

Introduction

The Shroud of Turin as we know it today was born out of an act of piety met by a gesture of kindness. In 1578 Carlo Borromeo, the cardinal and archbishop of Milan, embarked on a pilgrimage to worship the fourteen-and-a-half-foot linen sheet believed to have been used in the preparations for Jesus Christ's entombment. Borromeo's commitment to undertake this voyage, done in gratitude for surviving the devastating plague that ravaged his city in 1576, is indicative of his trust in the Shroud's intercessory power. In an effort to spare the frail cardinal the arduous journey all the way to the holy cloth's resting place at the Sainte-Chapelle in Chambéry (now France), its owner, Duke Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy, sent the Shroud across the Alps to Turin, the new ducal capital since 1563 and conveniently positioned halfway to Borromeo's Milan. The Shroud arrived in Turin with great fanfare on September 14, 1578, and some weeks later the cardinal began his march on foot toward the city. Borromeo's passionate reverence for this sacred artifact fueled an astonishing physical and devotional stamina. Throughout his four-day journey to Turin he retreated into prolonged states of prayer while enduring discomfiting exposure and constant pain from blisters. Once he arrived in Turin on October 9, the opportunities to meditate on the Shroud further triggered his intense spiritual fervor. He was afforded a private showing, during which he repeatedly kissed and caressed the sacred cloth. Borromeo then assisted in displaying the Shroud publicly in Turin's Piazza Castello to a crowd of forty thousand adoring worshippers on October 12, and again two days later to satiate a continuing influx of pilgrims. Otherwise the cloth was kept in the cathedral, where the cardinal presided over a full spectrum of religious activities, including the Forty Hours Devotion.¹



FIGURE 1 | Girolamo and Ignazio Danti, *Ostension of the Shroud of Turin*, 1583. Galleria delle Carte Geografiche, Vatican City. Photo © Governorate of the Vatican City State –Directorate of the Vatican Museums.

Borromeo's pilgrimage proved to be a watershed for the Shroud of Turin's rapid ascent to becoming one of Christianity's most precious religious artifacts. It provided the impetus to keep the relic permanently in the new Savoy capital—thus earning it the appellation by which it is best known—and helped spur the city's transformation into a setting worthy of ducal power.² Of course, the Shroud was by then already recognized as a holy relic. In 1506 Pope Julius II designated May 4 as the Shroud's annual feast day for Savoy territories on the French side of the Alps. But in 1582, soon after its transfer to Turin, Pope Gregory XIII extended the feast to the ducal realm on the Italian side as well and authorized plenary indulgences in perpetuity to attendees at future exhibitions.³ Borromeo returned to Turin for a public showing that same year, this time joined by Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, the archbishop of Bologna.⁴ So significant were these early public ostensions to Turin's civic and spiritual identity that one of them already came to symbolize the Savoy capital city in the Vatican's Galleria delle Carte Geografiche, completed in 1583 (fig. 1).⁵ Exhibitions occurred with increasing frequency from the 1580s onward, drawing thousands of pilgrims to Turin, usually on May 4, but also on important secular feasts for the ducal family.⁶ In an effort to further incentivize pilgrimages to Turin, a Savoy secretary was dispatched to Rome on September 15, 1588, with instructions to "acquire the most comprehensive indulgences possible to whomever will visit the Most Holy Shroud of Our Savior Jesus Christ" (*Procurarete le più ampie indulgenze che saranno possibili à chi visiterà la Sant.^{ma} Sindone di N.S. Jesu Christo*).⁷

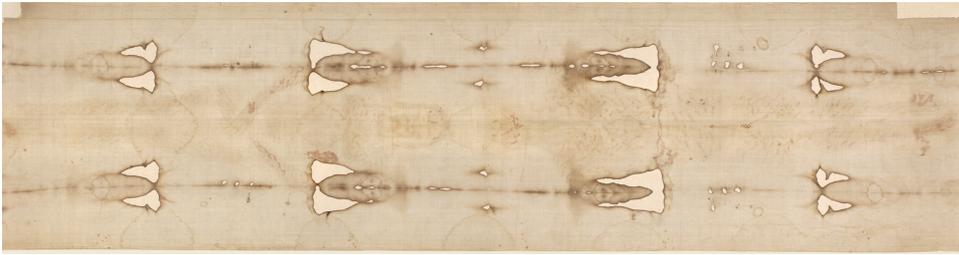


FIGURE 2 | Shroud of Turin. Cathedral, Turin. Photo by Giandurante—Copyright Arcidiocesi di Torino.

