

## **RECENT HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON THE SUDARIUM OF OVIEDO**

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### **Introduction: The Investigation Team of the Centro Español de Sindonología.**

The Investigation Team of the Centro Español de Sindonología is precisely that - a team. We work as a team and publish as a team - all the articles and books we write are read and peer reviewed by other team members, so all our publications are truly joint efforts. The Team consists of specialists in various fields, from history and languages to chemistry, physics and archaeology. Our special field of investigation is the Shroud of Turin and the Sudarium of Oviedo, the latter being the object of the most intensive study for the simple reason that the authorities at the cathedral in Oviedo recognise the efforts we are making and regularly permit direct study of the cloth. Our studies extend to all fields related to the historical Jesus, the final object of any study of the Shroud and Sudarium, whatever the beliefs of the investigator may be. The team consists mainly of Spanish experts (for obvious reasons) although there are members from the United Kingdom and the United States too.

Although this paper is concerned with the history of the Oviedo sudarium, a short introduction explaining past investigation carried out on the cloth is necessary to put it into context. Following are the conclusions from the first ten years of work by the Investigation Team of the Centro Español de Sindonología. More work is in progress, namely detailed chemical and forensic studies, identification of all the pollen samples found on the cloth, and of course this historical investigation of the cloth, which is not yet finished. The main historical findings up to now will be explained, with the expected limits of having to compress into thirty minutes the work of two intense years.

## **Summary of the First Ten Years of Investigation on the Oviedo Sudarium**

1. The Sudarium of Oviedo is a relic, which has been venerated in the cathedral of Oviedo for a very long time. It contains stains formed by human blood of the group AB.
2. The cloth is dirty, creased, torn and burnt in parts, stained and highly contaminated. It does not, however, show signs of fraudulent manipulation.
3. It seems to be a funeral cloth that was probably placed over the head of the corpse of an adult male of normal constitution.
4. The man whose face the Sudarium covered had a beard, moustache and long hair, tied up at the nape of his neck into a ponytail.
5. The man's mouth was closed, his nose was squashed and forced to the right by the pressure of holding the cloth to his face. Both these anatomical elements have been clearly identified on the sudarium of Oviedo.
6. The man was dead. The mechanism that formed the stains is incompatible with any kind of breathing movement.
7. At the bottom of the back of his head, there is a series of wounds produced in life by some sharp objects. These wounds had bled about an hour before the cloth was placed on top of them.
8. Just about the entire head, shoulders and at least part of the back of the man were covered in blood before being covered by this cloth. This is known because it is impossible to reproduce the stains in the hair, on the forehead and on top of the head with blood from a corpse. It can therefore be stated that the man was wounded before death with something that made his scalp bleed and produced wounds on his neck, shoulders and upper part of the back.
9. The man suffered a pulmonary oedema as a consequence of the terminal process. The main stains are one part blood and six parts fluid from the pulmonary oedema.
10. The cloth was placed over the head starting from the back, held to the hair by sharp objects.

From there it went round the left side of the head to the right cheek, where, for apparently unknown reasons it was folded over on itself, ending up folded like an accordion at the left cheek. It is possible that the cloth was placed like this because the head formed an obstacle and so it was folded over on itself. On placing the cloth in this position, two stained areas can be anatomically observed - one over the "ponytail" and the other over the top of the back.

Once the man had died, the corpse stayed in a vertical position for around one hour, and the right arm was raised with the head bent 70 degrees forwards and 20 degrees to the right. How can this be reasonably thought of as a "vertical position"? If the man of the Oviedo Sudarium was hanging by the right arm only, then the rest of the body, especially the head, would be relatively far from this arm, hanging to the left. This position is incompatible with that of the head that the cloth wrapped. It is therefore easy to deduce that the body was hanging by both arms. But if the body was hanging like this, without support for the feet, the man would have died in 15 or 20 minutes, and there would not have been enough time to generate the amount of liquid necessary to form the stains visible on the cloth. If the body were hanging with both arms above the head, then the head would have been leaning forwards and not to the right. So the only position compatible with the formation of the stains on the Oviedo cloth is both arms outstretched above the head and the feet in such a position as to make breathing very difficult, i.e. a position totally compatible with crucifixion. We can say that the man was wounded first (blood on the head, shoulders and back) and then "crucified".<sup>1</sup>

11. The body was then placed on the ground on its right side, with the arms in the same position, and the head still bent 20 degrees to the right, and at 115 degrees from the vertical position. The forehead was placed on a hard surface, and the body was left in this position for approximately one more hour.

