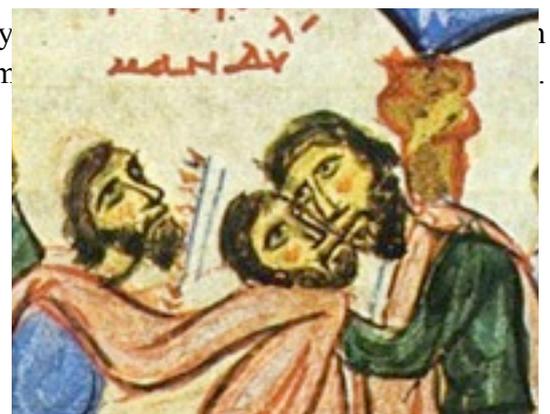


In the same niche in the walls of Edessa in which the Holy Mandylyon was found there was also a tile, which was called the Keramion.<sup>37</sup> It also had an image imprinted on it. The eleventh/twelfth century picture above right shows the Holy Mandylyon on the left with the Keramion on the right.<sup>36</sup> Notice that the background pattern work of the Mandylyon is very similar to the patterns in the image of the baptism of Boris I, the Bulgarian.

There is no image of the Keramion in the Madrid Skylitzes but according to the *Histories* it was transferred to Constantinople from Hierapolis by emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) when he retreated from his campaign in Syria. Hierapolis was besieged in October 966. The text of the Skylitzes *Histories* reads ‘along with him (Nikephoros) came the tile which bore an imprint not-made-with-hands of the features of Christ our God found in Hierapolis when it was taken...’<sup>38</sup> Hierapolis was the sister city to Edessa: the link between these cities survived in Christian times; the envoy of Abgar to Jerusalem is held to have passed through Hierapolis, and the city is on the route of pilgrims, as well as armies, from Antioch to the East.’<sup>39</sup>

The fringe on the Holy Mandylyon in the Keramion, and in the arrival at Constantinople shows that the threads are at top and bottom. The image of Abgar shows threads just at the bottom. In the Alexandria image they are at both sides. Perhaps the only purpose of the fringe is to denote that this is a cloth rather than a painting.

In the light of the evidence of red patterning on so many early Mandylyons the Madrid Skylitzes are unusual. They are more normally seen in mosaic. Are they a change made to the original by the copyist?



## The Holy Mandyllion in the Madrid Skylitzes in the reign of Michael IV (AD 1034-1042)

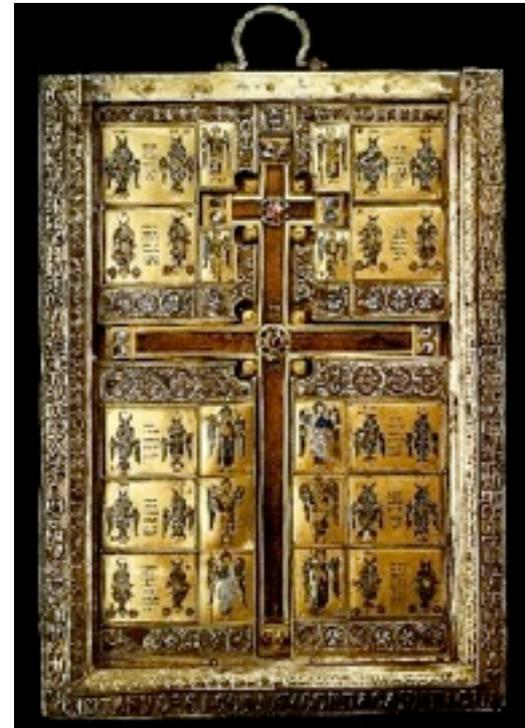
There are further references to the Holy Mandyllion in the Madrid Skylitzes. The image below (fol. 207v)<sup>39</sup> is accompanied by the following text: ‘Konstantinos Dalassenos was unwilling to honour the oaths and follow Ergodotes to Byzantium (to proclaim Michael IV as emperor). Another eunuch, Konstantinos Phagitzes from Paphlagonia was now sent to Dalassenos, bearing the Holy Woods, The Holy Mandyllion, Christ’s autographed letter to Abgar, and an icon of the Mother of God. Phagitzes arrived, exchanged oaths with Dalassenos and took him to Byzantium.’<sup>40</sup> Previous passages in the *Histories* explain that Konstantinos Dalassenos had led many military victories in the reign of Constantine VIII and was Constantine VIII’s choice for the succession. At the beginning of Michael’s reign he was the only person unwilling to accept Michael as the new emperor. The text reads, he (Dalassenos) wondered why, ‘when there were so many excellent men of distinguished families and noble birth, a vulgar threepence-a-day man should be preferred above all others and be proclaimed emperor.’<sup>42</sup> Michael’s powerful brother, the eunuch Ioannes Orphanotrophos had already tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade him to come to Constantinople, when the Holy Relics were sent.