What prompted this sudden, fevered attention in the late 1500s was a religious artifact unlike any other (fig. 2). Regarded as one of the sheets that wrapped Christ's dead corpse, the Shroud of Turin features a scattering of vivid red marks that believers maintain to be drops of his blood. These provided one of the only means anywhere for worshippers to venerate Christ's bodily remains. But those marks overlay other features that made the holy sheet especially captivating as an object to be put on display: ethereal, sepia-toned stains that allegedly coalesced miraculously into the shapes of the front and back of Christ's recumbent body. In other words, the Shroud of Turin supports a direct visual manifestation of the dead Christ. Yet those faint, bloodied forms and their lengthwise, head-to-head arrangement are without peer in medieval or early modern religious imagery. As "true images" formed through direct contact, these monochromatic impressions defy the standards of pictorial clarity and mimetic naturalism governing artistic portrayals of Christ's passion. The lifeless body, veiled by a translucent haze that blends it into the cloth support, is marked by a tantalizing obscurity that hovers precariously between unmistakable presence and illusory apparition. Finally, parallel lines of scorch marks left by a fire in 1532 run alongside the Shroud's bodily imprints. The fact that these bloodstained images escaped incineration proves, for believers, this sacred object's divine protection.

One measure of the Shroud's success in conveying Christ's material and figural presence to the eyes of viewers is the raucous spectacles that near-annual public ostensions inspired for over a century after Borromeo's first pilgrimage in 1578. An engraving by Antonio Tempesta from 1613 presents a wide-angle view of Turin's Piazza Castello with huge crowds gathered on balconies and rooftops. Mounted guards control the masses clamoring to catch a glimpse of the sheet's faint image of Christ's body and blood displayed from a platform at the center (fig. 3).⁸ Documentary records further highlight repeated manifestations of unbridled excitement in enormous scale, including a reported attendance of over forty thousand in 1606; public demand for an ostension inside the cathedral after the cancellation of the usual outdoor festivities in 1646; deaths among the crowds swarming to see it in the cathedral in 1647; a gathering so large as to gridlock the piazza

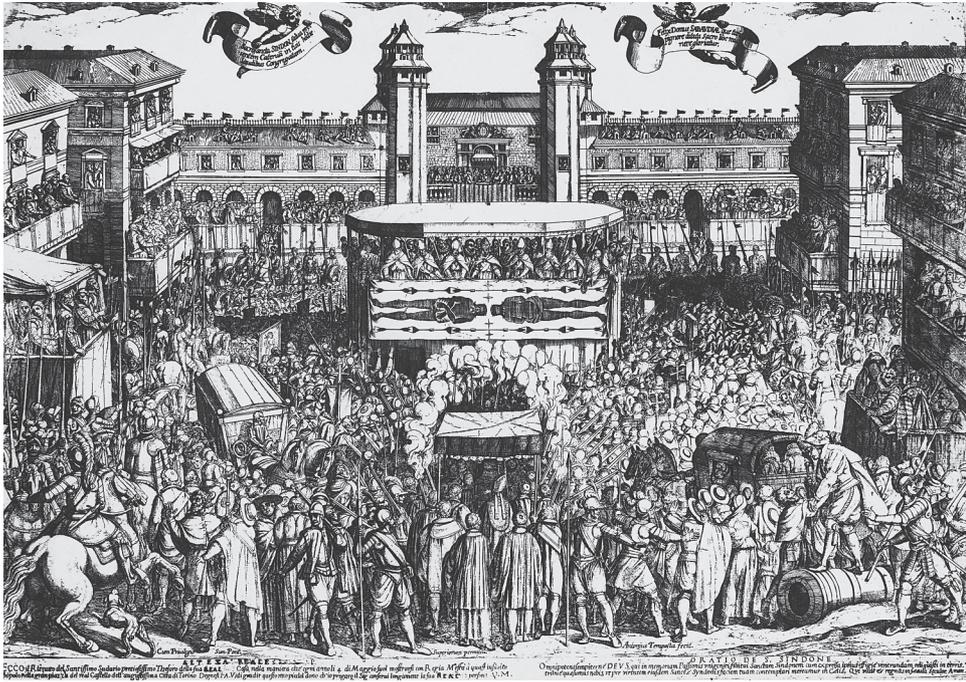


FIGURE 3 | Antonio Tempesta, *Ostension of the Shroud of Turin*, engraving, 1613. Photo: akg-images / De Agostini Picture Library.



