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Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

Clothing the Sacred

A Study of Ecclesiastical Vestments from Late
Medieval Scandinavia c. 1400 – 1550

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Thesis for the Degree of
Philosophiae Doctor
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Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth,

Trondheim September 2020

Abbreviations:

DI	Diplomatarium Islandicum: <i>Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn</i>
DN	Diplomatarium Nowegicum, 22 vols,
DNM	National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen
LCCM	Linköping Castle and Cathedral Museum, Sweden
LCM	Lund Cathedral Museum
MNAC	Museu Nacional d' Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain
NFM	Norwegian Folk Museum, Oslo, Norway
NMI	Natinal Museum of Iceland, Reykjavik, Þjóðminjasafn Íslands
NMN	National Museum, Oslo, Norway
NRB	Nils Ragnvaldssons beretning (Nils Ragnvaldsson's account) 1489
NTNU	NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet Trondheim, Norway
ÖLM	Örebro Läns Museum, Örebro, Sweden
KHM	Kulturhistorisk Museum UiO, Oslo, Norway
RN	Regesta Norvegica
SDHK	Diplomatarium Suecanum. Svenskt Diplomatariums hovudkartotek over medeltidsbreven
SHM	Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm, Sweden
SM	Smålands Museum, Vaxjö, Sweden
ST	<i>Sjælinna Thrøst: Første delin aff the bokinne som kallas Sjælinna Thrøst</i>
TM	Telemark Museum, Skien, Norway
TreMa	Musée provincial des Arts anciens du Namurois-Trésor d'Oignies, Namur
UCM	Uppsala Cathedral Museum, Sweden
UMB	Bergen University Museum, Sweden
UiT	The Arctic University Museum of Norway, Tromsø, Norway
VM	Västergötlands Museum, Skara, Sweden
VF	Voss Folk Museum

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1 Introduction

On the predella wing of a fifteenth-century altarpiece still *in situ* in Århus Cathedral, Denmark, a small and densely populated scene of the Mass of St Gregory reveals the multitude and complexity of late-medieval ecclesiastical textiles (fig. 1.1). The focal point, a full-sized figure of Christ appearing on a lavishly dressed altar table, is emphasised by a diagonal axis leading our eyes from the kneeling deacon, to the celebrant, towards the miraculous presence of Christ. A red fabric with gold ornaments, most likely a costly silk or velvet, is draped over the front of the altar. A white altar cloth with blue woven or embroidered décor and openwork fringe covers the altar table, and the smaller white linen cloth used for wrapping the consecrated Host (the corporal) shrouds the gilded paten.

Both the celebrant and his assisting deacon are dressed in matching ornate vestments. Pope Gregory is vested in a voluminous white alb and a green dalmatic covered by a golden brocade chasuble embellished with a green orphrey cross at the back. The embroidered crucifix on the orphrey is framed with tiny white pearls. This crucifix orphrey echoes the focal point of the scene: the bleeding Man of Sorrows appearing on the altar table.¹ Kneeling behind the celebrant, the deacon is dressed in a costly brocade dalmatic worn over a white alb, heavily folded over his feet. A bishop dressed in his episcopal vestments stands on the left side of the clerical entourage, wearing a green dalmatic, cope with golden bands, white gloves and alb, and a mitre of white silk damask. Even his crosier is embellished by a small white and golden textile known as a crosier mantle or *sudarium*. Next to the bishop, in the middle of the composition, two cardinals can be recognized by their red robes and hats with tassels (*gardion*).

The subject of the painted panel, attributed to Lübeck artist Bernt Notke, is the miraculous Mass celebrated by Pope Gregory the Great.² This iconography, known as the Mass

¹ *Details of the Mass of St Gregory as presented in Figure 1.1, showing the vested priest and deacon before the altar.*

¹ For discussions on the Man of Sorrows in the Mass of Saint Gregory, see Caroline Walker Bynum, “Seeing and Seeing Beyond: The Mass of St. Gregory in the Fifteenth Century,” in *The Mind’s Eye. Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages.*, ed. Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 208–40.

² The Århus altarpiece was commissioned by Bishop Jens Iversen Lange (1449 – 1482) of Århus and inaugurated in the Cathedral in 1479. The monumental altarpiece with its 12 metres (39 ft) of height is one of three artworks with known attributions to the workshop of Bernt Notke (c.1440-1509). For a comprehensive study of the altarpiece see Kerstin Petermann, *Bernt Notke: Arbeitsweise und Werkstattorganisation im Späten*

of St Gregory, made its first appearance at the beginning of the fourteenth century and became highly popular during the first half of the fifteenth century.³ Appearing in a variety of genres such as painted altar wings, epitaphs, illuminated manuscripts, prints and sculpture, this prolific iconography demonstrates the extensive use of ornate textiles during Mass in a period context. However, this depicted display of costly textiles in paintings of the Gregory Mass in late-medieval Northern Europe is rarely addressed by scholarship.⁴

The lack of scholarly attention to the display and use of ornate textiles in Notke's *Mass of St Gregory* reflects a broader tendency within medieval studies, where textiles have been understudied in comparison with other works seen in the panel painting such as painted glass, architecture and altarpieces. As will be further discussed in the literature review, the larger visual, cultural and social context of ecclesiastical vestments has not been explored fully. Previous research on medieval liturgical vestments in general, and the preserved Scandinavian vestments specifically, has focused on issues of provenance, workshops and textile techniques. In contrast, this study analyses how such textiles worked to shape the experience of the sacred within late-medieval churches and cathedrals and investigates the embodied and performative role of liturgical textiles. The near absence of discussion of ecclesiastical clothing within Scandinavian medieval scholarship is due to the pejorative status of textiles within the larger field of medieval studies. In other words, the position of textiles in scholarship today belies their importance in the medieval period.

After all, a preponderance of historical evidence – textual, pictorial and material – affirms that ecclesiastical textiles were central to the medieval church and its publics.⁵ Although many vestments were lost during the Reformation and the following centuries, a substantial corpus of liturgical textiles survives from late-medieval Scandinavia. Examples of albs, chasubles, copes, altar frontals, frontlets and corporals like those depicted in the Notke panel

Mittelalter (Berlin: Reimer, 2000) 70 – 93, Søren Kaspersen, “Højalter, liturgi og andagt: Betragtninger over Bernt Notkes Alterskab i Århus Domkirke,” *Hikuin*, 26 (1999): 101–34, 203, and Erik Moltke, *Bernt Notkes Altartavle i Århus Domkirke og Tallinntavlen*, 2 vols. (København: Gads forlag, 1970).

³ On the motif of the Mass of Saint Gregory, see Esther Meier, *Die Gregorsmesse: Funktionen eines spätmittelalterlichen Bildtypus* (Köln: Böhlau, 2006), Thomas Lentes and Andreas Gormans, eds., *Das Bild der Erscheinung. Die Gregorsmesse im Mittelalter.*, vol. 3, *KultBild. Visualität und Religion in der Vormoderne* (Berlin: Reimer, 2007) and Bynum, “Seeing and Seeing Beyond”. On twelfth-century depictions of the Mass of Saint Gregory, see Aden Kumler, “Manufacturing the Sacred in the Middle Ages: The Eucharist and Other Medieval Works of Ars,” *English Language Notes* 53, no. 2 (2015): 9–44.

⁴ An exception is the insightful article on architectural elements in Mass Vestments by Barbara M. Eggert: Eggert, “Edification with Thread and Needle: On the Uses and Functions of Architectonic Elements on Medieval Liturgical Vestments and Their Representation in Contemporary Paintings of the Mass of St Gregory (13th–16th C.)” in: *In Clothing the Sacred: Medieval Textiles as Fabric, Form and Metaphor*, eds. Mateusz Kapuska and Warren T. Woodfin (Berlin: Imorde, 2015), 53 – 70.

⁵ As will be discussed later in this Introduction and throughout the following chapters.

are preserved in Scandinavian museum collections and cathedral treasuries. The importance of textiles is reflected in the considerable amount of time and money that went into their making as well as their frequent reference and discussion in liturgical texts. As blessed and consecrated liturgical objects, the textiles analysed in this study were considered sacred (*ars sacra*). Only by re-clothing the medieval church in the layers upon layers of textiles that once covered its altars, relics and bodies can we understand the richness, beauty and multivalent effects of medieval vestments. By exploring this understudied material, this dissertation aims to recover a largely lost and misunderstood aspect of medieval visual culture and visibility.⁶ Taking the abundance of liturgical textiles displayed, used and performed in Notke's painted panel as a point of departure, this study explores what liturgical textiles *accomplished* in the medieval church.

How did ecclesiastical vestments shape the experience of sacred space and sacred bodies in late-medieval Scandinavia, c 1400 – 1550? This question is central to this dissertation, which examines the complex textile layering of liturgical vestments applied to human bodies and ritual objects. In asking this question, this study echoes Mary Carruthers' prompt to move from representation to action when considering a medieval work: "In the presence of any artefact, our first question could then be not 'What is it (and what does it represent)?' but 'What is it doing (and what is it asking us to do)?"⁷ In other words, this study explores the reception and experience of medieval vestments, and the potential effects and associations such textiles might have evoked in their wearers and beholders within specific temporal and spatial contexts. The Notke panel demonstrates how textiles are performative, in that they always cover and clothe human bodies or ritual objects: the corporal cloth veiling the paten, the altar cloths and silken altar frontal clothing the altar and the layered garments vesting clerical bodies. Thus, the focus shifts from questions of production, provenance and workshops towards the role of vestments in their performative context.⁸ Vestments had *functions* as liturgical objects

⁶ The term 'visual culture' is used in this study not as a modern paradigm, but to describe the role of sight and visual perception encompassing a range of expressions such as clothing, gesture, memory, word/ image, and manuscript designs, as laid out in Kathryn Starkey, "Visual Culture and the German Middle Ages" in *Visual Culture and the German middle Ages*, ed. Kathryn Starkey and Horst Wenzel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2. For discussions of the terms 'vision' and 'visuality' in medieval studies, see the state-of-the-field article by Cynthia Hahn. "Vision" in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, 2nd ed., ed. Conrad Rudolph, (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019), 71 – 93.

⁷ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 14. Page 14. A similar distinction was made by Cynthia Hahn in her groundbreaking article on reliquaries asking the question *What do reliquaries do for relics*, which considered reliquaries not in terms of what they represent (what they are) but explored their function in terms of their intended effects on both the beholder and its contents. See Cynthia Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?," *Numen* 57, no. 3/4 (2010): 284–316.

⁸ In this study, I employ the term 'performative' simply as an adjectival form or 'performance' as is now common in medieval studies, and further discussed by Laura Weigert, "Performance," *Studies in Iconography* 33

instrumental to the performance of liturgy and ritual. However, ecclesiastical textiles also had purposes or ends beyond function (in the sense of use-function): they could move, affect and act upon their wearers and viewers and create aesthetic experiences. I argue that textiles can be understood through a framework of rhetoric and the social, visual and performative context of textile usage and experience in the medieval church. Vestments were given meaning through human actions such as rituals, consecration and use and will be explored through aspects of wrapping as indicated in the title of this study: *clothing the sacred*.

In addition to the primary aim, this study asks several additional questions: *What kind of liturgical textiles were used in churches and cathedrals across medieval Scandinavia? How did liturgical textiles affect the performance of ritual in processes of veiling and unveiling? How did the visual and material textures of vestments create an aesthetic experience?* These additional questions comprise the running strands woven throughout this study, in which multiple threads of experience, textile display, and the materiality and aesthetics of textile surfaces are examined through the lens of rhetoric.

1.1 Scope

In order to limit the scope of this study, the focus will be on late-medieval vestments from Scandinavian museum collections and cathedral treasuries ca 1400 – 1550. I define vestments in the modern sense of the word as “a garment, especially a ceremonial or official robe”.⁹ However, to *vest something* is also to cover and drape with textiles, such as the dressing of altars or the wrapping of sacred matter like relic bones or the Eucharistic Host.¹⁰ The act of vesting significantly alters the body or person acted upon, which becomes invested or endowed. The etymology from the Latin *vestīre* (to clothe) underscores the active aspect of vestments, emphasising the act of covering, draping, investing and clothing through textile wrappings.¹¹ Medieval sources employ the term *vestīre* to describe the vesting of the altar (further discussed in Chapter Four), indicating that ‘vestments’ not only denoted items of clothing but also altar textiles.¹² In this study, the medieval concept of vestments is taken to denote the totality of

(2012): 65. In this context, the performativity of medieval vestments indicates that these textiles initiated or contributed to a form of performance. As will be discussed later in this Introduction, the medieval Mass can be understood as performance.

⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “vestments, n.1” accessed online June 10, 2020, <https://www.oed.com>.

¹⁰ Extended meanings of vestments according to *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. «vestments, n.1».

¹¹ Jan Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 1080 – 1081.

¹² William Durand discusses how deacons should assist priests in adorning the altar and vesting it: “in altari, atque vestire” see William Durand, *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, ed. A. Davril and Timothy M. Thibodeau (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995) 162

liturgical textiles used to cover and clothe sacred matter, altars and clerical bodies within the medieval church. In doing so, the study seeks to bridge modern and anachronistic dichotomies between clothing and artworks that often characterise scholarship on medieval ecclesiastical textiles.¹³

In line with the broader medieval concepts of vestments, the material examined in this study encompasses altar textiles, liturgical clothing, relic wrappings, textile reliquaries and textile tomb covers. As liturgical objects instrumental to Mass, most of the textiles discussed were consecrated before use and considered sacred: *ars sacra*. The corpus of preserved medieval textiles, presented in depth later in this Introduction, will be discussed through case studies illuminating the significance of relic wrappings and tomb covers (Chapter Three), altar textiles (Chapter Four), textiles used to cover the Host and wine (Chapter Five), liturgical clothing for the priest (Chapter Six) and episcopal vestments (Chapter Seven). It is not the aim of this dissertation to provide a comprehensive survey of the preserved ecclesiastical textiles from late-medieval Scandinavia. Although an updated and transnational catalogue would prove a valuable resource for further research on this little-known material, this is well beyond the scope of the present study.