So the Holy Mandyllion, along with the other sacred treasures, was used here in an act of diplomacy. It appears to successfully gain the Dalassenos’ support of Michael IV as emperor.

At this point in the text of the Madrid Skylitzes, in the reign of Michel IV, the Holy Mandyllion remains the most significant religious artefact in Constantinople. The implication of this scene is that Dalassenos did a complete U-turn because of the artefacts brought to him. If he had seen them before they would not have had that impact so the Holy Mandyllion was not regularly displayed, even to important dignitaries.

Mark Guscin describes an anonymous latin text from the eleventh century which reports: ‘this wonderful linen cloth with the face of the Lord Jesus, marked by direct contact, is kept in greater veneration than the other relics in the palace, and held in such high esteem that it is always kept in a golden case and very carefully locked up.’ It was not opened for ‘anyone except the emperor of Constantinople.’ The writer describes how the case was ‘kept open once’ but following a series of natural disasters ‘the sacred linen was locked away in a golden case and carefully sealed up’.... from that time on no-body has dared to open the case or to see what might be inside, as everyone believes and fears that if anyone tries to open it the whole city will be struck by another earthquake.’<sup>43</sup>

Notice that the chest which is transferred is sizable. For a discussion on the Limburg Staurotheke as the possible lid of this chest please see Paper II.



## A Litany

The image below (fol. 201v) is even more intriguing because one translation of the text appears to mention the Holy Shroud. The text reads: ‘Because there was a drought and no rain had fallen for six months, the brothers of the emperor held a litany. Ioannes Orphanotrophos carried the Mandylion, the *domestikos ton scholon*, ie Konstantinos, carried Christ’s letter to Abgar, and the *protobestiarios* Georgios the Holy Shroud. The procession advanced from the palace to the Blanchernai church.’<sup>44</sup> The Holy Woods and the Icon of Mary are not mentioned on the text.



The full text from the Wortley translation reads: ‘Because there was a drought and for six whole months no rain had fallen, the emperor’s brothers held a procession, John carrying the holy Mandylion, the Great Domestic the Letter of Christ to Abgar, the protovestiarios George the holy Swaddling Bands. They travelled on foot from the Great Palace to the church of the exceeding holy Mother of God at Blancherae. The patriarch and the clergy made another procession, and not only did it not rain but a massive hail-storm was unleashed which broke down trees and shattered the roof tiles of the city, The city was in the grip of a famine so John purchased one hundred thousand bushels of grain in the Peloponnese and in Hellas; with this the citizens were relieved.’<sup>45</sup>

So, here is evidence from the Madrid Skylitzes that the Holy Mandylion (or possibly depending on the translation the Holy Shroud) was carried in procession during Michael IV’s reign (AD 1034 and 1042). The text suggests that there were two processions. The first one was of the Mandylion being carried by the brother of the emperor, John Orphanotrophos. He was effectively the most important ruler as Michael was incapacitated.

The second procession was of the patriarch and priests. In the Madrid Skylitzes the only image of a procession which is attached to the text is the procession of the priests (fol. 201v see image above). There are two archbishops wearing the pallium of office and they are following what looks like a ecclesiastical procession, led by two crosses.

So the question is: where is the miniature of the Mandylion/Shroud? Why would the artist depict a procession of priests and ignore the most important artefact in Christendom? The Madrid Skylitzes includes an image of the Holy Mandylion as it arrived in Constantinople so why would it not be drawn when it was on public display for all the people at a time of crisis.