FIGURE 4 | Frontispiece to Daniele Mallonio, *Iesu Christi Crucifixi stigmata sacrae sindoni impressa* (Venice: Baretium Baretium Bibliopolam, 1606). Photo: PBA Galleries / Dana Weise.

and surrounding streets in 1648; sixty thousand pilgrims showing up in 1653 for an exhibition moved back two days due to torrential rain;⁹ and reportedly, in 1676, a number of pilgrims that exceeded what the city could accommodate.¹⁰ Posters publicizing the 1674 and 1684 ostensions invite “all Christian faithful, foreigners and citizens alike, to partake of the sight of that holy treasure.” But they give no hint that these public events would suddenly wane after the Shroud’s installation in 1694 into Guarino Guarini’s reliquary chapel behind the cathedral choir.¹¹ After 1697 no public exhibition took place for twenty-five years, and only four are documented to have occurred in the entire eighteenth century.¹² The Shroud never recovered its former glory.

This book examines the Shroud of Turin’s status as a religious image during this period of unprecedented devotional enthusiasm from 1578 to 1694. These dates encompass the period of Catholic Reform in Italy and its aftermath, which saw ruling regimes embrace charismatic cult objects as evangelizing tools to bolster religious piety. The Council of Trent’s decree from 1563 validating images and relics propelled the Shroud’s rise to prominence, since these very categories, which scholars today too often regard as distinct, converged on the bloodstained sheet.¹³ In fact, the Shroud was one of a trio of Christ’s holy image-relics popular around that time. The Mandylion of Edessa, a cloth on which Christ miraculously imprinted his face, arrived in the hands of King Abgar of Edessa as the first “true image.” By the sixteenth century images at San Bartolomeo degli Armeni in Genoa and at San Silvestro in Capite in Rome made competing claims to be the original.¹⁴ The Veronica, the principal religious artifact in Rome, received its own impression of Christ’s face when used to wipe away blood and sweat while Christ carried the cross to the crucifixion.¹⁵ The frontispiece to Daniele Mallonio’s *Iesu Christi Crucifixi stigmata sacrae sindoni impressa* (1606) emphasizes the shared genealogies of these images as contact relics and miraculous icons. It features angels displaying the two cloths showing Christ’s face underneath the Shroud, unfurled to reveal the impressions of his entire body (fig. 4). Yet neither the Mandylion nor the Veronica achieved as widespread a public following as what the Shroud inspired after the Council of Trent, making the Savoy palladium especially ripe for prolonged inquiry into its status as an object of religious devotion in early modernity.

Scholarship on the Shroud’s historical importance only partly explains the widespread rapture witnessed at its regular public exhibitions from the late 1500s through the 1600s.¹⁶ Much attention has focused on the interweaving fortunes of the Shroud and the dukes of Savoy who owned it, highlighting the Shroud’s deployment as a dynastic relic to legitimize the political ambitions of its custodians.¹⁷ John Beldon Scott’s commanding *Architecture for the Shroud* analyzes the mechanisms by which the Savoy publicly displayed the Shroud and how those spectacles shaped Turin’s urban infrastructure and court architecture, culminating in the definitive analysis of Guarini’s Chapel of the Holy Shroud.¹⁸

However, the very image-bearing relic whose ardent promotion established a major public cult remains underexamined. Art historians who are otherwise attracted to issues involving images and the religious devotion they arouse in this period have paid curiously scant attention to the Shroud's bloodstained impressions of Christ's body. Consequently, while we know much about the rituals and spectacles that the House of Savoy staged to promote the Shroud for dynastic and devotional gain, we know far less about how devout followers squared their regard for this unusual religious artifact with the multitude of sacred relics and images that routinely generated fervent expressions of piety.

This book offers the first examination of the Shroud of Turin from the vantage of art history to demonstrate how it was understood as a sacred image in the era of its rapidly expanding public cult. In particular, these chapters reveal how believers defined it foremost as an artful relic crafted by God, and in so doing asserted a reliance on early modern artistic culture unnoticed by the discipline of art history and its modern scholarship. The major contribution of this book, therefore, is a recovery of the foundational formulation of what remains one of Christianity's most controversial religious objects. This, in turn, encourages us to reexamine the contentious authenticity for which it is best known today, but this time in historicized terms as an early modern sacred image.