12. The body was then moved, while somebody's left hand in various positions tried to stem the flow of liquid from the nose and mouth, pressing strongly against them. This movement could have taken about five minutes. The cloth was folded over itself all this time. The cloth was then straightened out and wrapped all round the head, like a hood, held on again by sharp objects. This allowed part of the cloth, folded like a cone, to fall over the back. With the head thus covered, the corpse was held up (partly) by a left fist. The cloth was then moved sideways over the face in this position.

Thus, once the obstacle (which could have been the hair matted with blood or the head bent towards the right) had been removed, the cloth covered the entire head and the corpse was moved for the last time, face down on a closed left fist. This movement produced the large triangular stain, on whose surface the finger shaped stains can be seen. Like the previous movement, this one could have taken five minutes at most.

13. Finally, on reaching the destination, the body was placed face up and for unknown reasons, the cloth was taken off the head. Possibly myrrh and aloes were then sprinkled over the cloth.

There are many points of coincidence between all these points and the Shroud of Turin - the blood group, the way the corpse was tortured and died, and the macroscopic overlay of the stains on each cloth. This is especially notable in that the blood on the sudarium shed in life, as opposed to post mortem, corresponds exactly in blood group, blood type and surface area to those stains on the Shroud on the nape of the neck. If it is clear that the two cloths must have covered the same corpse, and this conclusion is inevitable from all the studies carried out up to date, and if the history of the sudarium can be trustworthily extended back beyond the fourteenth century, which is often referred to as the Shroud's first documented historical appearance, then this would take the Shroud back to at least the earliest dates of the sudarium's known history. The ark of relics and the sudarium have without any doubt at all been in Spain since the beginning of the seventh century, and the history recorded in various manuscripts from various times and geographical areas take it all the way back to Jerusalem in the first century. The importance of this for Shroud history cannot be overstressed. I will now summarise the sudarium's history as I have found it expressed in the above mentioned manuscripts.

## **THE HISTORY OF THE OVIEDO SUDARIUM.**

### **1. The Gospels.**

Only John's gospel uses the Greek term  $\tau\omicron\ \sigma\upsilon\delta\alpha\rho\iota\omicron\nu$  in relation to the burial of Jesus. The Greek word is actually a loan word from the Latin *sudarium*, which is a very difficult word to translate into English. The various versions of the Bible have used such terms as "napkin", "face cloth" and just "cloth". None of these words accurately portrays to a twentieth century mind exactly what the Latin word did to a first century mind. A study of the word in classical sources (Catullus, Petronius, Suetonius, and Martial) gives the idea of a cloth somewhat larger than a modern handkerchief, that could be put to various uses. It was normally carried round the neck or

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<sup>1</sup> We have not observed any sign of how the man was fastened to the cross.

tied to the wrist, and its etymology, closely linked to the Latin *sudor* (sweat), strongly suggests it was used to wipe sweat from and clean the face in general. The difficulty of finding an exact equivalent in other languages is shown by the fact that the Latin word was transliterated into Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic.

John does not state that the sudarium was used as a burial cloth, but rather that it had been over Jesus' head before the burial. This fits in with what has been discovered from the Oviedo cloth, as does the fact that it was found separate from the other linen cloth (or cloths) in the tomb. John uses the term τα οθονια (ta othonia) for the other linen cloths - this must have been the Shroud or included the Shroud, as Luke uses othonia and sindon as synonyms. Despite many attempts to suggest different meanings for John's text, to the effect that the sudarium was not actually separate from the other cloth, John says it was three times - "not with the other cloths", "separately" and "in a place by itself" - this is clearly what he wanted us to understand. This too fits in with what has been discovered from the Oviedo cloth, which had been over Jesus' face and head, and must have been discarded before the body was wrapped in the Shroud, otherwise it would have been between the face and Shroud when the image was formed on the latter.

Having established what the sudarium was and how it was used, we shall now pass on to its history as expressed in the various manuscripts. In order to understand these, a short introduction to Spanish history from the transformation of the Roman empire in the West to the Muslim invasion of the peninsula is now called for.

## **2. Background to Spanish History of the Period.**

At the beginning of the fifth century, Roman Spain was invaded by the Suevi, the Vandals and the Alans. The Alans disappeared without trace soon after, the Suevi established themselves in Galicia, (NW Spain) and the Vandals in the south, from where they crossed over into North Africa in 430. Very different was the case of the Visigoths, who settled in the Iberian peninsula legally a few years later - this was not an invasion, but payment with land in return for military service. From the beginning of the sixth century Spain was the main home of the Visigoths. At least theoretically, the Goths were a separate nation from the native Roman Spanish. Perhaps the strongest difference between the two peoples was religion - the Goths were Arians<sup>2</sup> while the native population was Catholic.