## [5] Another image of the Mandylion/ Holy Shroud?

There is one final image that deserves attention, although the description in the text suggests it is nothing to do with the Mandylion or the Shroud: fol. 26v top. The beautiful image below is one of the finest in the manuscript and it is large - the illustrator covered 'not only the space initially reserved for it, but also the entire upper margin of the folio.'<sup>46</sup> Apparently, 'this splendid miniature illustrates a passage .. which is written on the previous folio.'<sup>47</sup>

The text reads: 'The assassins of Leon V pitilessly dragged his body to the Hippodrome through the Skyla Gate. Their own soldiers surround the palace.' The text to the previous miniature states 'They attacked the emperor during the liturgy in the palace church. The emperor escaped in the sanctuary and defended himself with a censer or, as others believe, with a cross. He resisted for a while repelling the sword blows with the cross. Beaten from all directions, he was finally attacked by a giant, who cut off his arm together with the beam of the cross; another man decapitated the already exhausted emperor.'<sup>48</sup> This is the only example in the Madrid Skylitzes where the text speaks of a procession carrying the dead body of an emperor. For the text and image for the death of every emperor in the Madrid Skylitzes see Appendix II.



There are several problems with this image and the text that apparently describes it. The first problem lies in the depiction of the soldiers. Even the text seems to suggest the scribe is not confident: he loosely refers to 'their own soldiers' rather than to a specific army as is usual in the *Histories*. Leon V, the Armenian, reigned between AD 813 and AD 820, when he was assassinated and decapitated. The soldiers in the background are the Varangian Guard, (AD 988) clearly indicated by the nature of the axes that the men carry, along with their shields.

The Varangian Guard, were an army of 6,000 fighting men who were recruited by Basil II (AD 976 - 1025), 160 years after Leon V's death. A treaty in AD 911 allowed Varangian soldiers to fight for the Byzantine emperor but it was not until AD 988 that they formed a separate fighting unit, following a treaty with Vladimir I of Kiev. The text of the *Histories* read 'the emperor (Basil II) repeatedly asked Delphinus to withdraw from Chrysopolis, and not set up camp against the capitol. When he refused to obey, the emperor fitted out some ships at night and embarked some Russians in them, for he had been able to enlist allies among the Russians and he had made their leader Vladimir his kinsman by marrying him to his sister Anna.'<sup>49</sup> After Anna's death a further 'company of eight hundred men,' 'came to Constantinople, ostensibly to serve as mercenaries.'<sup>50</sup>

Basil II did not trust local men and he employed the Guard in many venues including the Cathedral at Hagai Sophia. Anna Comnena in *The Alexiad*, (written in 1148), wrote: "The Varangians too, who carried axes on their shoulders, regarded their loyalty to the Emperors and their protection of the imperial persons as a pledge and ancestral tradition, handed down from father to son, which they keep inviolate, and will certainly not listen to even the slightest word about treachery."<sup>51</sup>

There are numerous sources which identify this image with the Varangian Guard. They were also known as the Kievan Rus, (from Kiev, the ancient capitol of Russia). They were originally Vikings and Norsemen, the greatest fighting warriors of the early Middle Ages. The axes in particular indicate this is an army with Viking origins as the image from the Bayeaux Tapestry confirms.<sup>52</sup> The two images of axes to the right are archaeological examples of axe blades used by the Kievan Rus, the original members of the Varangian Guard.<sup>53</sup> In Greek sources the Varangians are sometimes referred to as the 'axe-bearing barbarians', or those who 'dangle their swords from their right shoulders'.<sup>54</sup> 'This image is the only depiction of this kind of axe in the Madrid Skylitzes. Was the image meant to be of the Varangian Guard?



### Evidence of the Varangian Guard in the Madrid Skylitzes.

There is one specific description of the Varangian Guard in the Madrid Skylitzes. In the reign of Michael IV Paphlagon (1034-1042), the miniature below (fol. 208r) immediately follows the miniature of the large casket with the Holy Mandylion being sent to Konstantinos Dalassenos. It has the following text: 'In the same year, one of the Varangians ... came across a native woman in an isolated spot and tempted her virtue. Because he could not persuade her, he used violence. The woman drew the sword of her husband and killed the Varangian with a thrust to the heart. When the other Varangians heard of it, they crowned the woman and gave her all the possessions of the rapist, they then disposed of his body without burial, according to the law concerning murderers.'<sup>55</sup> In these images the Guard are not in uniform.



## Decapitations

Secondly, the emperor has not been decapitated - neither is his arm severed or his body hacked. The Madrid Skylitzes miniatures are full of gory scenes, including numerous decapitations, so why would it not show the emperor's headless body? This gruesome detail (right) from fol. 80 v bottom shows the decapitation of Emperor Michael III (AD 843-867). Michael III's body lies on the ground, his head is detached and there is a large pool of blood.



