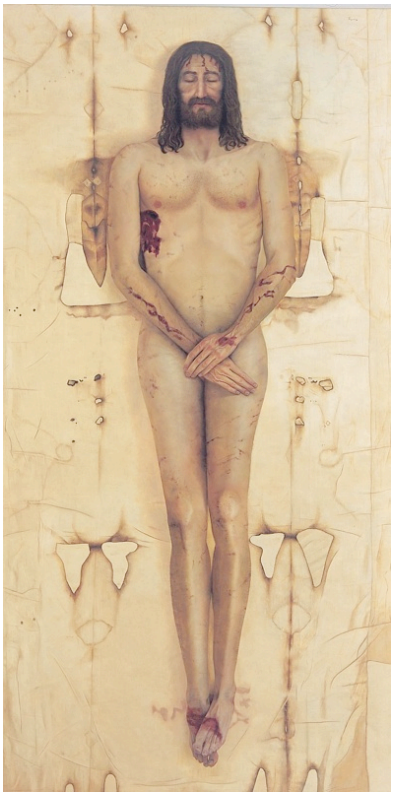
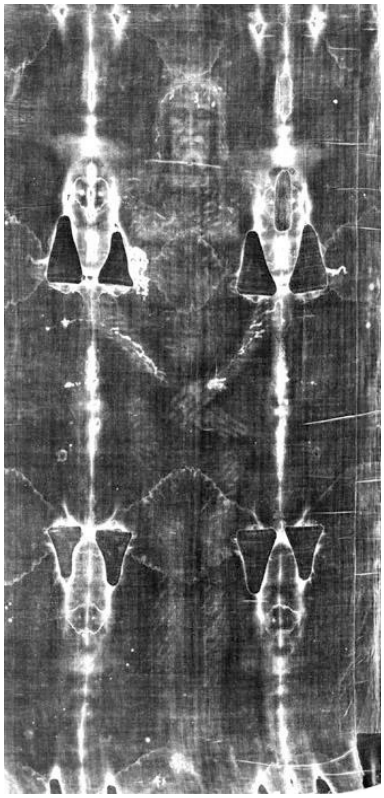
The Turin Shroud and Easter stories

As usual, every Easter worldwide media pay too much attention to new books and theories advanced to date back the Shroud of Turin from its medieval origin to the time of Jesus. With a perfect marketing strategy, a publisher had decided to release a book on this subject (http://www.amazon.com/The-Sign-Shroud-Secret-Resurrection/dp/0525953655/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1334063695&sr=8-1). I have read it and I have to admit that there is absolutely nothing new or revolutionary. It is just a collection of what other "shroudologists" have already written. Errors and inaccuracies are probably due to the fact that the author, Thomas de Wesselow, has chosen his sources *only* among the Shroud fans. And none of them is a real peer-reviewed paper.

A good summary of these inaccuracies was published on the CBS website (http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-3445_162-57410982/controversial-new-theories-on-the-shroud-of-turin/). Let's correct them.

1) *He compared it to artwork depicting the Crucifixion created since the Middle Ages, referring to the Station of the Cross at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola in New York City: "If you look at the hands on the cross, the nails go through the center of the palms," he showed Teichner. "That part of the hand is not strong enough to bear the weight of the body." Meanwhile, the image on the Shroud shows the nail wounds going through the wrists.*



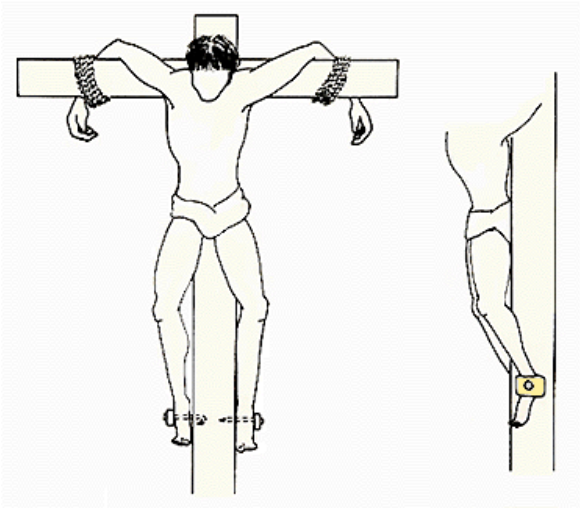


This is not correct and it keeps on being repeated over and over again by authors and journalists. As you can see from the images, a exit hole is visible on the Shroud and it goes through the palm of the hand and not through the wrist.





2) *"That's how they would have done it in Roman times,"*



He meant that Romans used to crucifiy people with nails through the wrists. This is incorrect as well. As a paper by J. Zias and E. Sekeles have shown, the only archaeological evidence of crucifixion in the Roman Palestine says just the contrary of what Wesselow has written[1].

3) *According to de Wesselow, each supposed sighting of the risen Christ was actually a sighting of the Shroud. He's convinced it was what sparked the rapid spread of Christianity, as it was taken from Jerusalem to Galilee, then to Damascus, where he believes Paul saw it and became a Christian.*

De Wesselow, of course, does not quote any ancient source to sustain this hypothesis, since the New Testament is totally silent about the burial cloth(s) after Jesus' resurrection. Also the Church Fathers have not written a word on this. So, this is just historical fiction.

4) *More than a thousand years before it turned up in Lirey, France, where Geoffrey de Charny - descended from one of the crusaders who led the sacking of Constantinople - put it on display in 1355, right about when the carbon dating results said it was faked.*

This paragraph contains one more error: Geoffroy de Charny did not descend from a crusader who led the sack of Constantinople in 1204. His family came from the house of Hugues de Mont Saint-Jean, lord of Charny[2].

5) *"There were plenty of other images of Christ which are meant to be imprints of his face, dating from the middle ages," said de Wesselow. "And none of them look remotely like the Shroud."*

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[1] J. Zias, E. Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal", *Israel Expoloration Journal* 35 (1985): 22-27.

[2] A. Lombatti, "La Sindone e Goffredo di Charny" *Studi Medievali* 53 (2012), forthcoming.

This is true and false at the same time. The 40 burial shrouds which were circulating in Europe during the XIII century give the idea of the profits that were being made by forging and displaying relics. However, we are not sure on how they all looked like, since many of them were lost and others were burnt during the French Revolution[3].

6) *its distinct herringbone weave, even the way a seam was sewn is consistent with ancient burial cloths found near Jerusalem.*

Probably de Wesselow should have read more papers on Jewish burial pratices during the Second Temple Period. He would have known that not a single piece of linen with a 3:1 herringbone twill weave has ever been found in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas[4]. The only parallel with the Turin Shroud textile is a piece of cloth kept in the Victoria & Albert Museum, in London, and it is medieval[5].

Finally, pollens do not prove anything. It has been shown that the man who claimed to have spotted these pollens, Max Frei, had not expertise and, above all, that the whole affaire was a fraud[6].

It is a pity that even Harold Attridge, dean of Yale Divinity School, said the Turin Shroud could be authentic. I bet he has never read a single scientific paper on the Turin Shroud or books on the cult of relics. But this is another story.

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[3] F. de Mely, *Le Saint-Suaire de Turin est-il authentique?* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1902).

[4] A. Lombatti, “Sindoni giudaiche contemporanee a Gesù”, *Micromega* 4 (2010): 49-54.

[5] D. King, “A parallel for the linen of the Turin Shroud”, *Bulletin du CIETA* 67 (1989): 25-27.

[6] G. Ciccone, *La truffa dei pollini. Il dossier completo* (at http://sindone.weebly.com/pollini1.html).