The first Visigothic capital of Spain was Tolosa. From there the Vandals were defeated and the Suevi were cornered in Galicia. Toledo became the capital in 507, and remained so until the end of the Visigothic kingdom in 711. In 589, the Arian king Recaredo declared that the official religion of Spain was to be Catholicism. After all, the majority of his subjects already professed this religion. The regular councils held in Toledo set the scene for the religious change, and also for the relationship between church and state. The proceedings from these councils are one of the most important sources for the history of Visigothic Spain.

The seventh century saw the appearance of Spain's greatest ecclesiastical figures - Leandro died right at the beginning of the century, but his brother Isidoro of Seville, Braulio of Zaragoza, Eugenius and Ildefonso of Toledo all left the mark of their great intellect on the Gothic kingdom in the peninsula.

The Visigothic kings nominally ruled over the whole peninsula, but the internal weaknesses, expressed by the frequent rebellions of subject peoples and the great efforts to suppress them, were made evident in 711 when the Arabs invaded Spain. The last Gothic king, Rodrigo, was utterly defeated by the invader Tariq, who encountered virtually no opposition in his advance. Spain was almost immediately conquered by the Muslims.

The Muslims advanced right up to the northern limits of the country, and suffered no reverse until the battle of Covadonga in Asturias, which took place some time between 718 and 722 under the military leader Pelayo. The figure of Pelayo is surrounded by legend, although there is no doubt he existed and started the resistance in the north of the peninsula. A small Christian kingdom was formed in Asturias, with Pelayo as its first leader or king. Oviedo was Alfonso II's capital, although as the kingdom expanded, the capital was moved south to León.

With this historical situation in mind, we can now proceed to the first and probably the most important witness for the history of the sudarium and the large wooden box, or ark, that it travelled in. This is Oviedo's bishop Pelayo (the namesake of the first Asturian leader), who occupied the see from c.1101 to 1129, resigned for unknown reasons, and served two more years as bishop in the 1140's. Pelayo's most famous work is the Book of Testaments (where "testament" means donation), a collection of documents recording all the donations made to the cathedral church of San Salvador in Oviedo.

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<sup>2</sup> Arianism held that although the Son was divine and existed before all other things, he had not existed eternally.

### **3. Pelayo of Oviedo.**

The first document recorded by Pelayo is the history of the ark followed by a list of the relics contained in it. The relevant paragraphs read as follows:

When the emperor Phocas came to power in the Roman empire, the Persians, tired of bearing the Roman yoke, started a fierce war against this same republic. The power of Rome, shaken by the great burden of this war inflicted by the Persian leaders, was finally and cruelly defeated. As the Persians were victorious, the Romans stopped considering some of the provinces according to Roman law, among them the one that Pompey the Great had defeated and conquered many years before, namely Jerusalem. When Phocas died, Heraclius became emperor. In the sixth year of his reign, the Slavs annexed Greece from the Romans, and the Persians took Syria and Egypt from the Slavs. While Heraclius was emperor, the ruler in Spain was Sisebutus, king of the Goths. He was an expert in war, and he too conquered some cities from the same Roman army. As he was also a perfect Catholic, he made the Jews who were in his kingdom convert to faith in Christ. So, when the above-mentioned Heraclius was in power in the Roman world, and when the most glorious Sisebutus was wearing the royal crown in Spain, the ark, that had been made in Jerusalem by the disciples of the apostles, and in whose presence the eminent see of Oviedo now boasts, was brought with various relics of saints by men devoted to the divine faith. On account of the excessive pagan invasions and especially because of the devastation wrought by Chosroes in the temple of the Lord, a wise decision was taken and the ark was moved first to Africa by Philip, presbyter of Jerusalem and companion of the presbyter Jerome. It was then taken to Toledo by Fulgentius, the bishop of the African church of Rusp. It resided in this metropolitan city with the greatest veneration of the faithful when the most holy doctor Ildefonso was in his prime. The ark remained there from the time of the most excellent king Sisebutus through various royal successions of Spain, up to the death of king Rodrigo, when it was taken to Oviedo. The ark at this time resided in tents, just like the ark of the covenant before the temple was built, up till the reign of Alfonso the younger, also called the Chaste. In the third year of his reign, an army of Arabs invaded Asturias under their general himself, named Mokeit. Alfonso cut off their van and defeated them in the place called Lodos. Seventy thousand Arabs were slaughtered, while the rest fled. King Alfonso, decorated with the flower of numerous virtues, foreign to all evil, was the first to make Oviedo the capital of the kingdom. In his wise thought he concluded that it was an act of divine piety that the above-mentioned ark should be within the borders of his kingdom, and he decided, like a second Solomon, to build a temple for the holy ark to rest in, as it had lacked a definite resting place up to then. And so, with elegant style, he had a church built in Oviedo, which as we have said, was the capital of his kingdom. It was devoted to Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. Since that time it has been called simply the Holy Saviour.