Similarly, despite bring the Keramion to Constantinople, emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (AD 963-976) was beheaded and his body was thrown from a window. The Skylitzes picture (fol. 157v, top) and text show that the assassins 'cut off his head and showed it through the window to those who were rushing to his assistance.'<sup>56</sup>



## A Procession

Finally, the image has the feel of a celebration and a procession. The sun is shining and the banners are blowing in the wind. It does not have the sense of political intrigue following the assassination of the emperor. The death of Michael II Travlos is depicted in a sombre way even though he was apparently an unpopular and evil emperor: see Appendix II.

Also as the Skylia gate was a covered area in the Imperial Palace adjacent to the Hippodrome, why would the sun be depicted?

There is a sense that the Varangian Guard are working in this picture. They are in uniform and heavily armed. What are they protecting?



There are fundamental questions here. Is this definitely the Varangian Guard? If so did the artist in this miniature superimpose the image of the Varangian Guard into older history? If that is the case an army from AD 988 and following is introduced into an event in AD 820. This is very unusual. Or did the scribe see an image that looked like a flat emperor and attribute it to the death of Leon V, inserting it into his history? Who do we trust: the artist or the scribe? More research needs to be done.



Could these two images have once belonged together, with one end of the procession showing the leaving of the Palace and the second showing the arrival at the church of St Mary's Blanchernai? The procession was long and 'went the length of the city, passing along the Golden Horn.'<sup>57</sup> The stylistic differences could be accounted for by the scribal error in separating them which meant they were copied by different artists into different folios. The image above was copied by painter A1 in Byzantine style and the image below is the work of an artist B1 from the Western group (please see page 23). Notice in the miniature at the bottom that the crosses are the Western one armed cross, rather than Byzantine two armed one, and the clothes are not the reds and golds of the Byzantine painter A1 (see page 23).

The circumstances surrounding this procession are important. A litany was a very unusual event, and this is the only depiction of one in the manuscript. It was a response to a time of huge crisis, following a severe drought for six months. Was this the catalyst to display the Holy Mandylyon more openly? Given the apparent fear of earthquake if the golden reliquary box of the Mandylyon was opened, perhaps the greater fear of famine proved a turning point?

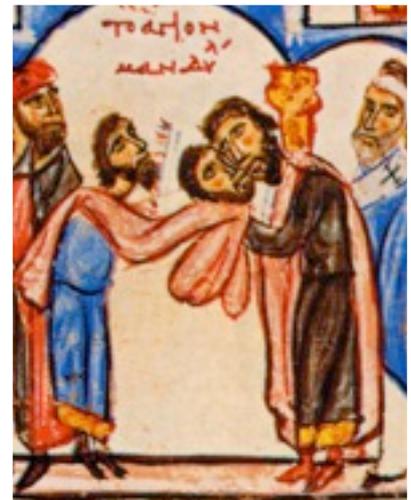
Was this the procession which transferred the Mandylyon permanently to St Mary's Blanchernai? This was the church in which which the Crusaders reported: every Friday the Shroud 'raised itself upright so that one could

## Could this be an artistic depiction of the Holy Mandylion/ Shroud of Turin?

What evidence is there that this could be a mis-placed image of the litany? Firstly the shape and flatness of the image is of interest. The artist A1 in the Madrid Skylitzes was perfectly capable of drawing in a manner which looked three-dimensional. Look, for example, at the rounded shoulder on the man on the left. However, the object which the two men are carrying is completely flat throughout the body. Is it flat to suggest the dead body of the emperor? The painter AI does use this technique in portraying death - see the image of the death of Michael II (Appendix II).

However the image could also be flat because it is a cloth rather than a human being. The dimensions of the Shroud when folded into four and was damaged by incense (7.15 × 1.85 ft) could fit this image. The small image below shows how the Shroud looked when it was damaged by incense, which is remarkably similar to the painting. Was this the kind of occasion, when it was displayed in this manner, that it was damaged?

When the Shroud of Turin is folded into four in this manner it no longer looks like a recognizable Shroud; neither would it look like the Mandylion with the central face image. If this image was mis-placed could this be a factor?



We have already seen that there is a stylistic device that the artists of the Madrid Skylitzes adopt to put a three dimensional head on the two dimensional Holy Mandylion (see above right). However, if this image is the Holy Mandylion and not Leon V the head image is apparently no longer in the center of the cloth. It is in the top corner.

The pink tent structures have already been seen in association with a religious event: the baptism of Basil I. The golden pattern in the doorway of the pink tent like structure on the left could suggest a doorway into a rich interior like the palace.