Geographically, the study has focused on areas belonging to the three archdioceses in medieval Scandinavia: Lund, Denmark (established 1104), Trondheim, Norway (the Nidaros Province, 1152/ 53) and Uppsala, Sweden (1164)¹⁴. These ecclesiastical provinces covered areas of today's Iceland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden as well as parts of Finland (fig. 1.2). In the Anglo-American world, particularly before the Second World War, 'Scandinavian' and 'Nordic' were often used interchangeably. This study uses 'Scandinavia' for present-day Denmark, Norway and Sweden in opposition to broader terms such as 'Nordic' or 'Nordic countries' which often also denote present-day Finland, Iceland and the autonomous regions of Greenland, Faroe Islands and Åland. Although the Danish province of Lund included suffragan

¹³ As will be discussed in the following chapters the *Ornamenta Ecclesiae* included a broad array of textiles, from curtains framing the altar to the small textiles wrapping relics and the Host, to clothes vesting clerical bodies. See for example Durand's discussion of *Ornamenta Ecclesiae* in Book One, Ch. 3 "On the pictures, curtains, and ornaments of the church" in William Durand, *The Rationale divinarum officiorum: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 32 – 48.

¹⁴ In the late medieval period, the Lund Province included Lund, Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, Bornholm, Dalby, Roskilde, Odense, Ribe, Slesvig, Viborg, Århus and Vestervig dioceses. Jarl Gallén, «Biskop,» in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder*, ed. Finn Hødnebo, vol. I (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1956), 618. The Nidaros Province included Trondheim (including the now Swedish area Härjedalen), Bergen, Oslo, Stavanger as well as Skálholt and Hólar in Iceland. Further information on the exclusion of suffragan dioceses of Sodor, Orkney and Gardar see footnotes below. In the late medieval period, the Uppsala Province included Uppsala, Linköping, Skara, Strängnäs, Västerås and Växjö in Sweden as well as Turku (Åbo) in Finland. Gallén, "Biskop," 619.

sees in Estonia in the thirteenth century, these were lost to the Teutonic Order in 1346 and are excluded from this present study.¹⁵ Turning to the Nidaros Province, this study has not included areas belonging to the suffragan dioceses of Kirkjuvagr (Orkney Islands including Shetland) and Suðreyjar (the Isle of Man and the Hebrides), which were transferred to the archbishop's see of St Andrews, Scotland, in 1472.¹⁶ Similarly, Greenland has not been included: although the bishopric of Garðar was part of the Nidaros province until the Reformation, connections were weak and sources suggest that there were no bishops present after the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹⁷ However, by 1450 Trondheim had strengthened its ties to the Icelandic bishoprics of Hólar and Skálholt.¹⁸ In addition to its Swedish dioceses, Uppsala Province also included the bishopric of Turku in Finland until the Reformation.¹⁹ A closer examination of the preserved Finnish vestments and written sources was beyond the scope of this study.²⁰ A few examples are included, and it is the hope that future research can further explore vestments and sources of the medieval Turku diocese.

With textiles spanning an area from Skálholt Cathedral in Western Iceland to Turku Cathedral in the East, and from Trondenes Church in Northern Norway to the Church of Our Lady, Århus, in central Denmark in the South, this study encompasses a vast geographical area with a large number of preserved textiles (see map fig. 1.2). This broad scope is necessary because few textiles are preserved from many of these dioceses. As will be discussed below, some areas almost completely lack preserved vestments or documents pertaining to ecclesiastical textiles, while dioceses like Linköping have a comprehensive cathedral treasury of textiles as well as a wealth of vestments preserved from adjacent areas such as the Vadstena

¹⁵ Revel (Tallin), Estonia, was transferred to the Teutonic Order in 1346, while Leal (Lihula) and Virland (Virumaa) were dissolved 1225. Gallén, 618.

¹⁶ The dioceses of Orkney (Kirkjuvagr) and Sodor (Suðreyjar) were transferred to the newly established Scottish archbishopric in 1472, see Barbara E. Crawford, "The Bishopric of Orkney," in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153 - 1537. Søkelys På Nidaroskirkens Og Nidarosprovinsens Historie.*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2003), 155.

¹⁷ Steinar Imsen, «Nidarosprovinsen,» in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153 - 1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie.*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2003), 15.

¹⁸ Jon Viðar Sigurðsson, «Island og Nidaros,» in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153 - 1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie.*, ed. Steinar Imsen (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2003), 134.

¹⁹ The medieval diocese of Turku (Åbo in Swedish) covered most of the Finnish peninsula. Gallén, "Biskop," 619.

²⁰ Although the inclusion of preserved textiles from modern-day Finland, which was formally part of the Kalmar Union as part of Sweden, and likewise the Baltic area in general, would have strengthened the Nordic perspective of this study the vast material and literature of such inclusions was beyond the scope of this study. It is the hope that future research can expand the arguments made in this study exploring the Finnish and Baltic material. For discussions on textiles in the wider context of the Hansa Trade and the Baltic region, see Angela Ling Huang, "Hanseatic Textile Production in 15th Century Long Distance Trade," in *Textiles and the Medieval Economy: Production, Trade, and Consumption of Textiles, 8th-16th Centuries*, ed. Angela Ling Huang and Carsten Jahnke (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), 204–15.

Monastery. The chronological parameters of the study have been similarly determined by the preserved corpus. In Scandinavian research, the periodization of *late medieval* generally extends from the aftermath of the Black Death in the 1360s to the emerging influences of the Reformation from ca 1520 – 1550.²¹ My focus on the period c 1400-1550 has been decided primarily by the material itself, which is most abundant from these years. In addition, a greater number of written sources are preserved from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, giving insight into the function, use and ‘work’ of ecclesiastical textiles within late-medieval churches.²²

Late-medieval Scandinavia was unified through common languages, politics and a shared culture, formalised with the Kalmar Union in 1319.²³ By examining textiles across national borders and focusing on the shared cultural sphere of late-medieval Scandinavia, this study challenges anachronistic notions of late-medieval vestments as parts of a national cultural heritage.²⁴ This is the first study that brings together Scandinavian ecclesiastical textiles on an equal footing. As such, it does not focus on establishing or reasserting national primacies that have long governed Scandinavian scholarship on medieval art.²⁵ At the core of this medieval culture of vestments was a shared Western European understanding built on common liturgical texts, treatises and the development of a slowly changing clerical style of vestments.²⁶ While local variations in liturgical practices, financial and material resources, and the skill of traders

²¹ In Scandinavian scholarship, the period known as late medieval is generally dated from after the Black Death (1350s) to the Reformations in the 1530s. In Scandinavia, the Reformations rather than the Renaissance represent a watershed in historical narratives. However, many vestments continued to be used and re-used in the following centuries. Still, much of the theological and spiritual meanings of vestments, and their significance in the church environment, was declining. Therefore, the Reformation marks a natural ending point to this present study. Although a small but remarkable collection of medieval textiles is preserved from before c. 1350, the majority of ecclesiastical textiles preserved in Scandinavian collection are dated from around 1400 - 1550, which represents the temporal focus of this study.

²² Textual sources will be discussed later in this Introduction.

²³ The Kalmar Union lasted more or less continuously from 1319 to 1523, but the period before Sweden left the union in 1523 was characterized by constant conflict between Sweden and Denmark. Norway remained in union with Denmark for three centuries.

²⁴ Especially relevant for this study is the ecclesiastical unification through a shared clerical culture and practice. While parish priests often received their education at the local cathedral, there are many examples of high-ranking members of the clergy with education in Northern German universities such as Rostock or Leiden.

²⁵ As pointed out by historians Birgit Sawyer and Peter Sawyer, the focus within medieval scholarship has been coloured by ideas about certain periods of national greatness. For example, since Norway lost its independence in the fourteenth century, a majority of twentieth century Norwegian scholarship focused on the medieval period before 1350. In contrast, Swedish scholarship has emphasised the late medieval period as a source of national independence and prosperity connected to Gustav Vasa’s reign (1523 - 1560), often thought of as the founder of the nation. See Birgit Sawyer and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation, Circa 800-1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 237 - 238.

²⁶ As discussed by Maureen C. Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, C. 800-1200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 9.

and craftsmen certainly influenced the diffusion of liturgical vestments in medieval Scandinavia, these textiles must be considered beyond the local and national levels. Moreover, late-medieval Scandinavia was strongly connected to northern Europe through the Hanse trading network, further demonstrating the importance of a transnational lens through which this study's objects were seen and used.²⁷

This study's acknowledgement of the mobile characteristics of textiles aligns with recent art historical efforts to re-frame local art histories as parts of a 'global' heritage.²⁸ Textiles are inherently mobile; they could easily be folded up and travel over great distances.²⁹ Therefore, textiles and textile materials are especially suitable for exploring international exchanges of artefacts and ideas. Although some of the textile materials discussed in this study, most notably wool and linen, could be produced locally, most of the fabrics travelled across great distances before ending up in Scandinavia. Thus, when discussing the reuse of Byzantine enamels in a mitre from Sweden, or Mongol silks in a chasuble from Denmark, it does not make sense to frame these discussions within the constraints of national borders.

1.2 Historiography: Previous Research on Ecclesiastical Textiles from Late Medieval Scandinavia

The emergence of textile studies as a broader field of research in Scandinavian countries at the turn of the twentieth century can be seen in the context of international currents such as the Arts and Crafts Movement. In the 1870s, William Morris promoted a revival of medieval embroidery techniques and motifs, most notably freehand surface embroidery.³⁰ Embroidery kits were sold through Morris's shop, and the new style was further encouraged through the establishment of the Royal School of Art Needlework (1872). Two years later, the society 'Hantarbetets Vänner'

²⁷ On the reach and significance of the Hanse, see Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz, "The Hanse in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: An Introduction," in *The Hanse in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz and Stuart Jenks (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1-35.

²⁸ I do not argue that Scandinavian art history is a global art history. Suzana Milevska has pointed out the absurdity of such questions, focusing on national or regional art histories in a Western/ Nonwestern or a North/South dichotomy. Rather Milevska argues that "one of the most important aims of global art history is to turn the local art histories into parts of the "global" heritage." Suzana Milevska, "Is Balkan Art History Global?" in *Is Art History Global?*, ed. James Elkins (New York: Routledge, 2007) 215. Translating and incorporating the Scandinavian material and situating it within a broader and global context, this study aims to provide a small step in that direction.

²⁹ Described by Avinoam Shalem as the 'migrant characteristic of textiles', discussed in Avinoam Shalem (ed.), *The Chasuble of Thomas Becket: A Biography* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2017) 9.

³⁰ Barbara J. Morris, *Victorian Embroidery: An Authoritative Guide* (New York: Dover, 2003), 124.

(Friends of Handicraft) was founded in Stockholm, introducing the new style of Art Needlework to Scandinavia. In the Scandinavian countries, however, the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement were mixed with nineteenth-century ideologies of nation-building and a revival of an ‘original’ and ‘national’ folk art. During this period, which coincided with the dissolution of the Union between Norway and Sweden, provenance became the primary concern for a growing field of Scandinavian art historical research on medieval textiles. Mapping preserved objects and grouping them in connection to certain workshops or masters became the *modus operandi* for studying medieval art. Recent research has pointed out how underlying nationalist ideologies influenced research, as when late medieval ‘Hanseatic’ sculpture was denigrated as an emblem of a Catholic and foreign culture and a marker of the Norwegian reign’s decline.³¹

Another important scholarly influence was the large-scale encyclopaedic surveys of medieval art initiated by antiquarian art historians working in close connection with museum collections. For the study of medieval vestments, the works of Joseph Braun hold a unique position.³² His exhaustive study of the development of liturgical vestments in Western Europe, *Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik* (1907) established a typology of vestments based on his knowledge of pictorial representations and surviving examples.³³ Although the majority of his examples are taken from collections in central Europe, Braun includes ecclesiastical textiles from medieval Scandinavia, most notably Sweden and Iceland.³⁴ Studies based on written sources also provided new information about textile terminology and the extensive use of textiles within medieval Scandinavia. Hjalmar Falk’s terminological study *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Terminologie* (1919) remains the most comprehensive record of Norse textile terms. In addition, Fredrik Wallem’s *De Islandske kirkers utstyr* (1910)

³¹ As discussed in Kristin Kausland, “Late medieval altarpieces in Norway – domestic, imported or a mixed enterprise?” (Phd. diss. University of Oslo, 2017), 11 – 12.

³² For example, his extensive survey of medieval altar vestments in Joseph Braun: *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Munich: Guenther Koch, 1924), especially volume 2. Braun also published on textile reliquaries in *Die Reliquiare des christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1940) and on liturgical garments (see footnote below).

³³ Joseph Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient: Nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1907). See also *Handbuch der Paramentik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1912).

³⁴ Although the majority of vestments discussed by Braun are from Germany, he includes examples from both Southern Europe (Italy, Spain) and Scandinavia (Sweden, Iceland).

discussed textile interiors of medieval churches by surveying several thousand Icelandic inventories.³⁵

Textile expert and curator Agnes Branting was a key figure in the reappraisal of medieval textiles in Sweden, both in the documentation, conservation and research of vestments through her renowned Pietas workshop and in the production of new ecclesiastical textiles in her textile atelier Licium.³⁶ Together with Andreas Lindblom she published *Medeltida vävnader och broderier i Sverige* (1928-29), which is still the most comprehensive survey of preserved medieval vestments in Swedish collections.³⁷ Like most of their colleagues in Scandinavian art history, Lindblom and Branting focused on provenance and workshops, and they organised their survey into separate volumes for the Swedish and imported vestments. This methodological division reflects a larger project of establishing a national art in opposition to imported artworks.³⁸ The national origins of a textile were of further importance because they were used as models for a national rebuilding and refurnishing of Scandinavian church interiors, specifically for the production of new liturgical vestments. In other words, textile research was coloured by a concern for rediscovering domestic histories and craft traditions.

An exhibition at the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History (Norsk Folkemuseum) in 1919 aimed to contribute to a revival of modern church vestments. Directed by Anders Bugge and Thor Kielland, over 180 textiles from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries were collected, documented and displayed under the heading “Altar decorations and vestments in Norway”.³⁹ Kielland was also a member of a new committee that provided both finances and art historical counsel for churches looking to acquire new vestments. This exhibition marked the starting point for a scholarly interest in medieval vestments in Norway, and was followed some twenty years later by Helen Engelstad’s *Messeklær og Alterskrud* (1942).⁴⁰ Engelstad’s publication, which built upon the 1919 exhibition catalogue, remains the only scholarly survey of medieval textiles preserved in Norwegian collections.

³⁵ Fredrik B Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen* (Kristiania: Grøndahl, 1910), Hjalmar Falk, *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Terminologie* (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1919).

³⁶ Margareta Ridderstedt, "Agnes Branting" in *Konstnärlig Kultur. Agnes Geijer och Textilforskningen*, ed. Margareta Nockert (Uppsala: Upplandsmuseet, 2015).

³⁷ Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier i Sverige*, Facsimile edition, 2 vols (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1997).