Art History and the Shroud

The hegemonic canon of the history of art has left little room for the Shroud of Turin to be recognized as the preeminent religious image that it once was. Yet several treatises on the Catholic defense of images and other mainstream works of art theory enshrine the Shroud's significance as an early modern sacred image in its own right and regard it as a quintessential justification for the validity of Christian imagery generally.¹⁹ Most prominent is Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (1582), which signals the Shroud's place within a taxonomy of diverse types of devotional imagery that includes but is hardly limited to those most readily embraced by art history. Paleotti established eight criteria for classifying sacred images, the second of which pertains to "anything that came in physical contact with the body or face or some other part of our Lord or one of his saints and that retained an impression of the shape of the body, or of whatever part was touched." For examples of this criterion he turned to the Veronica and "the sacred linen shroud in which the blessed corpse of our Savior was wrapped after death, leaving an imprint that is still visible today on the cloth, which is safeguarded with great veneration in the dominions of the Duke of Savoy."²⁰ While Paleotti's only direct reference to the Shroud of Turin thus pertains to it being a contact image, it also satisfied his fourth and fifth criteria for defining sacred images by virtue of its status as an

acheiropoieton (image not made by human hands) and by its propensity to perform miracles.²¹ The Shroud's promoters eagerly publicized the latter, and in so doing deployed what was perhaps the most potent strategy for highlighting the special power accorded to certain religious images. Testimonies for the Shroud's miraculous qualities granted an agentive legitimacy, aligning it with other miracle-working images that benefited from Counter-Reformation attitudes toward the sanctity of religious artifacts.²² Even so, those thaumaturgic powers were not the primary cause of the Shroud's cult appeal. Instead, it garnered significant authority from its visible mediation of Christ's body—that is, from its function as an image.

Of course, the Shroud's pictorial style and material composition—amorphous, monochromatic, and blood-flecked stains of a human corpse, lingering on the brink of abstraction—have understandably defied categorization alongside even the most marginalized ranks of medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque art. But its exclusion from art history on those grounds has effectively silenced its early modern devotional significance as an image. Hans Belting's notorious definition of the Renaissance as the “era of art,” during which appreciation for an image's artistry overshadowed its cult power, is reflective of the discipline's schematic framework, which tends to disqualify objects like the Shroud from being relevant subjects of consideration.²³ The merits and distortions of Belting's characterization of the Renaissance are open to debate. But less disputable is that as the field has evolved religious objects to which traditional authorial and stylistic analyses do not apply have been omitted. Granted, recent scholars have recognized the integral importance of supposedly miraculous icons to the image culture of early modernity on account of their function instead of their artistic merits. Yet however much those humble, often anonymously made objects stray from the period's advanced standards of artistic style, as panel paintings and carved statuary they still resemble the types of objects traditionally accommodated by the discipline enough as to merit inclusion.²⁴ The Shroud, meanwhile, made no such claims to artistic convention.

The rare art historians who do take notice of the Shroud and its brethren of true-image relics, such as the Veronica, often prioritize those objects' incongruity with conventional images due to their having purportedly captured the formal and material composition of their subjects through miraculously mechanical rather than artistic means. Scholars have effectively created a distinct class for them as the antithesis of the representational functionalities of images more readily recognized for their artistic craft. For example, such preoccupations resulted in a foundational work of scholarship defining true images of the Holy Face as the “paradox of representation” in its very title.²⁵ Georges Didi-Huberman has elevated “resemblance by contact,” the “auratization of the trace,” and the “dialectic of proximity and distance—that double distance of the auratic object” as the issues of most salient concern for the Veronica and Shroud.²⁶ Didi-Huberman's *Confronting*

Images does criticize the discipline for equating the history of art with the history of artists and a privileging of craftsmanship that results in the exclusion of image-relics claiming alternative etiologies. But in so advocating for the Veronica and Shroud's relevance, he nonetheless emphasizes their essential difference as "impossible objects and unthinkable forms."²⁷ For Belting, similarly, the inherent discrepancy between the "concept of a portrait and that of a mechanical trace" means that "Christ's icon is a contradiction in itself, even an impossibility."²⁸ No other images in the early modern artistic canon earn such treatment.

