



## The Cloth of Oviedo

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**June 21, 1999 Richmond, Virginia** Over the June 18-20 weekend in 1999, I attended the International Conference on the Shroud of Turin in Richmond, Virginia. The Shroud is a piece of linen cloth about 14 feet long that has the front and back images of a crucified man thought by many of the medical and scientific people at the Richmond Conference to be extraordinary photographic images of the crucified Jesus Christ.

Along with the Shroud of Turin, there is another part of the Christ crucifixion history that has rarely been presented to western audiences. It is called the Cloth of Oviedo. In Jewish tradition, at the moment of death a cloth is placed over the deceased's face and head. It is called a sudarium, a Latin word for face cloth. One of the presenters at the Richmond Shroud conference has traced the Cloth of Oviedo from John in the New Testament on to Alexandria, Egypt and several cities in Spain: Seville, Toledo and finally by the 7th Century A. D. to Oviedo in northern Spain. There it has long been revered as the cloth that wrapped the head of the crucified Christ to blot up the blood and serum running from his nose and mouth and wounds in the back of his head. In John, Chapter 20, Verses 3 through 7, it states:

*The Bible, John, Chapter 20, Verses 3-7:* "We ran to the tomb to see. I (John) outran Peter and got there first, and stooped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but I didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went on inside. He also noticed the cloth lying there, while the swath that had covered Jesus's head was rolled up in a bundle and was lying at the side."

English scholar Mark Guscini now lives in Spain where he has studied ancient texts about the Cloth of Oviedo in association with the Centro Español de Sindonología. Mr. Guscini is convinced that the head cloth mentioned in by John in the New Testament is the same as the Cloth of Oviedo now kept at the Cámara Santa 9th Century church in Oviedo.

The blood type on the Shroud of Turin and the Cloth of Oviedo are both AB negative. Further, when photographs of the blood on the back of the head in the Shroud of Turin are overlaid with the blood on the back of the head in the Cloth of Oviedo, there are identical matches of the blood clot shapes. You can see that comparison in the photos below:

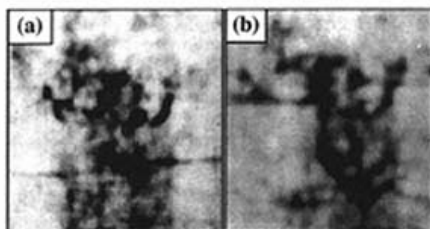


Figure 3. Comparison of dorsal head wound marks on the Shroud of Turin (a) and the Cloth of Oviedo (b).

Left, blood stain pattern on the linen Shroud of Turin where the back of the head

would have been. Right, blood stain pattern on the Cloth of Oviedo, allegedly the small cloth

placed over Jesus Christ's face after death. The Cloth of Oviedo has been kept in a church drawer in Oviedo, Spain for centuries.

I asked Mark Guscini why a cloth that may have wrapped the head of the crucified Jesus Christ and has a traceable history back to at least the 7th Century A. D. in Jerusalem has not been more acclaimed by both the Catholics and the Christians?

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## **Interview:**

**Mark Guscini, Oviedo Shroud Researcher, Centro Espagnol de**

**Sindonologia, La Coruna, Spain:** "No one has really publicized it until we went in there. The Cathedral authorities even today - they don't realize the full extent of what they have. They find it strange that some people want to go in and look at this old blood stained cloth. But they aren't aware of all the results of our studies, not because we don't make them available, but because they don't read it. They aren't aware in themselves of the great treasure they have in there.

### **BUT DON'T THEY ASSOCIATE IT AS BEING THE VERY BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST ON THIS CLOTH?**

It's a question I often ask myself because if they did, their attitude would surely be different. But they don't seem to. They know it's something special. They know it's awakening an interest in the world over now. And they find it strange when people have been over from the States to go and visit the cloth and they have actually asked me then without these people listening, 'Have they really come from the United States just to see this?'

### **WHY WOULD ANYONE INSIDE OF THE CHURCH ANYWHERE NOT BE COMPLETELY AND TOTALLY PASSIONATELY OBSESSED WITH THESE CLOTHS?**

I really wish I knew, but it always seems to be the question that it's people who are not 100% involved with the church who get passionately involved and realize what we have. I mean, we're talking about something that was in contact, physical contact, with Jesus Christ. It is incredible! Now, why they don't realize that and stand back and think, 'Wow, we've got this here!' is absolutely beyond me.