#### **A Critical Analysis of Pelayo's account.**

It is clear that if the two cloths kept today in Turin and Oviedo are indeed the cloths from Christ's tomb, they were taken out of the tomb by his followers and kept. Two eastern traditions state that the sudarium was taken and kept at first by Peter - this is affirmed by the author of the Life of Saint Nino of Georgia and by Ishodad of Merv in his commentaries on the gospels.

Many church fathers speak of the two cloths, but for the most part they are just paraphrasing John's gospel. There is one text, however, that documents the presence of the sudarium in Jerusalem before the year 614, when according to Pelayo it was taken out of the city.

### **Antoninus Martyr**

This anonymous text of about 570 speaks about a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in the course of which a group of pilgrims saw a sudarium in a cave near Jerusalem. The text has been attributed to Antoninus, a martyr from Piacenza in northern Italy. However, Antoninus lived in the third or the fourth century, and the internal descriptions of Jerusalem and Palestine in the text as a whole suggest a date of around 570, so it is clear that Antoninus could not have written this description of the voyage, nor even been present. The most likely explanation of this is that a group of pilgrims from Piacenza went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at the end of the sixth century under the spiritual protection of Antoninus, the local saint. When they returned to Italy, one of them wrote an account of the trip, and over time it became associated with the saint himself.

Chapter 12 of the story of the pilgrimage reads as follows: "There is a cave on the bank of the Jordan, where there are seven cells with seven girls, who are put there as little children. Whenever any of them dies, she is buried in the cell, and another cell is built and another girl is put there, so that there are always the same number. People from outside prepare their food. We entered this place with great fear to pray, but we saw nobody. The sudarium that covered Jesus' head is said to be there".

### **The Persian Invasion**

Pelayo tells us that when the Persians rebelled against the Romans<sup>3</sup>, Phocas was emperor, and that he was defeated by Chosroes king of Persia. Phocas died and Heraclius became emperor.

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<sup>3</sup> The Byzantines called themselves Romans and saw their empire as the natural continuation of the Roman empire.

Sisebutus was king in Spain. Due to the devastation wrought by Chosroes in the Lord's temple, the presbyter Philip took the ark to Africa.

Chosroes II was king of Persia from 590 to 628. He captured Jerusalem in 614, and the Persians took various relics, among them the fragments of the true cross. In 617 Chosroes invaded Egypt and conquered Alexandria. Pelayo's account coincides with known history in almost all aspects. If the sudarium was indeed in Jerusalem when Chosroes attacked the city, or up till the time when he was approaching, it certainly was a good idea to get it out of the city. The historian Theophanes states that the Persians killed all the important Christians, took Zacharias prisoner and took many people into exile along with the fragment of the true cross.<sup>4</sup> The detail about the fragment of the cross is important because it proves that were relics (genuine or false) in the city in this century and the Persians were aware of the value the Christians attached to them - maybe not the monetary value but rather the moral or negotiating value. The Christians who took the sudarium out of Jerusalem knew what would have happened if Chosroes had got his hands on the cloth.

We are told that the presbyter Philip took the ark out of Jerusalem. This man is also described as a companion of the presbyter Jerome. This is the first great chronological mistake in Pelayo's account. There was a presbyter called Philip, who wrote a commentary on the Book of Job. But he died in 455, or at the latest 456<sup>5</sup>, a long time before the Persian invasion of 614. Philip could not have been a companion (*collega* is the word Pelayo uses in Latin) of Jerome, as Jerome was born shortly after 340 and died in 420. Jerome was older than Philip, too much so for the two men to be described as "companions". He could well have been a disciple of Jerome, as Migne informs us. It is absolutely impossible that either of them had anything to do with Chosroes or the Persian invasion.

### **The Ark is taken to Spain.**

Pelayo then tells us that the ark was taken to Africa and from there to Toledo in Spain. This is the barest of summaries. Africa must mean the north of the continent, probably Alexandria in

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<sup>4</sup> Theophanes, *Chronographia* 252. Τουτω τω ετει παρελαβον την αγιαν πολιν πολεμω και πολλουφ απεκτειναν δια χειροφ των Ιουδαιων, ωφ φασι τινεφ, μυριαδεφ εννεα. Αυτοι γαρ ωνουμενοι τουφ Χριστιανουφ ημπορει εκαστοφ απεκτεινεν αυτουφ. Ζαχαριαν δε τον πατριαρχην Ιεροσολυμων, και τα τιμια

και ζωοποια ξυλα λαβοντεφ συν αιχμαλωσια πολλη εν Περσιδι Απηγαγον.