³⁸ Branting states in the foreword that later research might prove them wrong, that some textiles they classified as foreign may actually be Swedish, and that that would be a great fortune. Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier*, unpaginated.

³⁹ See the exhibition catalogue: Anders Bugge and Thor Kielland, *Alterskrud og messeklær i Norge*, (Kristiania: Norsk Folkemuseum, 1919).

⁴⁰ Helen Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud: middelalderske paramenter i Norge* (Oslo: Cammermeyers boghandel, 1941).

The next generation of textile scholars were women who combined art historical and archaeological methodologies with close knowledge of textile techniques and practice. The leading scholar in the emerging field was Agnes Geijer, who continued the work of her aunt Agnes Branting as the leader of *Pieta* and as a methodological pioneer.⁴¹ Her primary research material was medieval textiles in Sweden, but her extensive list of publications also included writing on Norwegian, Danish, Finnish and Icelandic textiles as well as international case-studies. With almost three hundred publications on textiles including editorial work, journal articles, books, reviews, literature surveys, exhibition catalogues and encyclopaedic essays, Geijer's research clearly made a significant contribution to the field in the second half of the twentieth century.⁴² She combined intimate and technical knowledge of textiles gained through innovative and collaborative conservation work with interdisciplinary scholarly approaches.

Geijer's colleagues in Norway, Sweden and Denmark shared her view of the importance of a close knowledge of textile techniques, conservation and praxis. Margrethe Hald and Marta Hoffmann focused their research on ancient textiles and weave technologies respectively, and worked with Geijer on a Nordic textile terminology.⁴³ Elsa Guðjónsson contributed with her expert knowledge of Icelandic textile terminology in a revised edition.⁴⁴ Guðjónsson established the field of textile research in Iceland during her fifty-year long career at the National Museum in Reykjavik. Her thorough work on Icelandic embroidery techniques, especially the preserved altar frontals and frontlets, provides invaluable insight into this unique textile tradition.⁴⁵ To sum up, this second wave of Scandinavian textile research focused

⁴¹ In addition to her comprehensive research and publications on the topic (see next footnote) Geijer established *The Agnes Geijer Foundation for Nordic Textile Research* (1988) supporting textile researchers. The foundation helped establish 'Textile Studies' as a field within The Uppsala University in 2003.

⁴² A complete bibliography of Agnes Geijer's publications 1928 – 1985 is published in Margareta Nockert (ed.), *Konstnärlig Kultur: Agnes Geijer och Textilforskningen* (Uppsala: Upplandsmuseet, 2015), 289 – 305.

⁴³ This initiative was part of a larger CIETA (Centre International d'Etude des Textiles Anciens) project in France, aiming to provide textile researchers with textile terms and definitions in various languages. Margrethe Hald et al., *Nordisk Textilteknisk Terminologi: med Engelska, Franska och Tyska parallelltermer* (Anciens (Lyon: CIETA, 1967)). Anne Kjellberg's article on the collaborative work of Agnes Geijer and Marta Hoffmann in establishing a cross-Scandinavian terminological framework for textile research provides fascinating information about both their scholarly work and the character of these pioneering woman researchers: Anne Kjellberg, "'Ett Idealiskt Samarbete' Agnes Geijer, Marta Hoffmann og Nordisk Tekstilteknisk Terminologi," in *Konstnärlig Kultur. Agnes Geijer Och Textilforskningen*, ed. Margareta Nockert (Uppsala: Upplandsmuseet, 2015), 131–54.

⁴⁴ Agnes Geijer, Martha Hoffmann, and Elisabeth Strömberg, *Nordisk Textilteknisk Terminologi : Förindustriell Vävnadsproduktion*, new ed. by Agnes Geijer and Marta Hoffmann (Oslo: Tanum-Norli, 1974).

⁴⁵ Elsa E. Guðjónsson, *Traditional Icelandic embroidery* (Reykjavik: Iceland Review, 1985). Elsa E. Guðjónsson, *Med Silfurbjarta Nál: Íslenskar Hannyrðakonur og Handaverk Deirra: Syningi Bogasal Þjóðminjasafns Íslands Júlí–Október 1985* (Reykjavik: Þjóðminjasafns Íslands, 1985). Elsa E. Guðjónsson, *Djótminjasafn Íslands : Íslenskir Kvenbúningar á Síðari Öldum* (Reykjavik, 1979). Elsa E. Guðjónsson, "Martinus ved Paris' port," *Konsthistorisk Tidsskrift/Journal of Art History* 59, no. 1–2 (1990): 25–28. Elsa E. Guðjónsson, *Prentuð og Öprentuð: Einkum Varðandi Íslenska Textil- og Búningasögu* (Reykjavik, 1994).

primarily on textile techniques and analysis, and established an ordered narrative into which preserved vestments could be inserted and interpreted. However, these textiles were rarely incorporated into more mainstream art historical discussions and remained within a separate field of textile studies.

Research on vestments in medieval Scandinavia has followed in the path of Agnes Geijer.⁴⁶ However, recent studies have focused less on establishing workshops and attributing works to known masters, than on the collective creative processes found in textile centres such as the Birgittine monastery at Vadstena, Sweden.⁴⁷ Moreover, the master-narratives established in the mid-nineteenth century have been revised. One such example is the re-examination of a corpus of embroideries attributed to a Swedish pearl embroiderer known as Albert Pärilstickare.⁴⁸

In the broader field of medieval art history, recent studies have increasingly discussed medieval liturgical textiles.⁴⁹ Studies of Islamic and Byzantine textiles have a longer tradition of considering issues of visual culture, meaning and historical context.⁵⁰ Within Western medieval art history, the study of vestments was energized by a new wave of publications on English embroideries in connection with the 2016/2017 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum titled *Opus Anglicanum: Masterpieces of English Medieval Embroidery*.⁵¹ Evelyn Wetter, one of the contributors, has also published extensively on the broader European context of medieval vestments in relation to issues of iconography, theological significance and

⁴⁶ However, new methods for technical analysis have opened up to new knowledge. See for example Margareta Nockert and Göran Possnert, *Att datera textilier* (Stockholm: Gidlund, 2002). Scientific and technical analysis of textiles is still crucial to the studies of medieval textiles, as demonstrated by new publications such as Eva Lindqvist Sandgren and Ingela Wahlberg, “The embroidered reliquary in Linköping Cathedral,” *Fornvännen*, 113, no. 4 (2018): 184–195.

⁴⁷ Inger Estham, *Textilier i Vadstena klosterkyrka* (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 1984). Inger Estham, «Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-talet,» in *Uppsala Domkyrka, V. Inredning Och Inventarier.*, ed. Herman Bengtsson (Växjö, 2010), 213–342, Inger Estham and Åke Nisbeth, *Linköpings Domkyrka III. Inredning och Inventarier* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien, 2001).

⁴⁸ Inger Estham, “Albertus och andra pärlstickare” in *Den mångsidige målaren. Vigade perspektiv på Albertus Pictors bild- och textvärld*, ed. Jan Öberg, Erika Kihlman and Pia Bengtsson Melin (Stockholm: Runica et mediævalia, 2007), 47–52.

⁴⁹ In his study of the Decorated Style in English Architecture, Paul Binski incorporates cope embroideries, see Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290-1350*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 232 – 235. Michael Camille also included cope orphreys in his discussion of the multisensory Mass, see Michael Camille, *Gothic Art, Glorious Visions*, (London: Laurence King Publishing, 1996) 109 – 110.

⁵⁰ For Byzantine vestments, see most notably Warren T Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). An art historical and contextualized approach to the re-use of Islamic textiles in medieval Western Europe was published as a “biography” of the so-called Fermo chasuble, see Shalem (ed.), *The Chasuble of Thomas Becket*.

⁵¹ See for example the various contributions in Clare Browne et al., eds., *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus Anglicanum* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

performance.⁵² A 2014 publication by Maureen Miller offers a comprehensive historical survey of the development of liturgical vestments, drawing upon both visual sources (the textiles themselves) and a broad selection of textual sources including liturgy.⁵³ Miller focuses on the development of costly vestments in silks and velvets with gold and silk embroideries, which she describes as the ‘ornate style’ of clerical clothing.⁵⁴ Employing theories from linguistics, communication theory and anthropology, Miller argues that medieval vestments can be understood as an expressive “language of clothing claiming holiness and power.”⁵⁵ Concepts of medieval vestments as a language, inspired by theoretical frameworks such as Roland Barthes’ ‘vestimentary code’, have inspired new approaches to the study of medieval textiles. In a volume edited by Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring, both textiles and representations of textiles associated with clerical and secular elites are discussed as a form of visual rhetoric.⁵⁶ Several scholars have explored the performative potential of vestments, including Pamela Graves’s discussion of priestly vestments as a form of ‘discourse’ with an audience and Barbara Eggert’s study of the embodied role of ecclesiastical clothing in the performative context of Mass.⁵⁷

This brief outline of studies of medieval vestments in the broader field of medieval art history is not a comprehensive review but has rather pointed towards some recent tendencies within international research. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, a growing field of art history is now concerned with textile artworks, reflecting an increasing interest in, and awareness of, the importance of medieval ecclesiastical textiles.⁵⁸

Returning to the review of nineteenth- and twentieth-century research on Scandinavian vestments, it should be noted that the present study would never have been possible without the systematic conserving, documenting and organising of medieval vestments by pioneering

⁵² See for example, Evelyn Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien III: Stickerei bis um 1500 und figürlich gewebte Borten* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2012), Evelyn Wetter (ed.), *Iconography of Liturgical Textiles in the Middle Ages* (Riggisberg: Abegg Stiftung, 2010), Evelyn Wetter and Philippe Cordez, *Die Krone der Hildegard von Bingen* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2019).

⁵³ Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*. For discussions of approach and sources, see pages 3-6.

⁵⁴ Miller, 15.

⁵⁵ Miller, 3. For Miller’s discussion of her concept of vestments as an expressive language, see page 9 in text and footnote 23.

⁵⁶ Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring (ed.), *Dressing the Part: Textiles as Propaganda in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

⁵⁷ C. Pamela Graves, “Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church,” *Economy and Society* 18, no. 3 (1989): 297–322. Barbara M Eggert, “Performative Paramente. Zu Funktionen bildlicher darstellungen auf liturgischen Gewändern im Kontext des Messerituals (13. - 16. Jahrhundert),” in *Mode Und Bewegung: Beiträge Zur Theorie Und Geschichte der Kleidung*, ed. Anna-Brigitte Schlittler and Katharina Tietze, (Berlin: Edition Imorde, 2013), 111–19.

⁵⁸ Further scholarship on medieval vestments in medieval Western Europe will be introduced throughout the following chapters.

woman textile researchers. Their meticulous and comprehensive research has paved the way for new ways of looking at this fascinating material. Building upon this foundational work by textile specialists and museum curators, this study asks questions concerning the use and purpose of late-medieval ecclesiastical textiles in a wider Scandinavian context. Rather than limiting the material to a single country, attributed artist, technique, or specific textile medium, I shift attention to situating vestments within their visual and performative context.

1.3 Textiles as Minor Arts/ *ars sacra*

In contrast to the central position of ornate textiles within medieval visual culture, the post-medieval reception of textile art relegated it to the margins of artistic expression. Once labelled ‘applied arts’, ‘decorative arts’ or ‘minor arts’, the modern reception of textiles belies their medieval importance. Giorgio Vasari promoted paintings, sculpture and architecture as ‘primary’ artistic media, and the modern divide between major and minor arts persisted for centuries thereafter.⁵⁹ Only in recent decades has this anachronistic and post-medieval division been bridged by scholars urging a more holistic and integrated history of art.⁶⁰ However, the idea of medieval textiles as *decorative*, implying a lesser visual or artistic importance, has continued to colour interpretations of textiles into the present day. For instance, in the 1981 edition of *Norwegian Art History* Marta Hoffman described wall-hangings and fragments of ecclesiastical textiles as decorative.⁶¹ It should be noted here that I do not contend that issues of décor in terms of the importance of ornament and visual non-narrative embellishment are important to vestments. On the contrary, as will be further discussed in the theoretical framework, I argue that the visual appearance of textile surfaces was instrumental to their use, experience and responsive effects.

A second reason for the marginalisation of textile art is the post-medieval feminisation of textiles as “women’s work”. This devaluation of textile art was thoroughly discussed by

⁵⁹ See Laura Weigert’s discussion of Vasari’s *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1568) with specific reference to Vasari’s treatment of textiles and tapestries as less important than the *arte del disegno* (painting, sculpture and architecture) in Laura Weigert, “The Art of Tapestry: Neither Minor nor Decorative,” in *From Minor to Major, The Minor Arts in Medieval Art History*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2012), 105 - 106.

⁶⁰ See for example the 2012 collection of essays: Colum Hourihane (ed.), *From Minor to Major, The Minor Arts in Medieval Art History* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2012). For textiles, especially Laura Weigert’s chapter on tapestries as cited in footnote above.

⁶¹ Martha Hoffmann, «Tekstil,» in *Norges Kunsthistorie: Høy middelalder og hansatid*, ed. Hans-Emil Lidén, (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1991), 315.

Rozsika Parker in her 1989 book *The Subversive Stitch*.⁶² Parker argued that this devaluation was partly due to a post-medieval domestication of embroidery paralleled with the inculcation of a new feminine ideal.⁶³ According to Parker, the stereotype of femininity merged with a conceptualisation of embroidery as devoid of meaning and “characterised as mindless, decorative and delicate; like the icing on the cake, good to look at, adding taste and status, but devoid of significant content.”⁶⁴ Recent feminist scholarship has reframed gendered perceptions of textile art, reclaiming the value of female art production.⁶⁵ Likewise, a more nuanced understanding of medieval textile art production as both male and female challenges the idea of textiles as ‘women’s work’.⁶⁶

A third factor that has impacted the marginal position of textile objects within art history is the prevailing focus within literature on technical features such as stitch types and weave structures. As the above survey of previous literature on medieval vestments in Scandinavia demonstrated, research has mainly focused on production and provenance within the constraints of the highly technical disciplines of conservation work and textile studies. As Avinoam Shalem points out, this emphasis on techniques of manufacture in textile studies often overshadows broader questions of meaning and context:

Any scholar writing on, say, the use of light and shadow in the paintings of Rembrandt or the sculptures of Dan Flavin is not necessarily expected to provide us with a color analysis of the pigments used by Rembrandt or the electrical system of the fluorescents of Flavin.⁶⁷

As Shalem aptly contends, discussions of textile objects often demand detailed technical analysis and knowledge in lieu of cultural framework. That is not to say that such technical studies and considerations are not important or hugely useful. In fact, this study builds upon the literature and expertise provided by textile specialists. However, one result of the predominantly technical literature is that issues of textile manufacture, use and meaning are

⁶² Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, New ed. (London: I.B.Tauris, 2012).