In the smaller detail on the left the man appears to be carrying the hands of the King on the cloth, suggesting that his hands are actually behind him. If this picture was describing the transportation of an emperor the servant would be dislocating his shoulders, or the emperor's head would be rotated at 180°. Perhaps this endorses the scribal view that this is Leon V. There is also what looks like a flow of blood from the neck. Is this consistent with the beheading of Leon V or a addition by the artistic copyist to make the image fit the text. We know from the description of Leon V's death in the manuscript that his arm that had been hacked off. There is a ring of red around his arm, but the arm is intact.



If this is an artistic interpretation of the transport of the Shroud, then the artist could be saying to his viewer that they are looking at the back image. So the front image of the King on the cloth is behind his head, toward the man in red on the left. The Shroud was folded and displayed in this manner when it was possibly damaged by incense.

Finally the full regalia of a Byzantine emperor could be a addition, or it could be a reference to the majesty of Christ?

**Do the red robes denote dignitaries such as the brothers of the emperor?**

The red robe of the man to the right of the picture (below left) could be in the robe of high official. Could it be John who led the procession of the Mandylion? ‘Byzantine dignitaries are clad in red or blue girdled tunics, with golden borders at the bottom.’<sup>58</sup>

The image below right (fol. 43r, top) is important in the understanding of costume in the Madrid Skylitzes. The text says: ‘Theophilos ordered the eparch of the city to bring the accomplices of Michael II to justice. They were arrested and punished as murderers.’<sup>59</sup> The costume of the eparch, which is seen in other manuscripts has led scholars to believe that the Skylitzes originated in Byzantium. Oikonomides argued that the ‘detailed rendering of the costume can only be explained if one presupposed that it was copied from life in the milieu in which it was worn.’<sup>60</sup> So the original archetype of the manuscript, which was copied, was authentically Byzantine in the way the costume was portrayed.

The dignitary leading the procession in the image, wears a similar costume to the accomplices of Michael II in the image below right. There is a striking similarity between the robe and the costume of the man to the left of the eparch on horseback.

As costume is ‘copied from the milieu in which it is worn,’ why is the Varangian Guard so out of place?



## Is the Holy Mandylion the Shroud of Turin?

The Holy Mandylion (image of Edessa) is the most important religious artefact in the Madrid Skylitzes. Before it arrived in Constantinople the *Histories* repeatedly argues for its importance in the iconoclastic debates in the reigns of the emperors Leon V, Michael II and Theophilos. The Image of Edessa was the justification which underpinned the creation of icons. Emperors who attempt to destroy icons are strongly criticised by the writer of the *Histories*.

The Holy Mandylion is displayed arriving in Constantinople. The letter of Jesus relating to it is described and illustrated. The Keramion is discussed in the text. All three of these events were the consequence of extensive military campaigns, by three different emperors. A copy may have been displayed at the baptism of Boris I, the Bulgarian. The Holy Mandylion was used in diplomacy to gain the support of Konstantinos Dalassenos. Finally it is taken on procession in a time of national crisis when the harvest has failed through lack of rain and the people are starving. It is extraordinary to think that such an important cloth would just disappear.

The text of the Skylitzes apparently only shows one image of what it looked like - at the point of arrival. If the images identified in this paper are the Holy Mandylion (the baptism of Boris I and the possible missing image of the procession from the litany) then this may inform our understanding of the Holy Mandylion. In the first, the image of Christ shows him standing. In the second either the Holy Mandylion is of lesser importance than the cloth displayed in the procession (which is unlikely from an examination of the full text of the *Histories*) or the Mandylion is not just a face image in the center of a small cloth. The cloth is long - at least six feet according to the image and the face is not in the middle of the cloth but at the corner of one end. All this is consistent with the Shroud when it is folded into four.