This attention by influential voices in the field has helped signal the importance of these sorts of objects to the image culture of early modernity. But their modes of analysis, often laced with elaborate jargon, simply reinforce paradoxicality as the primary allure of some of the most devotionally potent of Christian artifacts. This creates a closed loop that leaves the images themselves languishing in an unresolved categorical impasse awkwardly detached from the mainstream currents of the culture that nurtured their prominence as vehicles for religious devotion. Consequently, I question the usefulness of these treatments for understanding how or why the Shroud of Turin generated such a passionate cult following. "Paradox," "contradiction," and "impossibility" might be clever and perfectly apt philosophical constructs to characterize its undeniably unique ontology. But early modern viewers did not regard it in such terms, and neither should scholars of early modern religious imagery.

Instead of merely reinforcing the Shroud's distinctiveness, a major preoccupation of this book is also to demystify the Savoy relic by seeing it as a special example of something commonplace in the history of art—namely, an image of Christ that inspired widespread religious devotion. In order to accommodate the Shroud of Turin, art history must recognize the fabric's bloodstained representation of Christ's body as one of many sacred images existing alongside a host of artistic masterpieces, miraculous icons, and humble pictures alike—not unlike the varieties of sacred images classified by Paleotti's *Discorso*. Art historians thus need to protect the Shroud from being defined too narrowly against the restricted canon of their own discipline. In this regard I am indebted to the path that Lisa Pon pioneered for art-historical inquiry when she ventured outside the traditional boundaries of the discipline to examine the miraculous fifteenth-century woodcut of the *Madonna of the Fire*. Pon settled on an approach that "embeds [it] not within any closed category of similar objects"—because none exist—"but within a rich miscellany of things and places."²⁹ Similarly, the present book does not frame the Shroud's early modern relevance through comparisons to traditional religious imagery alone. Neither do conventional methodologies of connoisseurship, stylistic attribution, formal and technical analyses, or iconographical identification feature in the investigations that follow.³⁰ Instead, this book marks the Shroud's myriad connections to the period's devotional image culture in ways that counteract art history's disciplinary myopia. In the process,

this new art-historical treatment dislodges the Shroud from the grip of modern curiosity. It subverts paradigms of what is real and what is artificial that have both contributed to its exclusion from the history of art and distorted its function as a religious image.

Authenticity and Its Discontents

The Shroud of Turin's current popular notoriety has long eclipsed its acclaim as a Christian image at the height of its fame. Rapturous demonstrations of piety toward an image—and toward this image in particular—seem antiquated, superstitious, and naive to secular viewers. Meanwhile, certain audiences burden the Shroud with the weighty and highly contentious obligation of proving or disproving religious belief. Most notably, evangelical debates over authenticity that overwhelm the Shroud's existing literature persist even after the carbon 14 analysis in 1988 established the cloth's origins as no earlier than the thirteenth century.³¹ To be clear, this book takes no position on that matter one way or another. It does not declare the Shroud of Turin to be either a “fake” work of art or a “real” relic. What it does do is hold these rampant modern preoccupations with authenticity at arm's length on account of their irrelevance for understanding the historical significance of this mysterious object. What one believes now changes nothing about prevailing attitudes centuries ago.

In fact, by 1578 the Shroud's status as a sacred image had emerged from over two centuries of periodic episodes that addressed, questioned, and ultimately framed authenticity on its own terms. Documentary records securely trace the cloth's existence at least as far back as the mid-1300s, when the chivalric knight Geoffroi de Charny reportedly displayed it to pilgrims in the collegiate church of Lirey, France.³² Even then doubts over the materiality of the Shroud's blood-stained imagery and its means of coming into being frustrated universal agreement on the relic's claims to legitimacy. The notorious late fourteenth-century memorandum of Pierre d'Arcis, bishop of Troyes, to the antipope Clement VII alleged that the cloth was the work of a forger and that the unnamed artist responsible had even admitted it to be “cunningly painted . . . a work of human skill and not miraculously wrought or bestowed.” D'Arcis then pleaded for the pope to end its public display.³³ While Clement evaded any definitive position on the issue of the Shroud's credibility as a relic, his bulls from 1390 reinstating its exhibitions still stipulated that it be declared a mere representation—that is, an image, a work of art.³⁴ Audiences in the 1400s evidently continued to consider the Shroud a mere proxy for Christ's actual burial cloth.³⁵ Further insistence on the inherent artificiality, and hence inauthenticity, of the Shroud comes from a Benedictine monk at the abbey of Saint James in Liège who in 1449 described it as a sheet “in which the form of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was admirably painted” and done so in such a way that the bloody wounds appear as if freshly

administered.³⁶ The context for those doubts was the burgeoning market for spurious relics. Certainly one as provocative as the Shroud, whose primary features are unmentioned in the Scriptures, would alert the suspicion of bishops hoping to attract pilgrims to their churches and who were justifiably skeptical of the tactics used by others to draw attention to their own. But it also reveals distrust of devotional objects that could too easily be dismissed as man-made, artificial, and therefore fake.