⁶³ Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, especially chapters 4 and 5.

⁶⁴ Parker, 6.

⁶⁵ See for example Wicker and Martin, “Nimble-Fingered Maidens in Scandinavia: Women as Artists and Patrons,” in *Reassessing Women’s Roles as “Makers” of Medieval Art and Architecture*, Vol. 2, Ed. Therèse Martin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 865–902.

⁶⁶ The role of nuns as artists has been explored in: Jeffrey Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (California: University of California Press, 1997). For male production of ‘Opus Anglicanum’, see Glyn Davies, “Embroiderers and the Embroidery Trade,” in *English Medieval Embroidery. Opus Anglicanum.*, ed. Clare Browne et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 43.

⁶⁷ Shalem, *The Chasuble of Thomas Becket*, 9.

rarely discussed by medievalists and art historians. A symptom of this division between mainstream art history and textile conservation is that the 1981 multi-volume survey of Norwegian Art discusses sculpture in terms of reception, iconography and visual culture, but textiles are framed solely in terms of technical features relating to their production.⁶⁸ Furthermore, while Scandinavian painted altar frontals, stave church sculpture, golden altars and wooden sculpture were surveyed through large-scale research projects and publications during the 1990s and 2000s⁶⁹, the most comprehensive research publications and surveys of preserved ecclesiastical textiles are nearly a century old.⁷⁰

In museum collections, textiles are often displayed in separate galleries, underscoring their exclusion from other liturgical objects in the main medieval galleries. As fragmented and fragile objects, most of the textiles discussed in this study are currently locked in temperature- and light-regulated storage. If on display, medieval textiles require special glass cases providing controlled conditions. Thus, personal access to museum archives is often needed in order to survey and examine these objects. Perhaps for such reasons, a comprehensive art historical and technical survey of this material accompanied by detailed colour photographs, comparable to published studies on painted altar frontals and sculpture, is still lacking. Such a publication is beyond the scope of the present study; nonetheless, I hope it encourages such further research. These four interwoven factors - textiles as ‘minor arts’, their post-medieval gendering, the

⁶⁸ See for example from the same 1981 volume: Peter Anker’s discussion on the ‘Kultbild’ in relation to wooden sculptures in Peter Anker, “Høymiddelalderens skulptur i stein og tre”, in *Norges Kunsthistorie: Høymiddelalder og hansatid*, ed. Knut Berg (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981), 126–251. Anne Wichstrøm discuss issues of didactic art and painting in Anne Wichstrøm, “Maleriet i Høymiddelalderen,” in *Norges Kunsthistorie: Høymiddelalder og hansatid*, ed. Knut Berg (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981), 252–314. And furthermore, Per Jonas Nordhagen discuss altar pieces in relation to function and liturgy in Per Jonas Nordhagen, “Senmiddelalderens Billedkunst,” in *Norges Kunsthistorie: Høymiddelalder og hansatid*, ed. Knut Berg (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1981), 375–435.

⁶⁹ See for example the 3-volume book presenting an exhaustive survey of the 31 preserved painted altar frontals from Norway (1250 – 1350), covering both art-history and technology: Unn Plahter (ed.), *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway 1250-1350*, 3 vols. (London: Archetype, 2004). For the Danish golden altars, see a series of articles by Kristin B. Aavistland, “Materialitet og teofani. Om bruken av kostbare materialer i Romansk Alterutsmykning,” *Kunst Og Kultur* 90, no. 2 (2007): 79–92, Kristin Bliksrud Aavitsland, “Ornament and Iconography. Visual Orders in The Golden Altar from Lisbjerg,” in *Ornament and Order: Essays on Viking and Northern Medieval Art for Signe Horn Fuglesang*, ed. Margrethe C. Stang and Kristin Bliksrud Aavitsland (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2008), 73–95, Kristin Bliksrud Aavitsland, “Incarnation. Paradoxes of Perception and Mediation in Medieval Liturgical Art,” in *The Saturated Sensorium: Principles of Perception and Mediation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, Henning Laugerud, and Laura Katrine Skinnebach (Århus: Aarhus University Press, 2016), 72–90. On the Danish golden altars, see also Søren Kaspersen, “Narrative “Modes” in the Danish Golden Frontals,” in *Decorating the Lord’s Table. On the Dynamics between Image and Altar in the Middle Ages*, ed. Erik Thunø and Søren Kaspersen (Copenhagen: Tusculum Press, 2006), 79–127. In the late 1990s, a survey of Stave Church sculpture was published: Erla Bergendahl Hohler, *Norwegian Stave Church Sculpture*. 2 vols (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1999). For the painted medieval altar frontals in Denmark, see the 2 volume publication: Sissel F Plathe, *Danmarks middelalderlige altertavler*, 2 vols, (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2010).

⁷⁰ Most notably Branting and Lindblom: *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier i Sverige* and Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*.

predominately technical focus of textile research, and the practical realities of textile display and availability in museums - have all contributed to the ways medieval textiles are 'seen' by scholars (and the public).

1.4 Theoretical Framework: Clothing the Sacred

The research questions of this study build on the premise that ecclesiastical vestments were a significant part of medieval visual culture. However, the importance placed on these garments and textile coverings by both clergy and laity cannot be fully explained through traditional art historical approaches such as stylistic analysis, patronage studies, or iconography. Textiles differ considerably from many other artworks in their church environment. In a broader sense, questions of use are particularly relevant for textiles because they are soft, moving, flexible and performative, and changed the appearance of objects, bodies and spaces according to occasion. Compared to wall paintings and architectural sculpture, textiles were not static but *performative*, in that they initiated or contributed to actions and performances within churches and cathedrals.⁷¹ Performance, in this context, is used as a broad term describing the human actions (liturgical, ritual, theatrical, devotional) taking place in the physical context in which textiles were encountered and experienced.⁷² Clerics wore and handled textiles so that they became moving images in liturgical rituals. As items of clothing, vestments were intimately associated with bodies and their imagery and surfaces became animated by the cleric's gestures, movements and bodily position. Moreover, the transformative potential of cloth was utilised in processes of covering and uncovering with relic wrappings, altar textiles and linens veiling the bread and wine. In approaching the question of what this diverse group of textiles *accomplished* in the church environment, this study explores textile usage and effects.

1.4.1 Vestments in the Liturgy

Mass could not be celebrated without textiles clothing the altar, wrapping the Host and vesting the priest. Moreover, relics deposited in the altar were often bundled and wrapped in layers of textiles, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three. On one level, these layered fabrics held a practical purpose: they distinguished clerical bodies, they kept people warm in cold churches, they provided clean surfaces on altars for the Eucharistic celebration and they protected and

⁷¹ For 'performative' in this context, see Weigert, "Performance," 65.

⁷² Weigert, 65 – 66.

controlled sacred matter such as relics or the bread and wine. As will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four, diocesan regulations prescribed penalties for priests failing to provide clean and suitable textiles for their church. However, texts and textiles reveal layers of purpose beyond practical measures.

To define function, this study employs the broad concept of the term put forth by Paul Binski:

The artwork's function is to direct, to create a mood and disposition through its crafting or handling, which we handle or weigh up in turn. The artwork creates a form of demonstrative experience. This two-way 'intending' requires the powers of sensation and reasoning of its audience.⁷³

This definition of function as a "two-way intending" pushes us to understand the encounter between textiles and their wearers, holders or beholders in terms of experience and perception. Such a framework, as the discussion of Notke's painting suggested, allows for a fuller understanding of the social, visual and performative context of textile use and experience in the medieval church. Liturgical function was just one of many ways textiles acted in church spaces, to respond to Carruthers' queries about meaning cited above. In the last decades, scholarship has examined medieval art and liturgy through formal functional analysis.⁷⁴ Arguing for a broader conception of liturgy, Binski has argued that 'liturgy' encompasses rituals, actions and practice, as well as the imaginative content of ritual.⁷⁵ In keeping with these broader definitions of liturgy and function, I consider both how textiles worked (their use-function) and how they 'worked' upon their wearers and beholders.

Such a broadened understanding of liturgy allows for an integral approach including the embodiment, rhetoric and aesthetics of textiles and ritual. This study uses liturgical texts providing information about textile usage to determine how, when and where liturgical textiles were used in the church environment, how they related to clerical bodies and their 'installation' in the church. In other words, surveying textile usage is a first step towards re-integrating textiles in their performative and spatial environment. Liturgy as a *discourse of words, ideas and actions* allows for a fuller discussion of how textiles were made meaningful in a liturgical

⁷³ Paul Binski, *Gothic Sculpture* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2019), 45

⁷⁴ For example, Staale Sinding Larsen, in his *Iconography and Ritual* (1984), provided a system of analysis for the functional context of Christian iconography, especially liturgical art. See Staale Sinding-Larsen, *Iconography and Ritual: A Study of Analytical Perspectives* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984).

⁷⁵ Paul Binski, "Liturgy and Local Knowledge. English Perspectives on Trondheim Cathedral," in *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim. Architectural and Ritual Constructions in Their European Context.*, ed. Margrete Syrstad Andås et al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 22.

context, including not just the content of liturgical texts but also their ramifications for viewers' aesthetic experience and imagination.⁷⁶

In addition to information about which textiles were required for Mass and how they were used, liturgical texts discuss how vestments were imbued with theological beliefs and associations. Allegorical interpretations of vestments were included in liturgical texts describing rituals for consecrating altars and ordaining clerics as well as vesting rituals. Vesting rituals show how textiles were part of spiritual practices such as the recitation of vesting prayers and the bestowal of vestments in ordination rites. The prominent role of vestments in these rituals demonstrate how textiles participate in human, active practices utilizing the performative and transformative potential of cloth.⁷⁷

1.4.2 Rhetoric

This study explores how medieval vestments shaped experience of the sacred in medieval churches and cathedrals. The vestments discussed in this study were made for a specific spatial and temporal context; the celebration of Mass and other ceremonial events taking place in late-medieval churches and cathedrals. Layers upon layers of ornate textiles sought to engage their beholders and persuade them of the sacred status of what was wrapped or veiled within textile layers. As such, the aesthetic experience can be understood rhetorically as a series of value judgements.⁷⁸ This was a culture in which the principles of rhetoric had been transmitted and developed from the classical and late antique tradition.⁷⁹ Faced with the intricately woven patterns of a silk brocade, or the mixed and ornamental surfaces of an embroidery, I argue that medieval viewers could recognise aesthetic values central to late-medieval culture such as variety and mixture (*varietas*), playfulness (*ludus*) or the brilliant whiteness of linen altar cloths (*cleneness*). Ekphrastic texts that can give insight to individual aesthetic experiences rarely survive from medieval Scandinavia. Rather than analysing ekphrastic texts from outside the region, this study takes a contextual approach in sketching out the visual, spatial and social environment in which medieval vestments were used and encountered to approximate medieval experience.

⁷⁶ Binski, "Liturgy and Local Knowledge," 22. In this article, Binski argued that 'liturgy' did not only encompass rituals, actions and practice, but also "things said and thought regularly and customarily: to use a fashionable contemporary parlance, it was a discourse of words and ideas as well as actions, possessing poetry as well as the strategic and tactical logic of organized human behavior."

⁷⁷ Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 63

⁷⁸ Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 14.

⁷⁹ Mary Carruthers (ed.) *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

In exploring the aesthetic effects of late-medieval vestments, this study draws on scholarship by Carruthers and Binski that has identified and argued for the rhetorical foundation of medieval aesthetic vocabularies.⁸⁰ Carruthers argues that rhetorical principles underpinned all medieval arts, and her research, as well as that of Binski, has demonstrated how medieval craftsmen were attuned to rhetorical values.⁸¹ Textile surfaces present an especially suitable corpus for exploring aesthetic experience and rhetorical effects in the medieval period. Both the preserved material and the way such vestments are discussed in contemporary sources indicate that the importance of visual appearance and its potential effects on both wearers and beholders. In defining rhetoric broadly, to encompass nonverbal arts and performance or delivery, this study argues that textiles have their own implicit rhetoric, which is explored through questions of audiences, performance and craft. Vestments are understood as a means of persuasion, and persuasion as a process involving the author (the performer but also the craft of art), oration (the artefact) and the audience.⁸² This study specifically employs the rhetorical concepts of *display* and *occasion* to explore the potential effects of vestments in late-medieval churches and cathedrals.

1.4.3 Rhetoric of Display

The effects or ‘work’ of ecclesiastical textiles can be explored as a rhetoric of display.

Textiles play a fundamental role in medieval strategies of presentation and display, not only as clerical clothing but in liturgies employing textiles to cover or uncover, dress or undress.⁸³ In fact, the modern English word display is essentially a textile term, with its root in the Latin *displicare*, a textile word meaning to ‘unfold’ or ‘to spread out’ fabric.⁸⁴ According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, the English term *display* came to mean ‘reveal’ or ‘exhibit’ in the late fourteenth century, “as in the unfurling of sails or unfolding of flags”, underlining that only through display could the function of these textiles be revealed or ‘showed forth’.⁸⁵ Kay Wells has pointed out the close connections between textiles and display:

⁸⁰ Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, and Binski, *Gothic Wonder*.

⁸¹ Carruthers. *The Experience of Beauty* 15. Binski discusses rhetorical values and craft in both *Gothic Wonder* and *Gothic Sculpture*.

⁸² For this process of persuasion and its actors, see Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 14.

⁸³ For instance, Cynthia Hahn describes layered enshrinement as a fundamental strategy of Christian presentation and display in Cynthia Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016) 60. Textile reliquaries and relic silks as display will be discussed in Chapter Three.