### Misclassification.

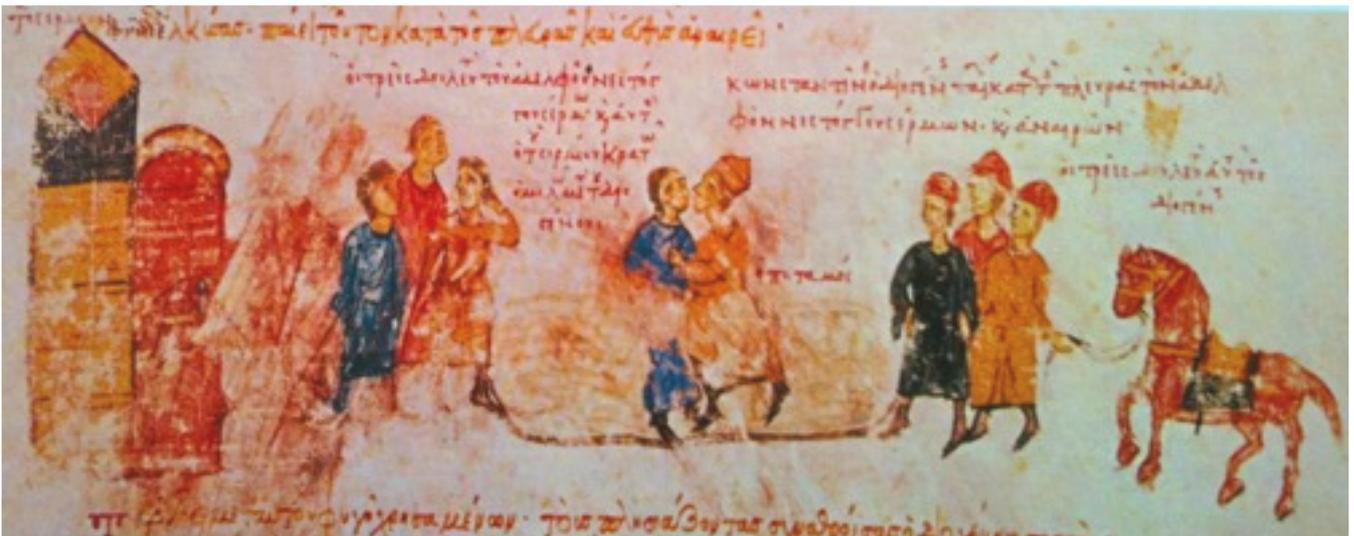
If the image in fol. 26v top is the Holy Shroud, the fact that it was copied into the history of Leon V and assumed for over 800 years to be his body, means that it cannot be a later addition to the text to fabricate a history of the Holy Shroud. It also points to the historical validity of the image. Historians have not significantly questioned the Madrid Skylitzes manuscript when it depicts the death of emperors such as Michael III, Nikephoros II Phokas or Romanos II. Rather, it is regarded as a major source material. This image of the apparent procession of Leon V has not been doubted historically. What would be the incentive of any artist to falsify the image of an assassinated emperor?

It is likely that the copy of this miniature (probably painted in the 1170's to 1190's) was not significantly altered from the lost original. And the original was possibly painted when Ioannes Skylitzes was alive: probably in the 1060's - 1090's. If the image in fol.26v top is the Shroud, it provides historical evidence, both textual and artistic that the Shroud was in Constantinople in the eleventh century, over 100 years before the Pray Manuscript.

## How reliable is the Madrid Skylitzes as a historical document of this period?

John Skylitzes was born around AD 1040 and lived, (by his admission in his preface) as a contemporary of Michael Psellos (1018-1096/7). He was eventually appointed to high judicial office and it is believed he wrote the *Synopses Historian* in the 1070s. Skylitzes used other contemporary sources, some of which he mentions in his preface.<sup>61</sup>

The existing manuscript of the Madrid Skylitzes is a copy of the original text. Before the printing press came into use it was common for texts to be copied by scribes. Vasiliki Tsamakda in her thorough thesis argues that the painters of the Madrid Skylitzes ‘were copyists who did not illustrate the Skylitzes text for the first time. This is suggested by the various kinds of mistakes discovered in the miniatures, the captions and the inscriptions accompanying them. The sequential order of the miniatures is occasionally disturbed, indicating that the artists copied a few miniatures in the wrong place. In most cases, however, the miniatures correctly follow or precede the passage which they illustrate, or are painted between the lines. In a very few cases, the same miniature is copied twice by mistake. Most convincing for the interpretation that the Matritensis is a copy is the miniature on fol.195r (see Appendix 3): it contains details missing from the text because the scribe has forgotten to copy them. The artist could only have painted these details by copying them from a model, not by reading his text. The captions and the inscriptions contain numerous mistakes, if one compares them to the content of the miniatures or the text. The inscriptions were often wrongly assigned to certain figures and scenes or differ in content from the text; they occasionally even refer to episodes which are not illustrated.’<sup>62</sup>