The eventual acceptance of the Shroud of Turin's authenticity is due in part to the power and influence of its owners. Upon acquiring the Shroud in 1453, the House of Savoy combated the relic's reputation as a symbol or representation through a concentrated campaign to promote it as a holy relic worthy of a widespread cult.³⁷ In 1466 Duke Amadeus IX and Duchess Yolande of Valois requested that Pope Paul II approve plenary indulgences to anyone visiting the ducal chapel housing the Shroud on Good Friday and during its exhibitions.³⁸ In 1471 Pope Sixtus IV published *De Sanguine Christi*, first written in 1462, which officially defined the Savoy relic as the "shroud in which the body of Christ was wrapped when he was taken down from the cross, . . . and is colored red with the blood of Christ." It goes on to affirm the authenticity of its traces of Christ's blood beyond any shadow of doubt.³⁹ In 1506 Pope Julius II approved Duke Charles III's request to designate May 4 as the Shroud's feast day and establish the liturgy for its Mass, thereby sanctioning a public cult. Moreover, Julius's reaffirmation that the Shroud's threaded fibers trap traces of true blood muted earlier doubts over its authenticity.⁴⁰ The Shroud's cult expanded in the following decades through numerous public processions and exhibitions as well as increased indulgences offered to those undertaking pilgrimages.⁴¹

One event more than any other consecrated the Shroud's authenticity as a sacred object. On the night of December 3 in 1532 a fire began that devastated the Sainte-Chapelle in Chambéry. It narrowly missed consuming the Shroud but left a permanent reminder in the form of parallel rows of scorches caused by a molten piece of the relic's silver casket dropping onto a corner of the cloth folded up inside.⁴² The bloodstained images of Christ's body were barely touched. Accounts of this fire all credit its survival to a miracle and regard the burn marks as signs of divine protection. The Shroud's subsequent fortunes would remain inflected by this fire and the opportunity it afforded to proclaim the cloth's authenticity. Pope Clement VII dispatched Cardinal Louis de Gorrevod to investigate the Shroud's survival, which the cardinal affirmed in a report filed in 1534.⁴³ This escape from annihilation would play a major role in the Shroud's hagiography as a sacred object after its transfer to Turin. Carlo Borromeo's confessor, Francesco Adorno, who joined the cardinal on his pilgrimage in 1578, characterized the fire as having been mysteriously impeded when it reached the delineated image of Christ's body.⁴⁴ Filiberto Pingone's *Sindon Evangelica* (1581) more explicitly signaled the burn marks as an "eternal testimony of the miracle" of the Shroud's survival.⁴⁵

At the same time, skeptical Protestants turned their sights on the Shroud as evidence for fraudulent church practices. Just a decade after the Chambéry fire, John Calvin revived suspicions that the Shroud was a human forgery. His *Treatise on Relics* (1543) discredited the Shroud alongside a host of other ostensibly original burial sheets at Carcassonne, Aachen, Trier, and Besançon. “For whoever admitted the reality of one of these sudaries shown in so many places,” Calvin reasoned, “must have considered the rest as wicked impostures set up to deceive the public by the pretense that they were each the real sheet in which Christ’s body had been wrapped.”⁴⁶ Even after the 1578 exhibition the Shroud’s problematic reconciliation with Gospel accounts of the linens found in Christ’s tomb provoked some hushed suspicions concerning the cloth’s authenticity (discussed in chapter 1). But these hardly encumbered the Shroud’s meteoric rise to prominence. A treatise written in 1587 by Agostino Bucci confidently proclaimed the Shroud’s authenticity on the bases of its matching ancient descriptions of Christ’s physiognomy, the miraculous works it performed, and, vaguely, the authorization of the church.⁴⁷ From the late 1500s on, therefore, the Shroud’s authenticity was as broadly accepted as ever thanks to persistent Savoy promotion, regular ecclesiastical endorsements, the fortuitous survival of a fire, and, we must allow, Counter-Reformation propaganda that brandished the preservation of a prestigious relic as a sign of Catholic triumph.