### **COULD YOU PLEASE DESCRIBE THE VERY FIRST MOMENT THAT YOU WENT INTO THE CHURCH AND THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO WAS HANDED TO YOU TO HANDLE AND TO EXAMINE.**

It was a very moving and emotional moment. I had driven over from where I live in the morning about four hours drive away. I was nervous is the word really. I was very much looking forward to the moment. I went into the cathedral. There were a lot of other people who were there that I needed to meet, but I ignored them and sent to Jorge - one of the other members of the team - 'Take me to it. Let me see it.' And I just stood there for ten or fifteen minutes in front of it just trying to realize - I knew it was there, I knew what it was - but just trying to realize in myself and in my heart exactly what this is. You know, if this is six inches away from my face - I've got the actual blood of Christ! It was an incredible moment. Something I'll never forget.

### **DID YOU PICK THE CLOTH UP?**

No. We try to do that as little as possible. And when we do touch it, it's always with rubber gloves to avoid more contamination. Although, having said that, nobody can resist the temptation - at least the first time - of either touching it with fingers without gloves on to just get that historical contact. And I did do it as well.

**WHEN YOU DID, DID YOU HAVE A SENSE OF SOMETHING EVEN MORE DIFFERENT BEYOND LOOKING AT IT?**

Not really, no. I thought I would, but I didn't. I touched it. I still knew what it was, but it didn't make too much difference touching it physically because it was just a literal touching it with the tip of a finger. That's all. Nothing more.

**IF JESUS CHRIST WERE A REAL HUMAN BEING WHO HAS HAD THE KIND OF IMPACT ON THIS PLANET THAT HE APPEARS TO HAVE HAD FOR 2000 YEARS AND EVERYTHING SURROUNDING THE HISTORIES THAT ARE WRITTEN IN THE GOSPELS IS A MAN WHO DIED IN A HORRIBLE, PHYSICAL PAINFUL WAY. BUT THEN SEEMED TO DISAPPEAR AS HE SAID THAT HE WOULD IN A MIRACULOUS WAY CONSISTENT WITH CALLING HIMSELF THE SON OF GOD. IN YOUR WORK, FROM A STRICT FORENSIC POINT OF VIEW, IS THERE ANYTHING THAT HAS AFFECTED YOU AS BEING MIRACULOUS?**

I always say that you can get to a certain point with forensic studies, chemical studies, physical studies, study of manuscripts and history - you can get to a point where you say, 'Up to here it's fact and you can't deny this.' Some people try to, but they can't. But you do reach a point - I mean, I don't think the Shroud or the Oviedo Cloth prove the Resurrection. I don't think they can ever do that. Some people say they can. I really don't think they can. You reach that point where from there on, it depends on your own personal faith.

Some people who are convinced that the Shroud is genuine - you heard them in the Conference - they are not professing Christians and may not even believe in the Resurrection. But you can reach a point with the Shroud where you say, 'This is science and you can't deny that.' Then there is a point where it comes to deeper spiritual things.

**CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO A RADIO AUDIENCE WHO HAS NEVER HEARD THIS BEFORE ABOUT THE EXPERIMENTATION THAT YOU DID CONCERNING THE VARIOUS ANGLES THAT THE BODY MUST HAVE BEEN IN TWO DIFFERENT TIME PERIODS TO CREATE THE BLOOD, THE SCAB WOUND, AND THE FLUID SERUM THAT IS THERE ON THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO?**

These studies were forensic studies done by a professional forensic doctor. What he did was make a model head with all the tubes to pass the liquid through them so that it would come out through the nose of the head. In other words, all the stains were reproduced in the laboratory and can be reproduced again. It's a scientific experiment that can be repeated any time, as many times as anybody could wish.

The first group of stains - in order to reproduce those, the head and body would have to be in a vertical position with the head tilted 70 degrees forward and 20 degrees to the right. And it would have been in that position for between 45 minutes to one hour.

**THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE BODY WAS HANGING ON THE CROSS FOR THAT PERIOD OF TIME TO HAVE PRODUCED THAT ANGLE THAT THE HEAD WAS FORWARD AND SLIGHTLY TO THE RIGHT?**

After death. We're talking about that time after death. The body would have been hanging on the cross for that time once Jesus - that's who we're talking about really - had expired.

**WHAT HAPPENS IN TERMS OF THIS WRAPPING OF THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO AT THAT POINT?**

Well, we suppose that the original idea was to wrap it all the way around the head. But with the head being tilted to the right, that would bring the cheek in contact with the right shoulder on top of the arm which would have impeded the cloth going all the way around. So what actually happened was when whoever was wrapping reached that point, they just folded the cloth back over on itself over the face which is why on the cloth you have these symmetrical stains that when you open it out again, you've got stains on each side - they are the same stains, basically.

**BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T GET THE CLOTH AROUND HIS ARM THAT WAS STILL HANGING ON THE CROSS?**

That's exactly right, yes.