⁸⁴ The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, ed. T. F. Hoad, s.v. “Display,” accessed online June 10, 2020, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192830982.001.0001/acref-9780192830982>

⁸⁵ The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, “s.v.” *Display*,

That we inherit this concept from textiles speaks to how crucial display is to the function of cloth. While textiles spend much of their lives hidden away, their unfolding activates their functional ability to conceal, enclose, and blanket. Understanding display as a textile term repositions display from a potentially ostentatious or purposeless exhibition to a necessary deployment that reveals a work's function and character. To display is to unfold the role the textile work.⁸⁶

Following Well's conceptualisation of the term, textile display exceeds ideas of decoration or exhibition devoid of purpose. Rather, when display is defined as the physical and metaphorical unfolding of textiles, it becomes instrumental to understanding how textiles 'worked'. As stated above, the dialectics between unfolding and enclosing or revealing and concealing are central to the ritual use and function of textiles within the medieval liturgy. Moreover, Lawrence J. Prelli argues that this dialectic of concealing and revealing is fundamental to understanding how displays are constituted rhetorically.⁸⁷ Prelli argues that the rhetoric of display mobilised Aristotle's third branch of rhetoric, the *epideictic*, to strategically persuade audiences.⁸⁸ Binski's recent discussion of the epideictic mode in medieval art has demonstrated how this rhetoric was especially associated with ceremony, celebration and eloquence, characteristics which are closely associated with the performance of medieval liturgies.⁸⁹ Gregory Clark and Michael S. Halloran argue that liturgical rites can be understood as rhetorics of display, where the cleric's gestures and language persuade the beholder of the sacred status of otherwise ordinary objects such as "a wafer of bread, a cup of wine, a book, a fragment of cloth or bone."⁹⁰ This study demonstrates how textiles were part of such performative processes of persuasion, shaping the experience of sacred objects and bodies. The persuasive potential of cloth is exposed through a wide variety of display practices understood broadly as actions of unfolding or covering. Whether the textiles employed were ornate vestments of gold and silk or more humble linen cloths, their function in such rhetorical displays was not constrained to a 'purposeless exhibition' of clerical wealth and status or a demonstration of the means of affluent donors. Instead, they should be understood as vehicles of persuasion and communication in the broader context of Christian liturgy.

⁸⁶ K. L. H. Wells, "Display," in *Textile Terms: A Glossary*, ed. Anika Reineke et al. (Berlin: Edition Imorde, 2017), 79.

⁸⁷ Lawrence J. Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006) 11.

⁸⁸ Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display*, 2.

⁸⁹ As argued by Binski, in his discussion of epideictic rhetoric in Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*. Page 47. See also discussion on the epideictic pages 44 – 47 and 100 – 101.

⁹⁰ Michael S. Halloran and Gregory Clark, "National Park Landscapes and the Rhetorical Display of Civic Religion," in *Rhetorics of Display*, ed. Lawrence J. Prelli (California: University of South California Press, 2006), 147.

1.4.4 Rhetoric and Occasion

Following Carruthers' argument that all medieval arts were conceived and perceived essentially as rhetorical, this rhetorical approach enables us to focus on the social context, what rhetoricians describe as 'occasion'.⁹¹ Occasion refers to the context or purpose of an image, or how the image creates or takes advantage of an opportunity to engage the audience.⁹² Textiles established occasions through public and social interactions between viewers, wearers and the textiles themselves. Although there are examples of textiles tailored more towards a private and contemplative 'reading', most textiles discussed in this study were 'actors' in public and complex visual and spatial environments. People were essential to the experience of textiles as the vestments were activated, displayed and animated through human movements and interactions.

In other words, the aesthetic effects of any work of art depend on the context or occasion in which it is seen.⁹³ Textiles were not experienced in a vacuum but were part of the larger installation of the church, surrounded by wall paintings, sculpture, architecture, music, incense and performance. This visual, spatial and multi-sensory environment was different in a parish church and cathedral and could also change during the week or year according to the liturgical calendar. Thus, occasion is in flux, "a process in which both audience and artefact participate".⁹⁴ Chapter Two explores how vestments worked together with other artworks to enhance the liturgy and establish occasion in a smaller parish church and a great cathedral in late-medieval Scandinavia.

1.4.5 Textiles as rhetoric

Analogies between rhetoric and textiles are found in the frequent use of textile metaphors in rhetorical language, as well as a variety of textile terms used to describe aesthetic experiences by medieval writers. The idea of textiles, and especially clothing, as visual rhetoric or language re-occurs in contemporary discourse, and the idea of clothing as central to self-fashioning is

⁹¹ Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998) 223. See also Carruthers discussion of occasion and persuasion in Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 102.

⁹² Paul Binski, "The Rhetorical Occasions of Gothic Sculpture. Sophus Bugge Annual Lecture 2017," *Collegium Medievale*, no 30 (2017) 9.

⁹³ Paul Binski, "The Rhetorical Occasions of Gothic Sculpture," 15 and 28.

⁹⁴ Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*, 21.

familiar to modern societies.⁹⁵ However, the intensive and complex processes required to make textiles from plant and animal fibres are alien to most people today. Nevertheless, the language we use for describing texts is interspersed with textile terms, most of which originate from textile production. Texts are often described as a fabric, as spun, woven, knitted, quilted, sewn, or pieced together.⁹⁶ Likewise, an argument or text that is incohesive or false can unravel, tangle, fray or have ‘loose ends’. This metaphorical textile usage recalls the significance of textile work as a process constructing meaning. Moreover, the noun ‘text’ come from the Latin verb *texere*, “to construct or to weave”, prompting Roland Barthes to argue that text and textile are analogous because “etymologically the text is a cloth”.⁹⁷ Tim Ingold has explored the use of textiles as a compositional metaphor by pointing out that the word ‘line’ derives from Latin *linea*, a thread made of flax (linen). The transformation from lines to text is thus analogous with the process of weaving: “And if ‘line’ began as a thread rather than a trace, so did ‘text’ begin as a meshwork of interwoven threads rather than of inscribed traces.”⁹⁸

The interweaving of textile and text is also found in other languages. For instance, the old Norse *bók* could denote both books (and in a broader sense literary knowledge) and embroidered or woven tapestries.⁹⁹ Like a text, a woven fabric is a complex structure requiring the synthesizing of many different parts in order to create a cohesive and persuasive result. The concept of a central theme running as a thread throughout a story, known as *der roter Faden* in German (with equivalences in Scandinavian languages), demonstrates a textile’s ability to bind together complex structures.¹⁰⁰ If this crucial structural element is removed, the story unravels.

Through the rhetoric of textiles, issues of style and display can be explored as strategies of persuasion and nonverbal communication. This interweaving of textiles and text is also relevant to the study of aesthetic experience. The importance of textiles for aesthetic language

⁹⁵ See for example Roland Barthes’ discussion of ‘The Vestimentary Code and the Fashion System’ in Roland Barthes, *Systeme de La Mode*, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard, reprint (University of California Press, 1990). This is a new translation and edition of Barthes’ seminal 1967 publication.

⁹⁶ Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, *Weaving the Word: The Metaphors of Weaving and Female Textual Production* (Selingsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2001) 31.

⁹⁷ Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. J. V. Haveri (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976) 76.

⁹⁸ Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*, (London: Routledge, 2016) 63.

⁹⁹ Leiv Heggstad, Finn Hødnebo and Erik Simensen (ed.) *Norron Ordbok, 5th ed.* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2012), 80.

¹⁰⁰ This literary trope apparently stems from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s 1809 *Die Wahlverwandschaften*, where Goethe compares a red thread closely twisted in the ropes used by the Royal Navy, with the “thread of attachment and affection” in Otilie’s diary. If the red thread is taken out of the ropes, they unravel. Likewise, it is the red thread that connects and characterizes the writings in Otilie’s diary. For etymology and explanations see Christiane Wanzeck, *Zur Etymologie Lexikalischer Farbwortverbindungen: Untersuchungen Anhand Der Farben Rot, Gelb, Grün Und Blau* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003) 74.

is not only evident in the more general terms of *text/ textere*, but in specific aesthetic words used by medieval writers to describe artworks. A number of aesthetic terms stem from words used to describe threads, embroidery, weaving and spinning. In his discussion of the English luxury embroideries known as *Opus Anglicanum*, Binski pointed out that the term often used to describe this intricate and highly skilled craftsmanship was *subtilis*, a term referring to weaving: “literally to the thread passing below the warp (sub-tilis), the finest thread, which is hard to grasp or to see but is fundamental to the integrity of the whole fabric.”¹⁰¹ Likewise, one of the most central terms to describe aesthetic experience – *varietas* - derives from textile terminology.¹⁰² Thus, when medieval arts pursued varied and mixed surfaces, there was an etymological connection to the multi-coloured and tactile surfaces of embroidery.¹⁰³ Another central aesthetic term is that of intent, used to describe responses evoked in the perceiver from any aesthetic experience.¹⁰⁴ The Latin noun *intentio* stems from *tendo-tendere*, meaning to stretch, extend or direct when working with a thread or a cloth.¹⁰⁵ In other words, textile terms and a close affinity to textile facture provided medieval writers with a vocabulary suited for describing the surfaces, effects and responses of medieval art. In a broader sense, these textile words indicate the high status of skilled textile work and the central position of ornate and mixed textile surfaces in medieval aesthetic and visual culture.

1.4.6 Materiality

The framework of aesthetic experience and the rhetorical potential of textiles employed in this study puts emphasis on textile surface and textile materials. In each of the main chapters (Chs. 2-7) of this study, a specific material used in late-medieval vestments will be highlighted to explore its diverse material significance. In doing so, I will situate the material in the context of the vestment’s performance and persuasion by triangulating between material histories, religious and cultural understandings, and the aesthetic effects produced by the material’s visual

¹⁰¹ Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, 233

¹⁰² In ancient Greek, words with the root *poikil* were used for ‘variegated’; particularly for describing all of the different colours of an embroidery. The later term ‘*varietas*’ includes this meaning. Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 135.

¹⁰³ Binski points out that *varietas* most commonly applied to media like jewellery, goldsmith’s work and textiles, as reflected in medieval writing emphasising the “glittering, multi-coloured furnishings of churches, their reliquaries, windows and revetments, rather than their actual architecture.” Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, 28 – 29.

¹⁰⁴ Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 43

¹⁰⁵ For Latin *intentio*, see Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, 548. Paul Binski has discussed how ‘tendo’ is connected to ‘line’ words deriving from thread, spinning and weaving in Paul Binski, “The Gothic Line of Beauty: Motif and Medieval Aesthetics/La Línea de la Belleza en el Gótico: motivos y estética medieval,” *Quintana*, 16 (2018): 71.

appearance through its colour, shine and crafting. This complex exploration of material significance reflects the diversity of textile materials and the intricacy of textile surfaces.

The textile surfaces discussed in this study are excellent examples of medieval artworks as a “crafted and pragmatic mixture” of many different materials and techniques.¹⁰⁶ When discussing the materiality of textiles it is important to note that textiles are strictly speaking not a unified material, but rather network structures that can be made of various raw materials such as plant fibres, animal fibres or metal wires, and further embellished with silk, wool, pearls, beads, enamels, metalwork and precious stones. A wide range of techniques such as weaving, knitting, crocheting, knotting, felting and braiding can form textiles, and they can be embellished through embroidery and appliqué work. Tristan Weddigen points out that textiles “challenge established notions about artistic material”, presenting themselves as a hybrid of “material, technology, medium and metaphor”.¹⁰⁷ Thus, when discussing the materiality of textiles in this study, I discuss the materials employed in ground fabrics and in embellishments, their cultural histories and associated meanings, and the craftsmanship that went into crafting textile surfaces. Tim Ingold has acknowledged this duality in his definition of materiality as a combination of what he conceives as a “brute materiality”, the physical properties of a material, and human facture as the ways this material is “appropriated in human projects”.¹⁰⁸ It is clear from this brief exposition of textile materiality that textile as a medium is inherently multimodal and ‘impure’.

Through their materials, techniques and aesthetic expressions, textile surfaces create mixture, variation and complexity.¹⁰⁹ When first considering the material dimensions of an object, it is perhaps natural to ask about its cultural, theological or historical associations in a specific time and place. For example, one might wonder how people in late-medieval Scandinavia perceived and understood precious pearls. This line of thinking can be understood as an ‘iconology of materials’ where the raw material employed (or imitated) in a work of art can denote a range of meanings. Such ‘languages of materials’ can, according to Thomas Raff, be learned by investigating the specific material qualities of each *Werkstoffe*, such as durability, colour, transparency, medical and magical properties, earthly value (material hierarchies),

¹⁰⁶ Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*, 139 states that “Materials are mixed in themselves as well as joined together in elective affinities by human agency; indeed, it is in *crafted and pragmatic mixture* itself that sense-based knowledge finds pleasure and power.” (my italics)

¹⁰⁷ Tristan Weddigen, “Notes from the Field: Materiality,” *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 1 (2013): 34.

¹⁰⁸ Tim Ingold, “Toward an Ecology of Materials,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41, no. 1 (2012): 439.

¹⁰⁹ As discussed above, these concepts were central to medieval aesthetic values built on the discourse of rhetoric, see Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*. This is an overreaching argument of the book, see for example pages 45 – 48.

biblical allegories and symbolism.¹¹⁰ However, material histories and cultural understandings or materials are never normative, and such discussions will be framed within the specific context of late-medieval Scandinavia.¹¹¹ Moreover, the use of specific materials was often pragmatic. Practical concerns such as the materials available, their cost, and the suitability of the material for the specific artistic purpose often governed material choices. Additionally, it is clear that crafting is essential for textile materiality – only through human agency and invention can the fibres and embellishments be made into a textile surface. Such issues of craftsmanship, aesthetic effects and availability influenced the material appearance of any artwork and will be considered in the following chapters.

The above paragraphs have demonstrated the complexity of textile materiality in late-medieval vestments, touching on the cultural and religious associations of a material; the material interplay and diversity of textile surfaces; the aesthetic effects of a textile on its viewers and wearers; the importance of craftsmanship; and the pragmatic or practical concerns behind material choices. Due to the complexity of the material presented in this study, which ranges from small fragments of woven fabric to large vestments that best can be described as composite or inter-media works, a combination of these approaches will be employed in order to uncover the multiplicity of effects created through textile surfaces in late-medieval churches.

1.5 Interpreting Textiles: Material and Textual Sources

The point of departure for this study was surveying and examining preserved ecclesiastical textiles in cathedral treasuries and museum collections in modern-day Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark, including works in the Museum of Cultural History and the National Museum (including the former Museum of Decorative Arts and Design) in Oslo, the University Museum of Bergen and the NTNU University Museum in Trondheim, the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm, the cathedral treasuries at Uppsala and Linköping, the Sancta Birgitta Convent Museum in Vadstena, the National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavík and the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen. Visiting Finland and surveying the Finnish collections and sources was, as discussed above, outside the scope of this initial survey. However, online

¹¹⁰ Thomas Raff, *Die Sprache Der Materialien. Anleitung Zu Einer Ikonologie Der Werkstoffe* (Munich: Waxmann verlag, 1994) 49 – 158.