<sup>5</sup> Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, LIII, p.1011: "Philippus presbyter, Hieronymi discipulus, claruit praecipue circa an. 440. Obiit Marciano et Avito regnantibus, id est anno 455 vel ad minimum proximi initio".

Egypt. We are told the ark left Africa because of an invasion of pagans - this can only refer to the Persians, who did indeed invade Egypt and conquer Alexandria in 616. The ark must have entered Spain through a port, and travelled overland to Toledo, but Pelayo tells us nothing of this in the Book of Testaments. As will be seen from other sources, it seems unlikely that the ark was taken directly to Toledo. All the sources agree that the ark left Toledo when the Arabs invaded Spain - the invasion took place in 711, but it has generally been held that the ark did not leave Toledo until 718. However, a study of the manuscripts suggests it was immediately after the invasion, especially as Tariq's first objective after defeating Rodrigo was the capital, Toledo.

All in all, this part of Pelayo's account is historically accurate. The order of events is correct - Phocas, Chosroes, Heraclius, invasion of Jerusalem. The only exception is the totally incorrect part about Philip and Jerome. This does not affect the main story however - most of Pelayo's chronological errors are due to the introduction of historical people out of place. The actual details of the story of the ark all fit in with known history.

Pelayo also made a compilation of other historical chronicles, adding his own work in the middle and changing things when they were not to his liking. There are various manuscripts containing all or part of this *corpus pelagianum*, the majority of which have never been published. Three of them (from the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid) contain the history of the ark with some details not given in the Book of Testaments. In these manuscripts we are told that the ark left Jerusalem over the Mediterranean Sea, not overland, and that it entered the Iberian peninsula via the port of Cartagena. The curious thing about these manuscripts is that the sudarium does not appear in the list of relics, although it should also be pointed out that no two lists are the same in any document.

The relics are also mentioned in other documents in the Book of Testaments, which is a collection of donations and other texts from various dates. One of these dates from 1006, a hundred years before Pelayo's time, showing that the relics were already known in Oviedo at this time. This donation begins on folio 52r of the Book of Testaments of Oviedo.

### **3. The Manuscripts from North East France and Belgium.**

Oviedo was the most important "off route" stop on the Pilgrims' Road to Santiago - the relics were actually visited by most pilgrims. The pilgrimage to Santiago was very popular from the

start in Belgium and North East France, and there must have been a special interest in Oviedo as in this small area there are four manuscripts with versions of the history of the ark and its relics. Two of them are in the town of Valenciennes, which was actually on the pilgrims' route from Belgium. The first of these manuscripts, Valenciennes 99, is important because it is at least as old as Pelayo's account, if not older. The list of relics must be from 1075 or later, the date when the ark was opened in the presence of Alfonso VI and his knight El Cid, but the text clearly states that the list is an addition to the short history. The history is in fact nothing more than a list of cities through which the ark travelled, basically coinciding with Pelayo. The places named are Jerusalem, Africa, Cartagena, Toledo and Oviedo in Asturias. The sudarium is included in the list of relics.

Another version of the history is to be found in Valenciennes 30, and also in manuscripts B 804 in the nearby town of Cambrai and manuscript II 2544 of the Bibliothèque Royale of Brussels. This version is more a religious than a historical document as it is full of supernatural events and stories of miracles. The story begins with a pagan invasion of Jerusalem, without any indication of who these pagans were. The Christians heard about the invasion before it actually happened, so two holy men, called Julianus and Seranus, put all the relics they could in a chest and left it to float away in the sea. They then went to see what had happened to it, and eventually found it in Carthage. There is no difference in Latin between Carthage in Africa and Cartagena (New Carthage) in Spain. There can be no doubt here though as we are told that this city is the most important one in Africa.

When these same pagans invaded Africa, the ark was taken to Toledo with the bodies of Julianus and Seranus, who had stayed with the ark right up till their death. Here it would seem to be the Moslems who invaded Africa, as the writer says that Africa is still under their control. The text says the ark arrived in Toledo when Ildefonso was archbishop (657 to 667), digressing to tell the miraculous story of the appearance of Mary to Ildefonso and the imposition of the casulla, a kind of shawl. When the Arabs under Tariq invaded, the ark was taken to Asturias where it remained in the mountains for 45 years. All the manuscripts then have the long and detailed story of how a demon possessed girl was cured in the presence of the ark and its relics.