**SO HE'S HANGING THERE FOR MAYBE 45 MINUTES TO AN HOUR WITH A CLOTH PARTIALLY WRAPPED AROUND HIS FACE ABSORBING CLOTTED BLOOD FROM HIS NOSE AND MOUTH AND BACK OF HIS HEAD?**

Yes, but not only clotted blood. This is a liquid that was coming out very slowly, while the body was still hanging, through the nose and mouth which is one part blood and six parts serum or the liquid that collects in the lungs when you die from asphyxiation.

**IS THAT, IN TERMS OF FORENSIC MEDICINE, CLEARLY THERE ON THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO?**

Yes, that is very, very clear. In itself, you can't link that 100% and say, 'Oh, yeah, you've got this liquid crucifixion.' What it does imply is that the person died in a vertical position asphyxiated. Now, that same torture, for example, was used by the Nazis in the Second World War, but they would just hang people by the wrists and the person in a few minutes would be dead because you can breathe in, but with that kind of pressure when you've got your whole body weight hanging, you can't breathe out again. Which is also why that the chest on the Shroud of Turin this time - you can see it's a bit swollen. The muscles swell, the lungs swell, because you can't breathe in that position.

**THAT IS THE ASPHYXIATION DEATH?**

That's right.

**SOMEBODY COMES AND TAKES HIM DOWN WITH THE CLOTH STILL PARTIALLY AROUND THE HEAD. FROM YOUR EXAMINATION, WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE HAPPENED NEXT?**

The next thing that would have happened - and this is from the stains that would be in the area that corresponds to the forehead - the body was then laid on the ground with the arms in the same position. Now whether that means they were still nailed to the horizontal bar of the cross or not, we don't know. But the arm was still in that position. And then the liquid was flowing out through the nose and down the nose up to the forehead collecting in the eyebrows which is where the forehead stains were - again, for about the same period of time: 45 minutes to one hour.

**AS IF THE BODY WERE LYING ON THE GROUND AND SO THE CLOTH WOULD BE ABSORBING MORE FLUID COMING FROM**

## **THE MOUTH AND NOSE AND SEEPING UP ONTO THE FOREHEAD. WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE HAPPENED NEXT?**

Next, the arm must have been moved down into a different position. What was impeding the cloth going all the way around the head, this impediment was removed somehow. If that was the arm, all that was involved was just turning the arm away. The cloth was then wrapped all the way around the head and tied in a knot at the top. Now, in releasing the arm from that position, what you are actually doing is releasing all the pressure on the lungs and chest muscles. So, that's when the liquid really started to spurt out through the nose, not just dribble, but it was really spurting out. That was also helped by the body movement. And at that moment, the body was being moved for between five to ten minutes when we can presume that the body was picked up and taken from there to the tomb. You can actually see on the cloth, stains in the shape of fingers. In other words, somebody was holding the cloth to the nose and actually pressing it to try to stop the liquid coming out and to try to absorb what did come out.

Now, we know that it can't have been left on the head and then the Shroud put over the top of it. Why? Because there is no image on the Oviedo cloth and there is on the Shroud. Now, whatever caused the image - whatever the image formation was - it didn't leave anything on the Oviedo cloth and it did on the Shroud. So, that means that the Oviedo cloth was not involved, was not in contact with the body when the image was formed on the Shroud of Turin. It must have been taken off before that and just left to one side.

## **THE BLOOD IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD ON THE SHROUD OF TURIN AND WHAT APPEARS TO BE DORSAL BLOOD ON THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO SEEM TO MATCH QUITE CLOSELY.**

They do. Again, this is much better described in a visual aspect, but what we can say is that all the blood on the front stains - the ones I've just described (are) the post mortem blood on the Oviedo cloth - but on the area that corresponds to the back of the head (it) has blood that was shed in life. And you can actually calculate that it was shed, it was still bleeding about an hour before death. Now these stains - they are exactly the same stains in the same area on the Shroud of Turin. And when you do an overlay, then the stains just fit in perfectly. And it's the same blood group as well: AB.

## **IF YOU WERE TRYING TO TRACK THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO FROM THE CAVE UP TO 1999, WHAT IS THE KNOWN HISTORY OF THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO AFTER THE TOMB?**

OK, according to all the documents that talk about the history, it was in Jerusalem up to the year 614 A. D. which was when the Persians invaded Jerusalem. Lots of Christians fled the city and they took books, manuscripts, relics, personal possessions with them. There is a document written in the year 570 A. D. by some Italian pilgrims who did actually go to the cave where the sudarium was kept in Jerusalem. OK, so from there, it goes across the north of Africa and into Spain which was a great cultural center in the 7th Century. It enters Spain through the port of Cartagena. It would go from there to Seville and from there to Toledo which was the capitol of the kingdom and then when the Arabs invaded Spain in the year 711 A.D. - again we have this mass exodus of Christians and all their possessions right up to the north of the peninsula. According to all these documents as well, the sudarium and the other things (relics) it was with were in the mountains around Oviedo - well, Oviedo did not actually exist as a city then - it was in the mountains between 45 to 50 years. Once the city of Oviedo was built by King Alfonso II, he built a church, San Salvadore, especially for the sudarium and the other relics that were with it.