¹¹¹ Paul Binski has argued that an iconology of materials can be reductive, positioning the intent or effects of a material as normative and essential. In order to nuance normative or essentialist conclusions, Binski promotes discussions of where materials came from, how they were used, perceived, their purpose and cost, and their material histories. As such, he argues that material usage was occasional and pragmatic. See Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*, 137 - 139.

catalogues and published material have allowed me to include a few relevant Finnish artworks. Surveying and cataloguing preserved textiles was an important first step in understanding the extent and breadth of textiles that once existed in churches and cathedrals across Scandinavia.

Methodologically, the construction of this study's material corpus presented both challenges and opportunities. Although I visited some regional museums and churches in addition to the major collections referenced above in order to examine a larger range of textiles, my intention was not to create a complete survey of extant vestments. Rather, this study intentionally selects objects that are representative of the diverse collections of Scandinavia to analyse the larger role of textiles and how they actively shaped experience in the church or cathedral. In doing so, the collected case studies also allow for a meaningful incorporation of fragments that have rarely been discussed by art historians. A substantial corpus of such textile fragments from altars and ecclesiastical excavations exists in museums across Scandinavia, but they have been neglected within prior studies focusing on iconography or 'complete' examples. My methodological emphasis on purpose and experience resituates textile fragments as well as preserved vestments as fundamental actors in the medieval church environment.

Moreover, the preserved vestments are often examples of ecclesiastical textiles made in the most ornate and expensive materials, an elite bias that has both formed and undermined medieval art historical studies. Linen cloths used to cover the altar table or wrap the consecrated Host, and linen garments such as the alb and amice, have rarely survived. This is partly because these humbler and often worn-out textiles were less interesting to the antiquarians who collected textiles for early collections in the nineteenth century. Both written sources and visual depictions can be used to nuance this elite bias. However, such sources are scant for Scandinavia when compared to records available from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England or Continental Europe. For instance, only two medieval inventories are known from medieval Norway: one from stave churches at Ylmheim from 1321 and 1323 and another written at Holdhus Church (also known as Håland) in 1306.¹¹² The most comprehensive and informative collection of written sources is preserved in the Icelandic *Máldagar* (hereafter: the Icelandic inventories) recording a church's property, land and inventory including its textiles and art. These documents describe inventories for over 450 churches and abbeys in medieval Iceland, and the total corpus exceeds 1200 inventories.¹¹³ They are, perhaps, the most comprehensive inventories preserved in Western medieval Europe. Fredrik Wallem, who

¹¹² For the Ylmheim inventory: DN XV no. 8 For the Holdhus Inventory: DN XXI no. 7.

¹¹³ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 8.

published a 1910 doctoral thesis on these sources, compared them with the papal records: “Where else can one find inventories from all of the churches in two adjacent bishoprics carefully described with inventories of their property not only for each year, but more often, several times per year, over the course of several centuries?”¹¹⁴ Wallem argues that the sum of textiles, sculptures and other art present in Icelandic churches can be applied to a broader Scandinavian context and considered reflective of Norwegian church interiors in the absence of similar inventories.¹¹⁵ In the following chapters, the Icelandic inventories are employed as invaluable sources for the extensive use and visual appearance of ecclesiastical textiles.

After surveying the corpus of textiles and comparing this body of material with written sources, twenty-seven sample objects were chosen for further analysis and discussion. These main cases represent vestments across functional categories and are presented in Table 1.¹¹⁶

This method can be described as “purposive sampling”, relying on the subjective judgements of the researcher. According to *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (2008) this methodology employs “sampling as a series of strategic choices” where the range of samples are dictated by the main research objectives.¹¹⁷ Since this study is focused on uncovering how textiles constructed and communicated the sacred, case studies were chosen to analyse how particular textiles created complex and multi-layered surfaces and to elucidate the role they played in the relationship between wearer, context and audience. In some cases, the total population of samples (i.e. preserved textiles of one functional category) is very small; only two medieval albs are preserved. In other cases, the total population is substantial; almost two hundred late-medieval chasubles are extant. In managing this large textile category, a table of preserved chasubles with dorsal orphreys will be presented in Chapter Six, allowing for general conclusions about typical cases and more rare examples.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, when choosing case studies from this large groups of preserved textiles I have employed maximum

¹¹⁴ Wallem, 6: «Hvor finder man eller to bispedømmers samtlige kirker beskrevet indgående med registrering af deres eiendele ikke blot i et enkelt aar, men for manges vedkommende gjentagende gange i løbet af flere aarhundrer.»

¹¹⁵ Wallem, 6.

¹¹⁶ *Table 1: Catalogue: Main Textiles Discussed in this Study* presents key information on each of these twenty-six vestments, including inv.nos., original location, provenance and dating, measurements and brief object descriptions focused on the vestments’ material appearance, as well as selected previous research.

¹¹⁷ *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, s.v. “Purposive Sampling”, Lisa M. Given, 2008, accessed online June 10, 2020, <https://methods.sagepub.com/Reference/sage-encyc-qualitative-research-methods>

¹¹⁸ See *Table 2: Preserved Chasubles with Embroidered Orphreys c. 1400 - 1500* in the Appendix, and discussion of the table in Chapter Six. The statistics presented in this chapter and table does not represent all preserved chasubles, but a large selection of chasubles preserved in main collections in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland.

variation sampling aiming to include both “extreme and typical cases” in order to show the range or spectrum of textiles preserved.¹¹⁹

Information about the usage of vestments is primarily taken from a variety of contemporary texts: an eye-witness account of a translation ceremony, liturgies for the Mass, Lenten liturgies, consecration ceremonies from Pontificals and vesting prayers found in Priest’s books.¹²⁰ The liturgical texts and one eye-witness account of a medieval ritual are from fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Scandinavia, but they closely resemble contemporary European practice. For instance, the Icelandic expositions of the Mass reflect the most important medieval codification of liturgy, the *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* written by liturgist and papal administrator William Durand around 1286.¹²¹ This eight volume treatise became one of the most influential medieval liturgical commentaries and was copied widely across Europe. An inventory details that a copy of Durand’s *Rationale* was part of the cathedral library in Trondheim.¹²² Durand’s writing on the altar and ornaments of the church (Book 1), as well as his detailed treatise of clerical orders and vestments (Books 2-3) provide a rich source for the significance of textiles to the medieval church. Durand’s discussions of several different types of liturgical textiles are invaluable for the present study, as they speak to medieval understandings of the symbolic significance of vestments and the many different layers of meaning within which they operated.

1.6 Chapter Outlines

The theoretical framework sketched out in this introduction puts emphasis on the active role of textiles. Therefore, I employ variations of transitive verbs describing textile usage in each chapter title, namely encountering, wrapping, clothing, veiling, vesting and adorning – all of which focus on the performative but also *transformative* potential of textile coverings.

¹¹⁹ Maximum Variation Sampling is defined as “Searching for cases or individuals who cover the spectrum of positions and perspectives in relation to the phenomenon one is studying, and would include both of the previous categories, that is, both extreme and typical cases plus any other positions that can be identified.» See Lisa M. Given, “Purposive Sampling” accessed online 10 June 2020.

¹²⁰ These sources will be introduced throughout the following chapters.

¹²¹ The Icelandic Expositions of Mass are published in Kristin Norseth, ed., *Messuskýringar: Norrøne Messeforklaringer i norsk oversettelse: Festskrift til Førsteamanuensis Jan H. Schumacher*, trans. Elise Kleivane, (Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2014). These texts reflect the writings of William Durand (c. 1230 – 1296) also known as Guillaume Durand, Durandus, Duranti or Durantis. William Durand was a liturgical writer and Bishop of Mende, France. For an introduction to William Durand and *The Rationale*, see Thibodeau’s introduction in William Durand, *The Rationale divinatorum officiorum: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), xvii – xxvii.

¹²² Audun Dybdahl (ed.), *Nidaros Domkirkes og geistlighets kostbarheter: belyst ved 17 skriftlige kilder 1307-1577 med oversettelser og kommentarer* (Trondheim: Tapir, 2002), 129. Also published in DN XII no. 673.

Liturgical rituals discussed include a translation of relics (Chapter Three), consecration and stripping of altars (Chapter Four), veiling and unveiling the Host during Mass (Chapter Five), and rituals for consecrating, vesting and degrading clerics (Chapters Six and Seven). In pairing the sacred object or body with a transitive verb, this study contextualises the performative aspects of medieval vestments with particular attention to their liturgical role. Setting the stage for the more focused discussions of textile encounters, Chapter Two discusses the visual, spatial and social environment of Mass, sketching out a context of experience within the parish church and cathedral.

Chapter Three explores the role of textiles in processes of sanctification, from textile tomb covers adorning the elevated tombs of Swedish local saints to the wrapping and enclosing of relics in processes of translation and reliquary enshrinement. An eye-witness account of Katarina of Vadstena's translation in 1489 establishes a point of departure for discussing the intentional wrapping and unwrapping of relics with layered textiles.

Chapter Four shifts focus to the most sacred location in the church: the altar. This chapter examines the breadth of textiles used in clothing medieval altars, including altar cloths, frontlets and frontals. Consecration liturgies from late medieval pontificals are consulted to give insight into the role of textiles in rituals of sanctification. Furthermore, this chapter explores concepts of unwrapping in the Lenten liturgy through the use of Lenten textiles and the ritual stripping of altars on Maundy Thursday.

Chapter Five focuses on a small textile that was central to medieval liturgy; the white linen cloth veiling consecrated bread and wine during Mass. Examining the covering and uncovering with corporal cloths, this chapter demonstrates - on a smaller but no less significant scale - how the materiality of linen was intimately connected with wrapping sacred bodies. Moreover, ornate corporal burses are discussed as a rhetoric of display encapsulating, protecting but also displaying the sacred matter concealed within.

The final two chapters shift focus from the wrapping of sacred space (broadly speaking) to the vesting of sacred bodies. Through Chapters Six and Seven, the multi-layered vestments that clothed clerical bodies – namely the priest in Chapter Six and the bishop in Chapter Seven – are explored through rituals of wrapping and unwrapping such as consecration and vesting ceremonies.



Figure 1-1: Bernt Notke, *The Mass of St. Gregory*, left predella wing of the Århus Alterpiece, 1479, tempera with oil and gold on oak, Århus Cathedral, Denmark. Photo: © Altertavler.dk.



Figure 1-2: Map over Scandinavia, showing the locations of churches and cathedrals frequently mentioned in this study.



2 Encountering Medieval Textiles

This chapter explores how medieval people could view and sometimes interact with liturgical textiles in a medieval church or cathedral. In exploring this issue, I have chosen to focus on experience as a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between artwork and viewer rather than on reception. As Paul Binski has pointed out, the latter suggests a more passive perception where something is ‘received’ by the viewer, thus failing to acknowledge the “two-way dynamic of engagement”.¹²³ In keeping with this more active model, this study considers perception as an affective and relative process.¹²⁴ As discussed in the Introduction, textiles can be understood rhetorically as means of persuasion, and this persuasion involved both the viewer or wearer, the textile object and the author (in the sense of the performer and the crafting of textiles). Textile effects—how the vestments worked on their wearers and beholders—were never fixed but depended on the viewer’s (or wearer’s) perspective, as well as the visual and social context. Therefore, in approaching what a medieval vestment *accomplished* in the church, how it was experienced and perceived, we must establish an audience, a wearer or performer, and a context or occasion.¹²⁵

The first part of this chapter will explore the act of looking at textiles, their performative potential as embodied works of art, as well as textiles and occasion. These questions of experience and occasion are not, however, employed to reconstruct how a medieval viewer experienced specific textile artworks, as such an endeavour would be fundamentally anachronistic. Some five to six centuries after the vestments discussed in this study were made, we can access experience primarily through the medieval language used to describe encounters with textiles. Unfortunately, the Scandinavian sources mostly lack written accounts of how the medieval viewers experienced and valued ecclesiastical vestments. To compensate for the paucity of textual material, this chapter reframes the use and experience of medieval vestments within their contemporary spatial, visual and social milieu. Encompassing a large and disparate set of preserved textiles, this study discusses vestments originally used in cathedrals, small

— *Detail of Rogier van der Weyden’s The Seven Sacraments Altarpiece as presented in Figure 1.6.*

¹²³ Paul Binski, *Gothic Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 38.

¹²⁴ Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*, 84.

¹²⁵ In doing so, this study aligns itself with Paul Binski’s claim that aesthetic experience is relational and occasional, as discussed in Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*.

parish churches and abbeys across a vast geographical area with local variations and adaptations in liturgy and social practice. In particular, this chapter will explore context and audience for two specific cases – the Parish Church of Endre in Gotland, Sweden, and Trondheim Cathedral, Norway. While the spatial, visual and ritual environment of these case studies are specific to each church, they reflect the broader context of how vestments were experienced in the parish churches and great cathedrals of fifteenth-century Scandinavia. Thus, these examples ‘set the stage’, so to speak, for close readings of specific liturgical textiles presented in the following chapters.

Scholarship on medieval church or cathedral interiors often focus on built structures and artworks rather than the social context of this space. As Lena Liepe pointed out, these ‘reconstructions’ of medieval ecclesiastical spaces often ignore the social environment of human presence and practice.¹²⁶ These spaces were made for humans to use, and it was the people who gave the spaces meaning.¹²⁷ For instance, Binski’s work acknowledges the importance of activity, movement and performativity for the formation of social space in the English parish church. In his seminal article “The English Parish Church and Its Art in the Later Middle Ages: A Review of the Problem” (1999), Binski provides a framework for exploring artworks in the context of the spatial, visual and social environment of the church.¹²⁸ The internal arrangement of a church or cathedral, including architecture, sculpture, screening systems, placement of squints and the arrangement of altars and images, is described by Binski as the ‘installation’ of a church in which any artwork operated.¹²⁹ In other words, the interior arrangement of a church or cathedral should be understood as an ontological whole. Accordingly, liturgical reconstruction alone cannot provide us with a full understanding of social space.¹³⁰ This claim was recognised in a 1989 essay by Pamela Graves on “Social space in the English medieval parish church” that explored space through social practice including both non-liturgical and religious usage.¹³¹ The rhetorical concept of occasion discussed in the

¹²⁶ Lena Liepe, “Det befolkade rummet. Relikfyndet från Torsken kyrka,” *Nordlit* 36 (2015): 271.

¹²⁷ Liepe, “Det befolkade rummet,” 271.

¹²⁸ Paul Binski, “The English Parish Church and its Art in the Later Middle Ages; A Review of the Problem,” *Studies in Iconography* 20 (1999). Binski’s recently extended his arguments from the 1999 in a forthcoming article: Paul Binski, “Towards an Art History of the Parish Church: An Afterword on Explanation, Meaning and Experience” in *Towards an Art History of the Parish Church, 1200-1399*, ed. by M. Bernstein (et al) (London: Courtauld Books Online, forthcoming). I am grateful to Paul Binski for sharing this work with me.