Vasiliki Tsamakda goes on to argue that the copied text was ‘produced in the scriptorium of the Monastery of S. Salvatore in Messina.’ She suggests it was possibly commissioned by Onofrius, ‘the energetic Archimandrite in Messina from AD 1159-1183.’<sup>63</sup> Her evaluation identifies the current scholarly position, which has four main threads: it is 13th century copy of an 11th century Italian model, produced in South Italy (Graber-Manaoussacas); it was produced *ad hoc* in Sicily in the 12th century (Sevcenko); it is a 12th century copy, produced after 1158-1160 in Palermo with a Constantinopolitan model (Wilson); it was produced in the 12th Century in Constantinople (Oikonomides).<sup>64</sup>

## The Artists

There were seven different artists who copied the Madrid Skylitzes miniatures and the ones that most concern this paper are identified as A1 and B1. A1 paints in a Byzantine style and B1 chooses Western styling. For example the images below both depict the same church, St Mary of Blanchernai. The image on the left shows Theophilus (AD 829-842) riding to the church painted in the Byzantine style by artist A1, so notice the red costume embellished by gold of the citizen bringing his petition to the emperor. B1 Westernizes the clothes and figures .

The image which apparently shows the beheaded Leon V was copied by artist A1; the arrival of the Mandylion in Constantinople was by artist B1. The arrival of Christ's letter; the transport of the Holy relics to Dalassenos, and the killing of the Varangian guard were painted by artist B1. The baptism of Boris 1 was artist B2. <sup>65</sup>



### Photoshopping the image

The image on the left was photoshopped by William Stace and it shows the church at St Mary's Blanchernai depicted in the style of artist A1, without the people present. This enables a direct comparison of style for the same building with artist B1 above. If you imagine this image in the painting by artist B1 the possibility that both pictures represented the same procession seems more likely.



## Conclusion

This paper has examined the L shaped holes on the Shroud of Turin and argues that the holes were probably caused by incense accidentally spilled onto the cloth. There are strong similarities between the incense damage and the Pray Manuscript. This suggests the Shroud was in existence in AD 1192. It was probably in Constantinople, as historical records and descriptions of Crusaders suggest.

The paper then looked at the strong possibility that the Shroud is the Holy Mandyllion which arrived in Constantinople in AD 944. It looks at the evidence of the Holy Mandyllion from the Madrid Skylitzes, the only surviving illuminated manuscript of the period. The Madrid Skylitzes in its existing form is a copy of a more ancient work which was created by the historian Ioannes Skylitzes in the eleventh century. Although the copy was done by seven different artists in different styles it is possible to imagine what the original manuscript would have looked like.

The paper identified an image which may be the Holy Shroud being carried in procession through the streets of Constantinople, being taken to a church where Crusaders described seeing the Holy Shroud. If the image in the Madrid Skylitzes is the Shroud of Turin, the Shroud was folded in the pattern in which the damage from incense occurred. More research is needed to verify this possibility.

The evidence of the text and miniatures of the Madrid Skylitzes may have an impact on the dating of the Shroud. If the miniature identified by this paper is the Holy Shroud in procession and not the assassination of Leon V, then this adds to historical evidence that the Shroud was in Constantinople undercutting the carbon-14 dating. If the Shroud was the Holy Mandyllion, the Madrid Skylitzes takes the dating back to AD 944 in Constantinople and then earlier to Edessa and potentially to the time of Christ.

One final question remains and it is one of semantics. The people of the ancient city of Edessa, along with writers from Constantinople called the Holy Mandyllion an image 'not-made-by-hands' or 'divinely wrought.' Examinations of the Shroud of Turin in a secular scientific world do not use the language of divinity, but the 1978 STURP examinations showed the image on the Shroud is not made using paint or by any known artistic medium. Is it inexplicable. As Barrie Schwartz commented 'it is the single most studied artefact in human history,' and yet there is no answer to the simple question, 'how is the image formed?'

Until the mechanism which created the image is discovered and the identify of an artist who had the skill to make it is revealed, it is still, like the description of the Holy Mandyllion, an image 'not-made-by-hands.'