The dates in this version are not coherent. The invasion of Jerusalem could be the Persian one in 614, but the invasion of Africa would have to be the Moslem one if Africa was still in their hands in the twelfth century. Jerusalem fell to the Moslems in 637 but Carthage did not fall till 698, and as the same text says the ark was in Toledo between 657 and 667, there is an obvious contradiction. All the other sources say the ark was in Africa but do not specify the city. Only these manuscripts mention Carthage. In a way this would be logical as Carthage was an obligatory

port of call in Visigothic Spain's trade routes with Africa. This would mean there was relatively easy transport between the peninsula and the city, but the dates make the stay there impossible. On top of this, the emperor Heraclius made Carthage his operation base, so at that time the ark would have been perfectly safe in the city and would not have had to be evacuated.

One thing on which almost all the different sources agree is that the ark left Toledo in 711, when Rodrigo died at the hands of the invading Moslems. Then Valenciennes 30 and Cambrai B 804 both say that the ark spent 45 years in the Asturian mountains (more specifically on Monsacro, or the Holy Mountain, still called by this name today), which would bring us up to 756, when it was supposedly taken to Oviedo. However, the city of Oviedo was not founded until five years later, in 761, when the first church was built, and houses grew up around it.

The story in these manuscripts seems too based in religious fantasy to be classed as real history. They coincide with more trustworthy sources on some points, but diverge in the majority. Köhler, who edited the text in 1897, has only scathing comments to make about it. He dismisses it as so absurd as to suppose its readers had no idea of reality. He even questions whether the author intended anyone to actually believe what he had written.<sup>6</sup> It should be remembered, however, that these manuscripts are old as far as the histories of the ark go. Two are from the twelfth century, the same century as Pelayo.

#### **4. The Chronicle of the Monk of Silos**

At the beginning of the twelfth century, probably in the year 1115, an anonymous monk from the Spanish monastery of Silos<sup>7</sup> wrote a chronicle, which is known today as the Silos Chronicle<sup>8</sup>. The writer's main objective was to tell the life of Alfonso VI, although he includes a lot of previous history as the build up to Alfonso's reign. The monk was then a contemporary of Pelayo of Oviedo, but the completely different histories of the ark show that they certainly did not use the same sources. There is no list of relics either.

The Chronicle does not specify when the ark left Jerusalem - it just says it happened when the pagans were threatening. This could be a reference to the Persian invasion under Chosroes in

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<sup>6</sup> *Revue de l'Orient Latin*, 1897, page 4, "Cependant ce récit dans son ensemble est tellement absurde, il supposerait chez celui qui l'a écrit une telle dose de confiance dans la crédulité publique, que l'on peut se demander si vraiment l'auteur avait la prétention de donner pour réels les épisodes ajoutés par lui à la légende traditionnelle".

<sup>7</sup> This is the traditional identification of the Latin *domus Seminis* as given in the text. Other places have been suggested but none of them seem as sure as Silos.

<sup>8</sup> The Latin text of chapter 28, where the history of the ark is told, can be found in Appendix IV.

614, but it is not necessarily so. The Chronicle also says that the ark went directly from Jerusalem by sea to Seville (*Hispalis*) in the south of Spain. This is totally different from Pelayo's version, and from the version in Codex Valenciennes too. There is no mention of Africa or Cartagena. This is the first time Seville is mentioned in relation to the ark, although it is possible Pelayo suggests such a stay without actually mentioning the name of the city. At least the tradition linking the relics with Seville is as old as any other. The anonymous monk says the ark was in this city for some time (*aliquot temporum spatia*) before leaving for Toledo. According to this history it was in Toledo for a hundred years (*deinde per C annos Toleti permansit*). The chronology is not easy at this point. We are told that the ark left Toledo because of the Arabic invasion of Spain, which was in 711. Even if it did not leave immediately, it must have done so very soon after as the Moorish advance was very fast and almost unopposed. This would mean that the ark had been in Toledo since 611, three years before the Persian invasion of Jerusalem. This totally contradicts Pelayo and all the other sources, which are unanimous in affirming that the ark left Jerusalem in 614.

#### **4. Lucas of Tuy.**

Lucas of Tuy was born in León some time during the middle of the twelfth century. He was priest at the church of Saint Isidoro in León, and as a member of this community he was obliged to defend the cause of Seville (Isidoro had been bishop of Seville). Lucas himself says that he visited Jerusalem, Greece, Constantinople, Tarsus, Armenia and France. On his travels he saw the supposed four nails of the crucifixion, one in France, another in Nazareth, the third in Tarsus, and the fourth in Constantinople. In 1233 or 1234 he spent Easter in Rome, and in 1239 he was named bishop of Tuy, from where he took his name.