¹²⁹ Binski, “Towards an Art History of the Parish Church,” forthcoming.

¹³⁰ Binski, “The English Parish Church,” 18.

¹³¹ Pamela C. Graves, “Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church,” *Economy and Society* 18, no. 3 (1989).

Introduction allows us to focus on social context as a ‘happening’ or process where audience and textiles both participated and interacted.

2.1 Establishing Occasion

Liturgical textiles were a particularly flexible and performative part of the greater installation of a church. They could establish occasion through the use of colour, surface and ornament and through human actions such as veiling and unveiling. In contrast to architecture and sculpture, vestments were not static but could easily be changed according to liturgical circumstance. Furthermore, textile usage was characterised by veiling and unveiling – an almost theatrical performance utilised in liturgical ritual. In employing the term occasion, I emphasise the momentary and flexible aspect of textile usage. One meaning of occasion is, according to the OED, “something that produces an effect”.¹³² In medieval liturgy, this effect was tailored towards what was appropriate for a specific social and religious event. Great feast days and church feasts were extraordinary occasions of material and textile splendour. For the translation of St Katarina’s relics in Vadstena Abbey, discussed in Chapter Three, the church was decorated with painted banners, carpets and new altar coverings among other furnishings. Ornate vestments were brought in from nearby Linköping Cathedral to provide the appropriate magnificence required for this special occasion. An eye-witness account describes the textile splendour of the translation ritual and clerical processions and how people in the church wept for joy at the sight of the magnificent textile reliquary shrine.¹³³

However, liturgical vestments were part of both extraordinary and everyday religious experience. Binski stresses that experience is not only about those extraordinary first encounters but also habitual interactions with familiar artworks.¹³⁴ We know from the Icelandic inventories and material evidence that the same vestments were used in a church for centuries. Traces of careful maintenance such as alterations and remodelling of old vestments testify to a continued usage. Thus, it can be assumed that most chasubles were familiar to the local audience of a parish church. This habitual encounter with the familiar and well-known is no less significant

¹³² *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “occasion, n.1” accessed online June 10, 2020, <https://www.oed.com>

¹³³ This description of the textile splendour at Vadstena for St Katarina’s translation in 1489 will be further introduced in Chapter Three. The eye-witness account is published in: Lars Elfving and Brigitta Friz, *Den stora kyrkofesten för Sankta Katarina i Vadstena år 1489: Samtida texter med översättning och kommentar* (Stockholm: Kungl. Samfundet för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 2004).

¹³⁴ Binski, *Gothic Sculpture*, 21.

than the breath-taking first encounter. A pared down daily Mass was still an impactful occasion where ecclesiastical textiles were part of performance and experience.

One way in which ecclesiastical textiles could establish occasion was through the use of colour. Liturgical treatises provide detailed instructions about the use of specific colours for ferial and solemn celebrations, reflecting the colour regulations defined by Pope Innocent III.¹³⁵ However, there is little evidence for any systematic implementation of liturgical colours found in late-medieval Scandinavian sources. Rather than a programme for textile usage adhering to a central doctrine, sources indicate a more pragmatic approach where the most ornate vestments were reserved for greater celebrations. While great cathedrals may have owned a variety of vestments allowing for a more systematic use of colour, the collection of most parish churches was sparser and more eclectic, resulting in a more practical approach where materials and ornament signified the occasion.¹³⁶

The concept of habitually encountering vestments is also relevant for the daily vesting ritual performed by priests in preparation for Mass, as will be discussed in Chapter Six. Liturgical vestments established a decisive contrast between the parish priest outside of Mass and the priest as celebrant. In contrast to the ornate and multi-layered vestments donned for Mass, priests were required to wear muted, dark colours and simple closed cloaks outside of church.¹³⁷ An episode in the fourteenth-century *Laurentius Saga* gives insight into expectations for clerical attire outside the church. When the young bishop Laurentius arrived in Trondheim to meet the archbishop, he wore a red tunic. The archbishop disapproved of his clothing, stating that it was not suitable for a clerical man. Laurentius then received a set of clothes the archbishop himself had worn, described as brown clothes of good quality, and was instructed to give the red garments to his servants. Moreover, the archbishop advised Laurentius to spend the income from one of his farms to buy a set of dark clothes for daily wear.¹³⁸ This anecdote describes the importance of ‘clerical street-wear’ in opposition to the splendour of ecclesiastical

¹³⁵ For discussions on Pope Innocent III and liturgical colors, see Maureen C. Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, C. 800-1200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 39. Liturgical writers such as William Durand presented detailed colour regulations for vestments: William Durand, *On the Clergy and their Vestments, A New Translation of Books 2 – 3 of the Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, trans. and introduction by Timothy M. Thibodeau (Chicago: University of Scranton Press, 2010), 213 – 221.

¹³⁶ Margrethe C. Stang, “Farger i middelalderen,” *Fortidsminneforeningens Årbok*, vol. 160 (Oslo: Fortidsminneforeningen, 2006), 41.

¹³⁷ Described by Maureen Miller as ‘clerical street wear’ in Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 19. Outside Mass, a cleric was expected to wear muted colours of clothing and maintain a well-kept tonsure, the primary visual sign of his clerical status. See Miller, 23.

¹³⁸ *Laurentius saga (The Life of Laurence, Bishop of Hólar)*, trans. Oliver Elton (London: Rivington Press, 1890), 17-18. This episode and the significance of colours in medieval Norway is also discussed in Stang, “Farger i middelalderen,” 41.

vestments. Even though brightly coloured red garments were more sought-after and expensive than a brown cloak, they were deemed inappropriate. Clerical clothing displaying visual and material splendour were explicitly banned in Lateran IV's canon 16:

Their garments must be worn clasped at the top and neither too short nor too long. They are not to use red or green garments or curiously sewed together gloves, or beak-shaped shoes or gilded bridles, saddles, pectoral ornaments (for horses), spurs, or anything else indicative of superfluity. At the divine office in the church they are not to wear cappas with long sleeves, and priests and dignitaries may not wear them elsewhere except in case of danger when circumstances should require a change of outer garments. Buckles may under no condition be worn, nor sashes having ornaments of gold or silver, nor rings, unless it be in keeping with the dignity of their office.¹³⁹

In other words, there was a clear distinction between what priests wore for their everyday business and their attire during liturgical celebrations.¹⁴⁰ This clothing rhetoric relying on the contrast between muted and ornate clothing was employed to establish occasion and display the transformed clerical body as sacred.

Beyond priest's bodies, the entire ecclesiastical space could be transformed through the intentional use of contrast between ornate and more humble textiles. For the penitential season of Lent, church space was transformed. Both clerics and altars were garbed in simpler Lenten vestments, often employing undyed linen and printed images. Crucifixes, sculptures and other images were covered with linen cloth, and the liturgy was pared down to exclude incense, the ringing of bells and music. This 'sensory deprivation' dramatically changed how the church environment was experienced. On Easter morning, the joyous occasion was enhanced by the contrasting experience of a church re-emerging in all its glory, when all of the ornaments were brought back for the celebration of a festive Mass. As discussed in Chapter Four, such transformations show how textiles were part of the 'installation' of a parish church or cathedral, and how their use and experience could be tailored towards establishing specific occasions. These occasions included both habitual encounters with familiar vestments and the contrasting opulent Feasts and Lenten sparseness.

¹³⁹ Henry Joseph Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Freiberg: Herder, 1937) 257.

¹⁴⁰ Discussed by Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 41.

2.2 Audiences: Looking at Textiles

For the audience in a medieval church or cathedral, experience was a form of embodied sensation. In particular, the act of looking was especially important for this encounter. Figure 2.1 shows a richly embroidered mitre worn by a Swedish bishop in the mid-fifteenth century, displayed in a glass vitrine at the History Museum in Stockholm. This precious mitre, to be discussed in detail in Chapter Seven, is one of the most intriguing objects in the Museum's textile galleries, because of the extraordinary life of its wearer, and its exquisite embroidery covering every inch of the textile with silk and gold threads, enamel plaques, jewels and pearls. In some ways, the glass display case enhances the allure of the mitre, both isolating and elevating it and thus emphasizing its uniqueness.¹⁴¹ In her discussion of museum displays of Triptych Virgins, Melissa R. Katz argues that elevated positions in modern museums can mimic "the restricted access that pertained to liturgical goods in earlier times."¹⁴² Museumgoers are not allowed to touch the displayed artefacts, just as medieval laypeople were restricted from touching and handling liturgical textiles.¹⁴³ At the same time, displaying medieval textiles in the museum flattens the artworks, depriving them of their original context and experience. Katz points out that static displays in museum vitrines can rob the artworks of their ability to "transform, surprise and amaze" their beholders.¹⁴⁴ Encountering the mitre in the museum, today's museumgoer can view the object up-close, examining the details and admiring the material breadth and splendour. The modern viewing context in the museum is drastically different from how a medieval cleric or layperson would have encountered this vestment.

Textiles participated in the 'saturated sensorium' of a church. Over the last few decades, scholarship has challenged the prevailing focus on the visual by examining other sensory perceptions such as sounds or touch. However, for the medieval layperson the liturgical vestments discussed in this study could not be touched, smelled or experienced up close. Only

¹⁴¹ Cynthia Hahn argues that the extensive use of glass vitrines in museums today can be understood as a 'reliquary strategy' where glass enclosures serves as a form of enshrinement marking meaning and enduring value. See Hahn, *Reliquary Effect*, 272 – 273. For historic perspectives on museum displays specifically for medieval collections in Scandinavia, see the recent monograph: Lena Liepe, *A Case for the Middle Ages: The Public Display of Medieval Church Art in Sweden 1847-1943* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 2018).

¹⁴² Melissa R. Katz, "Behind Closed Doors: Distributed Bodies, Hidden Interiors, and Corporeal Erasure in "Vierge Ouvrante" Sculpture," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55–56 (2009): 209.

¹⁴³ Liturgical vestments – both altar textiles and clerical garments – were blessed and considered sacred, and their care and handling were restricted to members of the major orders as discussed in the following chapters, especially Chapter Three, Four and Five. For a discussion of the handling and care of sacred vestments, see Thomas M. Izbicki, "Linteamenta altaria: the care of altar linens in the Medieval church," in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles Volume 12*, ed. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Suffolk, England: Boydell Press, 2016), 41-60.

¹⁴⁴ Katz, "Behind Closed Doors," 209.

clerics of the major or sacred orders were allowed to wear and handle these blessed vestments. Thus, medieval people primarily accessed these textiles through the sense of looking. As such, visuality, described by Jacqueline Jung as “the varied modes and habits of looking, and the thinking about that looking, that characterize distinct historic cultures” was central to the encounter with medieval vestments.¹⁴⁵ When referring to ‘vision’ in this study I address acts of looking and its cultural context—in line with Jung’s definition—and not supernatural experiences of revelation.¹⁴⁶

A large body of literature exists on *seeing* in the medieval period, from the optics of vision to cultural and theological concerns with looking. Medieval writers discuss the act of looking as something fundamentally different from how we perceive it in western culture today. In terms of optics, the extramission theory proposed that the eye transmitted visual rays that could, when encountering objects illuminated by light, reflect back on the viewer and thus actively affect the beholder.¹⁴⁷ While ideas and concepts about vision evolved during the medieval period, a foundational text that continued to influence medieval ideas of vision was Augustine’s 401-415 CE treatise *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, which distinguished between three modes of looking: the corporeal, the spiritual and the intellectual.¹⁴⁸ Corporeal vision is, according to Augustine, a bodily sensation and this concept has been explored in recent scholarship as a tactile way of looking.¹⁴⁹ On another level, spiritual vision engaged the viewer’s imaginative faculties, conjuring mental images. As Cynthia Hahn pointed out, this mode depended on corporeal looking and the viewer’s ability to recollect visual memories or images.¹⁵⁰ Intellectual vision implied the highest level of understanding, involving the interpretation of mental images. This elevated mode of vision enabled viewers to perceive ‘divine truth’. Herbert Kessler has shown how the act of looking could also be experienced as an interior phenomenon, a form of ‘spiritual seeing’ which could be encouraged by aesthetic

¹⁴⁵ Jacqueline E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture, and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, Ca.1200-1400* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4.

¹⁴⁶ As Hahn points out in her comprehensive introduction to vision and visuality in medieval art, the term ‘vision’ can denote both of these meanings: “the theological, scientific and cultural understanding of the means and possibilities of sight and gaze” as well as “revelatory or nightmarish experiences”. This study concerns itself with the former. See Cynthia Hahn, “Vision,” in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, 2nd ed, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019), 71.

¹⁴⁷ For an introduction to the extramission theory, see Hahn, “Vision,” 74 - 75.

¹⁴⁸ The Augustine tradition is presented in Hahn, “Vision,” 74 - 75. For discussions on how Augustine’s theories can be applied to art historical studies, see for example Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 165.

¹⁴⁹ For example the scholarship of Suzannah Biernoff and her concept of ‘Ocular Communion’ as a way of consuming the Host through carnal vision. See Chapter Six in Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 133 – 164.

¹⁵⁰ Hahn, “Vision,” 72.

experience but was not dependent on it.¹⁵¹ To sum up, the act of looking entailed a physical encounter that could simulate a sense of touch, and the presence of light and shining surfaces enhanced this experience. Thus, vestments with tactile and varied surfaces where gold, silk and precious stones reflected light did not only evoke the physical sense of touch, but a corporeal sense of looking where the act of seeing itself could affect beholders. Moreover, textiles— like other works of art in the installation of the church – could conjure up mental images of something hidden or unseen as well as provoke a higher understanding of the divine truths unfolding in the context of the medieval Mass.

Returning to the Linköping Mitre and the medieval viewing context, one can ask not only what it *meant* to look at this precious vestment but also *how* a medieval viewer could actually perceive the textile. For the medieval viewer, experience depended on their distinct point of view. Laypeople saw the mitre as a moving image, sometimes from a distance where the precious materials merged with the splendour of the cope and other pontifical vestments. When worn, the ornate mitre was glimpsed by the laity as the Linköping bishop passed through a crowd in procession or partially seen at a distance through a chancel screen. In this context, the act of looking was not the contemplative gaze, but a hasty or partial sight of the vestment in motion.¹⁵² This observation is true of many of the textiles presented in the study, from the quick glimpse of the corporal cloth being unfolded to reveal the consecrated bread to the altar frontal partially obscured by the chancel screen and the body of the priest as he celebrated Mass. However, since most vestments were used in the same church for centuries, the visual experience was a habitual and repetitive perception of something familiar. Following this line of thought, a medieval viewer could perhaps recall a mental image of the obscured altar frontal or the mitre sighted as the bishop passed by. When encountering the Linköping Mitre in the glass vitrine today (fig. 2.1), museum-goers are deprived of not only the larger spatial and visual context of the church in which the vestment was used and perceived, but also the more immediate physical context of the bishop's vested body. A fully-vested bishop, wearing as many as sixteen different layers of clothing as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, can also be understood as an 'installation' in which the mitre held a prominent position as a symbolically and visually important component.