© Pam Moon, Pentecost Sunday 2013

## Thanks

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Bible Quotes from the NIV

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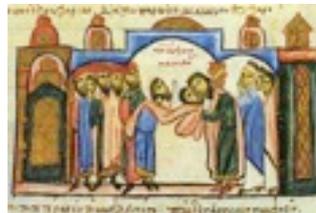
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## Appendix I

## **The Byzantine Emperors AD 811- 1055.**

Michael I Rhangabe (811-813)

Leon V the Armenian (813-820)

Michael II Travlos (820-829)

Theophilos (829-842)

Michael III (842-867)

Basileios I (867-886)

Leon VI the Wise (886-912)

Alexandros (912-913)

Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos (913-959)

Romanos I Lekapenos (920-944)

Konstantinos VII Porphyrogennetos (944-959)

Romanos II (959-963)

Basileios and Konstantinos (963)

Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969)

Ioannes Tzimiskes (969-976)

Basileios II (976-1025)

Konstantinos VIII (1025- 1028)

Romanos III Argyros (1028-1034)

Michael IV Paphlagon ( 1034-1042)

Michael V Kalaphates (1041-1042)

Konstantinos IX Monomachos (1042-1055)

## **Appendix II**

## The deaths of Emperors from 811 - 976 AD

### Michael I Rhangabe

Michael I abdicated (shown above) in favour of Leon V in AD 813 and died as a monk on Prote Island in AD 844.



### Leon V

The miniature of Leon V being attacked



### Michael II Tavalos

The text reads: The Emperor Michael II suffered from dysentery and died after nine years and eight months of rule.



### Theophilos

The image shows the death of Theophilos and the text reads: Theophilos died after a while (in 842 A.D.) He reigned twelve years and three months.



### Michael III

The miniature is very poor quality but the emperor's headless body is clear.



### Basileios I

The text reads: Basileios I died due to an illness after he had reigned for one year as co-emperor and nineteen years as sole ruler (886 AD). His oldest son Leon took over power. There is no image of death.

**Leon VI the Wise:** on his death bed



**Alexandros** on his deathbed



**Romanos I**  
on his death bed



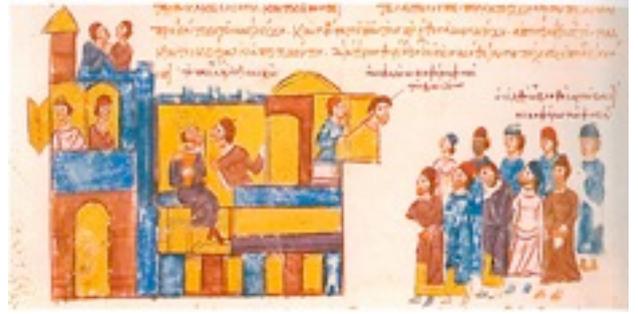
**Constantine VII**  
on his death bed



**Romanos II** on his death bed

**Nikephoros II. Phokas, Beheaded**





**Ioannes Tzimiskes, Abdicated**



**Basil II**

There is no image or record of his death in the manuscript

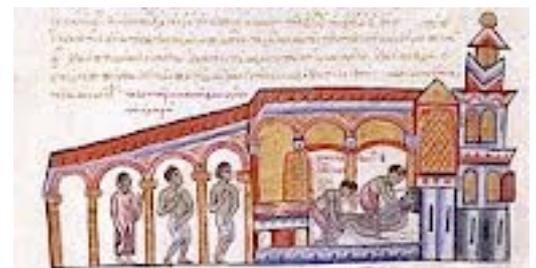
**Konstantinos VIII on his deathbed**

The text of the death of Konstantinos was separated by the copyist from the image. As Vasiliki Tsamakda reports: the text which best explains this scene is written on the verso of this folio.



**Romanos III Argyros**

The image right shows the assassination of Romanos III. The text reads ‘Romanos III distributed the senators’ allowances before going to the baths of the Great Palace. He was attacked mercilessly and drowned by Michael Paphlagon’s men in the baths’ swimming pool. He had reigned for five years and six months.



**Michael IV Paphlagon**

The text for this miniature reads: The emperor returned to Constantinople. As he was ill and concerned about the salvation of his soul, he let the monk Kosmas Tzintziloukios tonsure him. He died on the tenth of December AM 6650 (1041 A.D.), deeply regretting the wrong he had done the Emperor Romanos III, although many blamed Ioannes Orphanotrophos for this.

**Michael V Kalaphates**



20 April 1042: The text reads: The crowd demanded that the emperor be blinded and punished with death. Michael V died later that year (24 August 1042) and there is no image or textual record of his death in the Skylitzes manuscript



**K o n s t a n t i n o s**  
**M o n o m a c h o s**

**I X**

No image of death and missing text.