Importantly, the conceptualization of the Shroud as a religious image from the late 1500s through 1600s offers an alternative to the unwavering opposition of artifice and authenticity that marks the debates still waging today over its credibility. Since the early twentieth century, physicians, botanists, chemists, physicists, forensic investigators, and others have used the Shroud’s physical properties to advance theories crediting the mysterious image to painterly, natural, or even supernatural forces.⁴⁸ In all cases, the unquestioned premise that an artful image is a fake relic revives the basis for fourteenth- and fifteenth-century doubts. Studies of the Shroud’s blood most pointedly reinforce this paradigm. For example, Walter McCrone found traces of iron oxide and mercuric sulfide, which make up the pigment vermilion. For skeptics, these findings substantiated a long-held belief that the image had been painted onto the cloth and is consequently a counterfeit.⁴⁹ Yet other studies of samples extracted from the Shroud claim to uncover physical characteristics consistent with hemoglobin, thereby providing evidentiary support for those wishing to see the Shroud as an authentic relic whose image results from a process of direct imprinting from Christ’s bloodied body.⁵⁰ Some even allege the presence of both substances, but nevertheless uphold blood as a marker of originality and paint as a sign of more recent artificial intervention.⁵¹ Consequently, for modern observers, to recognize signs of artfulness is to discredit the Shroud’s authenticity by arguing that it is a medieval work of art—either one crafted as a deliberately deceptive forgery, or one painted as an innocent prop for Easter liturgies and only later misunderstood to

be the original.⁵² However, such treatments of artifice as the antithesis to authenticity frame the Shroud very differently than audiences did in the late 1500s and 1600s.

12

An Artful Relic

Recognizing the Shroud's authenticity as a relic of Christ's body in early modern terms also reveals its unexpected relevance to art history, and by consequence the discipline's schematic inadequacy for detecting how viewers then regarded objects of devotion they accepted as real. This book addresses the point where the issues of artifice and authenticity intersect by demonstrating how the Shroud came to be defined as an artful relic. Supporters did not believe that the Shroud originated in performances of artistic craft. And yet the artistic culture of Renaissance and Baroque Italy still provided an epistemological frame through which to understand the bloodstained image as both a verifiable relic of Christ's body and a divine painting attributed to God's artistry. In other words, seemingly routine conceptions of pictorial artifice promoted rather than negated the Shroud's authenticity. They offered broadly comprehensible ways to attribute the origins of this extraordinary image to sacred artistry, articulated a resurrection theology that accounts for the existence of a bloodstained body image on Christ's burial cloth as an artfully authored (and authoritative) image, and provided the means, through painted and printed reproductions, by which the Shroud could be worshipped in absentia. All the while, the Shroud emerges as a devotional image of uncommon multivalence—a divinely crafted work of art, a true icon, and a material relic of Christ's passion.

The conclusions advanced in this book concerning the Shroud's standing as an artful relic result from the close study of two bodies of material produced between 1578 and 1694 to perpetuate its cult following. First, its burgeoning popularity catalyzed the publication of printed texts promoting its status as one of Christianity's preeminent devotional relics. Duke Emanuele Filiberto commissioned Filiberto Pingone to draft the first official history of the Shroud, *Sindon Evangelica* (1581).⁵³ Alfonso Paleotti followed with his *Espliatione del sacro lenzuolo ove fu involto il signore* (1598; revised 1599), which became, in the words of one scholar, the Shroud's first "best-seller."⁵⁴ These two texts, the first historical and devotional treatises on the Shroud, respectively, inspired scores of others throughout the 1600s in an expansive range of genres that included songs and poems; sermons, homilies, and panegyrics; theological discourses; forensic analyses; and even a major work of art theory by Giambattista Marino.⁵⁵ Second, a variety of graphic reproductions of the Shroud in the form of small printed images, some of which were souvenirs distributed to pilgrims during public ostensions, as well as full-size painted reproductions, furnished especially direct experiences replicating encounters with the original. Through an analysis of these textual and pictorial presentations, this book reveals for the first time the

persistence with which conceptions about art and artifice not only shaped understanding of the Shroud of Turin but also reinforced its veracity as a relic. The published texts record how technical and philosophical speculations on the nature of images, their aesthetic properties, and their artistic formation informed theories on how the Shroud came into being. Meanwhile, the Shroud's printed and painted copies merge strategies for pictorial presentation with period practices of copying to mediate devotional access to the original.