His works include *De Miraculis Sancti Isidori* and *De altera vita fideique controversiis adversus Albigensium errores libri III*, but his masterpiece is the *Chronicon Mundi*. The date of the composition of this work cannot be placed definitely, but it must be after 1236, as this year is when the history ends, with the taking of Cordoba by Fernando III. According to B.F. Reilly<sup>9</sup>, the *Chronicon* was finished before Lucas was named bishop of Tuy in 1239.

The *Chronicon Mundi* is meant to be a Spanish reply to the great universal histories that were so popular at the time in Europe. Lucas' aim was to bring Isidoro's historical work up to the present.

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<sup>9</sup> *Sources of the Fourth Book of Lucas of Tuy's Chronicon Mundi*, in *Classical Folia* XXX.2, 1976.

It is strange that such an important work has only been published once, in Volume IV of *Hispania Illustrata*, an enormous effort with more than 4,000 pages, printed in 1608 and edited by Andreas Schott. The age of this work makes the *Chronicon* very difficult to even see.

The part of Lucas' text about the ark and the relics can be found on page 74 of Schott's edition. It gives the following information. "When the terror of the Gentiles was pressing, in the time of Mohammad, the false prophet, the ark was taken by boat from Jerusalem to Seville. Then it stayed in Toledo for 95 years, and when Toledo was attacked by the Moors, Pelayo took the ark of God and took it to Asturias through hidden places. As has already been said, King Alfonso put it in the church at Oviedo with much honour and the relics of many other saints".

The similarity to the Silos Chronicle is immediately visible, although Lucas has improved some of the less acceptable elements. He omits the ridiculous detail of the trip from Toledo to Asturias by sea, but does not mention any stay in Africa or entry in Spain via Cartagena. What might seem to be a reference to the Moslem conquest of Jerusalem instead of the Persian one turns out not to be so on closer inspection. Lucas says the ark left Jerusalem in the times of Mohammad, but this does not mean the Arab conquest of Jerusalem, as Mohammad lived from 570 to 632, and Jerusalem fell in 638. In fact, the date of the Persian invasion is what is meant, as 614 was definitely within what would be called the times of Mohammad. Lucas does not say it was the followers of Islam who were responsible for the ark's flight from Jerusalem, but just "pagans".

We have already seen that the Silos Chronicle's chronology is impossible, as a stay in Toledo of 100 years implies that the ark entered this city in 611, three years before the Persian invasion of Jerusalem. Lucas, like the majority of sources, agrees that the ark left Toledo in 711, due to the imminent approach of the victorious troops of Tariq. He seems to realise that a stay of 100 years in Toledo does not fit in with what he himself has written (the ark leaves Jerusalem in 614 and leaves Toledo in 711), so he changed the text of the Silos Chronicle. However, the slight change to 95 years does not solve the situation. If the ark left Toledo in 711, then a stay of 95 years means it went there in 616, which hardly gives time for coming to Spain, spending some years in Seville and going to Toledo. It looks like a useless change on Lucas' part, as it does not really improve the Silos Chronicle's defective chronology. Consequently, Lucas of Tuy has never been considered a trustworthy source for the history of the ark and its relics.

The detailed study of the manuscripts of the *Chronicon Mundi*, however, reveal a different picture. Folio 58r of the thirteenth century manuscript at Salamanca (2248) and the relevant unnumbered folio of Seville 58-4-43 both clearly read 75 years, not 95, as does Madrid Biblioteca Nacional 10442. Seville 58-1-2 has 25, but this is a clear mistake for 75, as in Latin it involves nothing more than the omission of one letter - XXV for LXXV. The reading of 95 years has led most investigators of the sudarium's history, myself included in my first book on the topic, to think of Lucas as something of a lesser authority on the matter. This situation should now change, thanks to establishing the true reading of the manuscripts.

If the ark was really in Toledo for 75 years, and it left this city in 711, then this gives us 636 for the move. 636 was the year when Isidoro, the great bishop of Seville, died, and Toledo displaced Seville as the ecclesiastical centre of Spain. In the same year, Justus, bishop of Toledo, died, and was succeeded by Eugenius, who died ten years later, in 646. When Eugenius died, he was succeeded by another Eugenius, known for his poetry. The year 636 was the perfect time for the ark and its relics to be taken from Seville to Toledo. Lucas of Tuy can be accepted as a valuable witness for the history of the ark of Oviedo.

It also seems unlikely that Ildefonso took the ark from Seville to Toledo in 657, as even his stay in Seville has recently come under some doubt. The only source to say he studied there is the Life by Cixila, which is not the most trustworthy witness. Even if it were true, Isidoro died in 636, so Ildefonso would not have been in Seville as his disciple in 657. 636 seems much more likely for the transfer from Seville to Toledo.