## **THE ONE DOCUMENT YOU SAID WAS THE OLDEST AND THAT IT WENT BACK TO PERHAPS THE 9TH CENTURY OR 10TH CENTURY A.D. COULD YOU DESCRIBE A LITTLE MORE ABOUT HOW THAT**



## **DOCUMENT WAS FOUND AND WHAT EXACTLY IT IS AND WHAT IT SAYS SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE SUDARIUM?**

It's a manuscript in northeast France. That brings us on to another relationship. For some reason, there are four manuscripts in northeast France and Belgium which is all the same area which are interested in this story of the sudarium. Now, the link - there are various theories - it's all on the pilgrims road to Santiago. That's something that needs more investigation. This manuscript is the oldest one. What it does is give a list that the sudarium passed through. It's not a detailed history. And they've got those cities on it. They've got Jerusalem and from there to what they call Africa and what we suppose they mean by that is Alexandria in Egypt. And then into Spain and through those cities we have mentioned.

## **WHO SUPPOSEDLY WROTE THIS PARTICULAR DOCUMENT?**

All of these documents are anonymous. Obviously, it was somebody with a great deal of interest in Oviedo and its history and the relics contained, but none of them are autographed, none of them are signed and we have no idea who wrote any of them.

## **HOW MANY DOCUMENTS HAVE YOU STUDIED THAT DESCRIBE THE SUDARIUM AND DESCRIBE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME ROUTE FROM JERUSALEM TO OVIEDO?**

There are about ten or eleven documents ranging from the 10th to the 12th and 13th Centuries. I've seen all of them personally and studied them. I've had photographs and slides taken of all of them so they can say, 'OK, it's here. I'm not inventing this.'

## **BUT IF IT HAD BEEN PROTECTED SO CAREFULLY ALL OF THOSE CENTURIES, THERE WERE PEOPLE AFFILIATED WITH THOSE VARIOUS CHURCHES AND ROUTES THAT ALSO SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS CONNECTED TO CHRIST. WHY WOULDN'T KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO, ESPECIALLY IF IT TRULY WERE CHRIST'S SUDARIUM, REACH THE WORLD PUBLIC MORE?**

That's a good question because people did see it. It's always been known as the sudarium of the Lord. It's never had any other name. People went to Oviedo when they were on the Pilgrim's road to Santiago. They saw it and wrote about it. But it's never really caught on. I really don't know why it hasn't become better known because it's a very important part of the history of the church.

## **A LOT OF PEOPLE TODAY AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY WHEN THEY THINK OF BLOOD, THEY THINK OF DNA. AND THERE IS THIS QUESTION ABOUT BEING ABLE TO CONFIRM WHAT THE DNA OF JESUS CHRIST WAS. IS ANYBODY DOING DNA TESTS ON THE BLOOD THAT'S FRAGMENTED ON THE CLOTH OF OVIEDO?**

It has been tried, but it is very, very difficult. It's difficult, first of all, with old blood. Second, according to some people, you can actually leave DNA through sweat, through saliva, so even if you did extract - on the Oviedo cloth there are hundreds of DNA chains. That's a fact. Why? Because it's been kissed, it's been touched, it's been handled - all over the centuries. There are female DNAs in there - it's been in the hands of nuns, they've all kissed it and left saliva on it. Your hands might be sweaty when you touch it. There are so many DNAs on there. You would actually have to get something out of the actual blood and if you could get one that coincided with the Shroud, well that would be fairly definitive proof. But it's very, very complicated to do that.

## **SO THE MOST IMPORTANT COMPARISON POINT IS THE FACT**

**THAT THE BACK OF THE HEAD BLOOD MARKS THAT APPEAR TO  
HAVE BEEN FRESHLY BLEEDING FOR A PERIOD OF TIME  
CLOSELY MATCH THE BACK OF THE HEAD ON THE SHROUD OF  
TURIN?**

That's the most obvious visual point that's easy to show and easy to appreciate. But there's the other things like the blood group, the blood type. When I'm talking here about postmortem blood and blood shed in life they coincide between the two cloths. The type of death. Everything coincides. Everything that we have discovered on this cloth matches with the Shroud of Turin. And with what we know of Christian history."

**Credits**

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