These textual and visual materials concoct the Shroud's identity as an artful relic by synthesizing three categories of devotional objects. First, writers and artists both portrayed it as the definitive devotional icon from which one could rehearse the events leading to Christ's death because it preserved an authentic likeness of all the wounds on his corrupted body. Second, belief that the fabric absorbed Christ's blood through physical contact consecrated the cloth's status as a primary relic supporting traces of his corporeal matter. This privilege was conferred upon painted copies as well by being pressed against the original to absorb its sacred essence. Third, and most curious, writers signaled this hybrid icon/relic's categorical versatility through language denoting artistic practices of image making. The resulting designation of the image as a painting composed of actual blood and Christ (or God) as its artist constitutes a trope found throughout the early modern literature on the Shroud. The Shroud of Turin was conceived as a divine work of art that was both materially authentic and artfully crafted. Painted and printed copies of the Shroud parallel this understanding of the original by openly acknowledging their artificial conditions as copies while at the same time making their own claims to authenticity as objects of devotion. Therefore, the understanding of the Shroud as an alloy of art, icon, and relic revealed through the pages of this book relies on historicized conceptions of artifice. Rather than portending modern associations of artifice with counterfeit figural resemblance through human manufacture, defining the Shroud as a work of art was a means to embrace its authenticity and the material presence of Christ's body.



Chapter 1 examines the Shroud's identification as a devotional image of uncommon prestige that stems less from its miraculous abilities common to other prominent religious images than from its semiotic function as icon and index. That is, its status as an image cannot be separated from the traces of Christ's bodily matter that it contains—constituting a doubled indexicality that sets it apart from most other objects of Christian devotion. Consequently, the devotional contours of the Shroud were shaped by its myriad connections to blood relics, representations of sacred violence, the Eucharist, and the modes of spiritual engagement that resulted in static images activating visionary encounters with the divine.

Chapter 2 introduces rich new material on the early modern cult of the Shroud, in which commentators attributed the formation of Christ's body image to *Deus artifex*—God

as artist. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts uphold the Shroud of Turin as an analogy for artistic creation by applying such art-theoretical concepts as *abbozzo* (sketch), *disegno* (drawing or design), *colorito* (color), and others informing contemporary understanding of the bloody stain as an image both authentic and artificial. These identify it as a painting composed out of blood that bears indexical marks of God's artistic craftsmanship.

Tropes of artistic creation reinforced belief in the Shroud as proof of Christ's resurrection. Chapter 3 explores how commentators defined it as an artistic by-product of Christ's revivification by deploying terminology describing the cloth's bloodstained image as a subtractive painting—residual traces left behind after the resurrecting body partially reabsorbed its discharged fluids. These treatments align Christian theology of the resurrection with early modern theories of artistic facture. In particular, the infusion of living spirit into Christ's physical restoration resonated at this time with theories of artistic animation that bestowed upon artists the power to enliven incarnate bodies.

The final two chapters contribute to the interest in copies and reproduction in the wider discipline of art history by examining dozens of printed and painted copies of the Shroud of Turin. Chapter 4 treats these copies as discursive commentaries on the authority of artistic productivity and its role in disseminating an image whose own generation is credited to divine creation. Such efforts to propagate the Shroud through reproductive media put pressure upon its singularity as a cult object. Multiplied copies draw complex and even contradictory relationships to the original they reproduce, mediating between viewer and prototype while also asserting their own autonomous authenticity as devotional objects. Chapter 5 focuses on a particular copy dating to the early 1600s at the Church of Santissimo Sudario in Rome. Though openly acknowledged in contemporary sources to be a painted reproduction, it is distinguished for being the only one at that time put on permanent display at the altar of a church. Its lavish Baroque framing device, coupled with the belief that it had touched the original Shroud, bestow the same qualities of the artful relic attributed to the original and offer new insights into the multivalent relationship between copies and originals in seventeenth-century Rome.

These chapters extend the traditional domains of art history by incorporating within prominent scholarly discourses an image-bearing cloth whose origins and material composition might seem contradictory to the works of art normally examined in the field. The Shroud of Turin, explored here as a religious image that inspired a widespread devotional cult, emerges as an object both peculiar and representative of its context within early modern Christianity. This book thus charts an unexpected compatibility of artifice and authenticity in an object conceptually regarded as a painting without diminishing its authority as the material remains and true image of Christ's body.