### **Reconstruction of the Ark's History.**

The following reconstruction is based on historical sources and fits in with what is known from other sources that have nothing to do with the ark or its relics. It is not therefore tradition, it is history and should be accepted as such by any serious investigator, whatever his religious beliefs may be. On the other hand, this history cannot be used to justify any belief, Catholic, protestant or whatever. Even though the history of the sudarium is inextricably linked up with Jesus and consequently with religious belief, the history per se of the relic has nothing to do with anything except history. The documents in question proceed from various countries at different times, and they coincide in the most important details. What follows can, therefore, be considered as genuine history.

The medical and forensic studies carried out on the cloth have shown how the sudarium was used on a body that had been crucified. The coincidences with the Shroud of Turin are highly significant, especially the blood group and the stains of blood shed in life and that shed after death, which are perfectly compatible between the two cloths. This suggests very strongly that the body in question was that of Jesus of Nazareth.

The gospel of John, which apart from being a document of faith is also one of history, tells us that the sudarium was found in the bodyless tomb, not with the other cloths but apart from them. Both the Life of Saint Nino of Georgia and the comments of Ishodad of Merv tell us that it was the apostle Peter who took charge of the sudarium, whereas the details about what happened to the Shroud are more confused. The sudarium stayed in the city of Jerusalem after Peter had gone elsewhere, and the cave where it was kept at the end of the sixth century was visited by a group of pilgrims from Piacenza in Italy around the year 570. They did not actually see the cloth, but they were told it was there, possibly already inside the ark, as this had been built at some time in the first century.

The sudarium was in Jerusalem for six centuries, but when the king of the Persians, Chosroes II, invaded and conquered the city in 614, some Christians fled with the ark and some relics. This flight is attested in Pelayo (both in the Book of Testaments and in the *corpus pelagianum*), Lucas of Tuy, Valenciennes 99, and the group formed by Valenciennes 30, Cambrai B 804, and Brussels II 2544 (old Cheltenham 299). The flight was justifiable, as amongst other things Chosroes was searching for relics, in full knowledge of the importance they had for the Christians.

The ark left Jerusalem by sea, with a possible stop in a city on the north coast of Africa. The city is only named in the group formed by Valenciennes 30, Cambrai B 804, and Brussels II 2544 (old Cheltenham 299) - and the name given is Carthage. This is not possible as the Persians conquered whichever city it was where the ark stopped, and Carthage was not conquered by the Persians. If there was a stop in an African city, it was most probably Alexandria, which was in fact conquered by Chosroes in 616, two years after the invasion of Jerusalem.

Did the ark enter Spain via Cartagena or was it taken directly to Seville? Cartagena seems a logical point to enter, as it was a very important city at the time, and this would explain the confusion of Valenciennes 30, Cambrai B 804, and Brussels II 2544, which mention Carthage. Both Carthage and Cartagena have the same name in Latin, as Cartagena was in fact New

Carthage. If the ark stopped in Africa, the entry into Spain would have been in 616, if there was not, it probably entered the peninsula in the same year it left Jerusalem, 614.

If it did enter via Cartagena, it went from there to Seville, according to almost all the sources and the laguna in Pelayo. It was there during the most prosperous years for the city, under the bishop Isidoro. When he died in 636, Toledo became the most important ecclesiastical city in Spain, with three significant archbishops, the two Eugenius and Ildefonso. The ark stayed in Toledo for 75 years, until the invasion of the peninsula by Tariq in 711. The Arabs destroyed the forces of the last Gothic king Rodrigo and went immediately to Toledo, provoking the mass exodus of Christians to the safer north of the country. The ark was then hidden for approximately half a century in the mountains of Asturias, not in one place all the time, but moving from one to another.

The ark has most probably been in Oviedo since the first founding of the city in 761, in which case it must have been hidden again in the mountains during the Arab invasion of Asturias in 794, and from where it went back it has been in Oviedo right up to today, in the cathedral of San Salvador. Alternatively, it could have been in the mountains around Oviedo up till the year 794, when the Arabs were definitively thrown out of the city. It was probably closed from 614 up to the official opening in 1075, although there might have been some previous attempts to open it.

One very important point that should be mentioned at this stage is the pollen analysis of the sudarium. Dr Max Frei took samples from the cloth and analysed them, and after he died his findings were confirmed by Spanish palynologists. There are present on the cloth species typical of Palestine, North Africa, the Mediterranean area in general, and of course Asturias, and nothing to link the sudarium to either Constantinople or any other area. These findings support the historical stages of the cloth's travels as expressed above.

So as I said at the beginning of this paper, the history of the sudarium is well recorded, with none of the name changes or lost years that we find in that of the Shroud. Given the undeniable relationship that links the two cloths, the conclusions for the history and age of the Turin Shroud are clear to everyone.