¹⁵¹ Spiritual vision is examined in a collection of essays by Herbert L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). For spiritual vision, pure contemplation and the spirituality of thought, see pages 118 – 119.

¹⁵² For discussion on the contemplative gaze versus the momentary glance, see Cynthia Hahn, "Visio dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality," in *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 183 – 184.

2.3 Wearing Vestments: Performance and Embodiment

For clerics wearing liturgical vestments, the sense of touch, sound, and being wrapped in layer upon layer of heavy and voluminous vestments created a bodily experience. The Linköping Mitre had tiny copper bells suspended from the lappets, which may have softly jingled as the bishop moved, emphasising the headpiece's movements. Moreover, wearing a tall and heavy headpiece such as the Linköping Mitre required the bishop to move slowly with good posture. Vestments enshrined his episcopal persona and restricted bodily movement. Returning for a moment to Notke's Mass of St Gregory, the scene depicts the deacon kneeling behind the celebrant with his hand outstretched to lift the lower hem of the chasuble. The chasuble is also carefully folded over the pope's shoulder to relieve weight as he prepares himself for the elevation ritual. This detail is mentioned in liturgical rubrics and often shown in medieval depictions of the Mass, indicating that the priest needed these practical measures in order to lift the consecrated bread and wine above his head while wearing a heavy ornate chasuble.

Clothing could not only affect physical appearance and movement but could also inspire spiritual and mental changes. Chapter Six will explore how each layer of textile actively influenced and transformed the cleric as he washed, groomed and dressed himself while reciting prayers in the vesting ritual, as a preparation for liturgical celebrations. In both the vesting rituals and the bestowal of vestments in ordination rites, items of clothing were used as a means of spiritual education.¹⁵³ The potential of clothing to actively influence how we identify ourselves as well as how others perceive us is recognized in modern science. Studies in experimental cognitive science have found that clothing can fundamentally change a person's psychological and behavioural tendencies.¹⁵⁴ This phenomenon is described as "encloded cognition" and can help to explain medieval beliefs in the efficacy of rituals of re-dressing in sacred vestments as a means of changing clerical behaviour.¹⁵⁵ The rhetoric of liturgical clothes was not just a 'symbol' of purity and holiness, because the garments themselves actively influenced their wearers. Thus, priestly vestments were persuasive, working not only to instil clerical spirituality in the wearer, but also to persuade the audience about their sacred position.

¹⁵³ This argument is presented by Maureen Miller in Chapter Two "A Clerical Spirituality" in Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 51 – 95.

¹⁵⁴ "In studies, it was found that wearing a type of clothing associated with certain qualities, such as a medical doctor's lab coat associated with scientific carefulness and attentiveness, actually did significantly influence the wearer's performance of tasks requiring sustained attention" qtd. in Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 188.

¹⁵⁵ Miller, 188.

2.4 Sunday Mass in Endre Church

Having addressed experience through the perspective of viewers and wearers and described how textiles established occasion, the following sections will situate experience through two case studies reflecting the spatial, social and visual environment in which vestments could be encountered in late-medieval Scandinavia. In order to sketch out what an ordinary Mass in a Scandinavian parish church may have looked like, I will employ an example thoroughly discussed in research: Sunday Mass in the small Endre Church on the peninsula of Gotland, Sweden around 1450.¹⁵⁶ Endre Church was built around 1300 and belonged to Linköping diocese (fig. 2.2).¹⁵⁷ In 1989, Swedish researchers Sven Helander, Sven-Erik Pernler, Anders Piltz and Bengt Stolt examined liturgical treatises, sermons, expositions of the mass and hundreds of images in order to recreate a historically-accurate Sunday Mass. The event was recorded for Swedish television.¹⁵⁸ The subsequent publication, *Mässa i medeltida socken* (1993) discusses the physical ‘installation’ of the church, liturgical sources and practice, and the social experience of Mass.¹⁵⁹ Since Endre Church is one of the best preserved medieval churches on Gotland, it is a good case study for approaching medieval spatial experience. Fragments of fourteenth-century chairs and pews indicate that the nave had some fixed seating, although most parishioners probably had to stand during Mass.¹⁶⁰ Wall paintings depicting the Passion adorned the whitewashed walls, some of which are still preserved and are dated to the mid-fifteenth century (fig. 2.2).¹⁶¹ Focusing her gaze towards the chancel, the medieval viewer

¹⁵⁶ The reconstruction specifically focused on the eighteenth Sunday after the Trinity in year 1450. See Sven Helander et al., *Mässa i Medeltida Socken*, 2nd ed (Skellefteå: Artos bokförlag, 2006), 70.

¹⁵⁷ Both choir and sacristy in Endre Church were built in the mid-1200s, while the nave was completed towards the end of the century (possibly consecrated 1297). The tower remains from an older church but was extended to fit with the 13th century church. Moreover, chapels were added to the church in the fourteenth century. Helander et al., *Mässa*, 136. For a more thorough survey of the architectural history of Endre Church, see Efraim Lundmark, *Kyrkor i Endre Ting: Konsthistoriskt Inventarium*, vol. 33 (Stockholm: Svenska Bokhandelscentralen, 1931), 385 – 393.

¹⁵⁸ The documentary the documentary “Ecclesia Endre Anno Domini MCCCCL. Medeltidsmässa inspelad i Endre kyrka, Gotland, hösten 1989” can now be seen on YouTube.

¹⁵⁹ *Mässa i Medeltida Socken*, 1993. For liturgical practice, the main sources were taken from the Linköping liturgy, which survives in a number of manuscripts and in the printed *Breviarium Lincopense* (1493). The main source for the Endre project was a parish missal, *Missale Lincopense* (c. 1436 – 48), a rich exposition of the Mass including texts for vesting the priest, intro of the Mass and the use of incense. *Missale Lincopense* is preserved in Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, inv. no. A 97. See Helander et al., *Mässa*, 94 – 95. In addition, vernacular devotional texts were employed to give insight into lay participation and practice. One such text, *Sieallinna thröst* (The Consolation of the Soul) is discussed below.

¹⁶⁰ A thirteenth century chair is preserved in Gotland’s Museum of Cultural History (called ‘Fornsalen’ in Swedish, lit. ‘Hall of Antiquities’), inv. no. B. 897, together with fragments of medieval benches, inv. no. B. 889. 896. Lundmark, *Kyrkor i Endre Ting*, 415.

¹⁶¹ For the medieval wall paintings of Endre. Church, see Lundmark. *Kyrkor i Endre Ting*, 399 – 405.

would see the monumental thirteenth-century rood Crucifix which may have been supported by a vertical rood beam as in other Gotland churches.¹⁶² No additional barrier or screen is preserved from the medieval period in Endre Church, but there might have been a chancel screen under the rood beam to further separate the chancel from the nave. For the reconstruction of the medieval Mass in 1989, a chancel screen was built, modelled after a preserved example in Husaby Church, Sweden.¹⁶³ Altars were placed on either side of the chancel arch; parts of the southern altar are still preserved (partly concealed under the post-medieval pulpit) while the northern Marian altar was reconstructed during early twentieth-century restorations. Both side altars would have been vested in white altar cloths and probably had some form of textile or painted frontals. Written sources from other medieval churches also mention curtains and textile baldachins framing sculptures.

Screening arrangements acted not only as physical barriers restricting lay access to the chancel, they also obscured visual access. The open tracery of screens like Husaby's, however, allowed parishioners to look through the divider. Depending on where in the nave they were positioned, they could thus see the vested priest and the Eucharistic ritual despite the screening structures. A somewhat blurry screenshot from the Endre documentary film demonstrates this quite well: filmed from the back of the nave, the view of the Eucharistic ritual and elevation is still visible (fig. 2.3). In his discussion of screening in English parish churches, Binski points out that screens established physical distance and evoked proximity through feelings of curiosity or fascination: "partial concealment, like partial clothing, acts to heighten imaginative value and attractiveness. The screen, then, "is both a barrier and no barrier," physically exclusive, but optically penetrable."¹⁶⁴ This understanding of medieval screens as facilitating a form of "sacramental viewing" of the events unfolding before the main altar is relevant for the experience of liturgical textiles.

The medieval main altar in Endre is still preserved, positioned in a choir flooded by light from the tripartite painted glass window in the Eastern wall. The presence of light illuminating the choir further enhanced and facilitated lay viewing.¹⁶⁵ On top of the altar, a

¹⁶² The crucifix has a height of 230 centimetres and a breadth of 170 centimetres. Lundmark, *Kyrkor i Endre Ting*, 415.

¹⁶³ For the rebuilt screen and staging of Endre church in preparation of this reconstruction, see Helander et al., *Mässa*, 141. For further discussions on the Husaby Screen, see Chapter Five.

¹⁶⁴ Binski, "The English Parish Church", 13.

¹⁶⁵ For the medieval glass windows in Endre Church, see Lundmark, *Kyrkor i Endre Ting*, 394 – 398.

late-fourteenth-century altarpiece is still in situ.¹⁶⁶ A medieval silver-gilt chalice and a late-twelfth-century processional Crucifix are also preserved.¹⁶⁷ The altar would have been dressed with layers of white altar cloths and textiles adorning the frontal side. Of these, only a narrow frontal band known as an altar frontlet is still preserved: a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century embroidery in silks and silver, it depicts fourteen figures, including St Birgitta and St Katarina of Vadstena, in architectural niches.¹⁶⁸ Textiles did not only clothe altars, walls and images as part of the greater ‘installation’ of a parish church, they also vested clerical bodies for the occasion of Mass. Thus, it is important to include people when discussing the experience of textiles in the context of a medieval church.

How can we know how people behaved, experienced and moved through a medieval ecclesiastical space? For the purpose of the following discussion, I will turn my attention towards liturgical practice. While vested altars could be seen and experienced outside of Mass, the fully vested priest in his chasuble was restricted to the Eucharistic ritual, as will be discussed in Chapter Six. Vernacular devotional texts can give some insight into lay participation and practice. Such texts, which were increasingly common in late medieval Europe, provided moral instruction through exempla, fables and Biblical stories. One example from Sweden is *The Consolation of the Soul*, or *Sieallinna thröst* (ST), an Old Swedish text from the first half of the fifteenth century built on German texts such as the *Grosse Seelentrost*.¹⁶⁹ ST was written in the diocese of Linköping, to which Endre Church belonged, and is thus a relevant source for the reconstruction of its Sunday Mass. One section titled “Here it is told how you should behave in church” (*Her sigx huru thu skalt hafwa thik j kyrkionne*) is of particular interest. According to the text, the bodily movements of parishioners alternated between being seated, standing, kneeling in prayer or ‘laying stretched out over the benches’.¹⁷⁰ This bodily interaction with the liturgy included reciting prayers, exchanging peace greetings and confessing their sins as they

¹⁶⁶ The altar shrine corpus displays a crucifixion scene with the Virgin and John the Apostle, flanked by four saints in architectural niches. Each wing has three nimbed male figures standing under architectural baldachins. The shrine is dated to ca. 1365, possibly made in Gotland. See Lundmark, *Kyrkor i Endre Ting*, 414.

¹⁶⁷ The silver-gilt chalice with paten are dated to the fifteenth century: Lundmark, *Kyrkor i Endre Ting*, 420. The processional crucifix with a height of 124 centimetres is probably late twelfth century, now in the collection of Gotland’s Museum of Cultural History (‘Fornsalen’), inv. no. B. 899. Lundmark, *Kyrkor i Endre Ting*, 415.

¹⁶⁸ The frontlet measures 218 x 16 centimetres and is now in the collection of Gotland’s Museum of Cultural History (‘Fornsalen’), inv. no. C 394. Lundmark, *Kyrkor i Endre Ting*, 421.

¹⁶⁹ *Sieallinna thröst* was written in Vadstena c. 1420 and is preserved in a copy from 1438 – 1442. It is a translation of the mid-fourteenth century *Der Grosse Seelentrost*, with added Swedish examples. See Helander et al., *Mässa*, 104. The Old Swedish text is published in Sam. Henning, *Sieallinna Thröst: Förste Delin Aff the Bokinne Som Kallas Sieallinna Thröst* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1954).

¹⁷⁰ “Stundom skal thu staa. Oc stundom skal thu falla a thin knæ. Stundom skal du sithia. Oc stundom ofwer benkin liggia.” in Henning, *Sieallinna Thröst*, 139.

beat their chests. It was promoted by the ringing of elevation bells as well as the movements of the priest and his helpers.

Pamela Graves interprets this interaction as a ‘discourse’ between the audience and the priest, where the bodily movements (and voice) of the priest indicate the level of engagement required from the laity.¹⁷¹ For instance, when the priest turns his back towards the audience to administer the sacrament, he simultaneously disengages the laity. Conversely, the ST states that as the priest turns towards them to say “Orate pro me peccate” they were expected to read ‘Oracio’ prayers.¹⁷² Graves’ observation is relevant to the embodied experience of vestments, in particular the symbolic and visually important priestly ‘top layer’ of the chasuble. When the priest turned his back towards the laity, he revealed the dorsal side of the vestment frequently embellished with a large embroidered orphrey. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, the most common imagery of such dorsal orphreys were Crucifixes. The Crucifix then, acted as a visual point of engagement.

In comparison to a small parish church, late-medieval cathedrals displayed significantly more vestments clothing altars, clerics and reliquaries. While Graves’ observations on engagement and discourse can be applied to the Pontifical Mass, this ceremony included a far greater number of clerics, some of which were vested in splendid copes for processions, pre-Mass liturgies and choir singing.

2.5 Pontifical Mass in Trondheim Cathedral

Attending Mass in a cathedral would have been a strikingly different experience from a small parish church. In terms of textiles, a greater number of vestments were required to clothe altars, chapels and clerics within the cathedral. For the purpose of the following discussion, we turn to the northernmost medieval cathedral still standing – Trondheim, or Nidaros, Cathedral. The Trondheim Cathedral was built over the presumed burial site of Norway’s patron Saint Olav, and held great symbolic and institutional importance as the burial site of some Norwegian kings and the archiepiscopal seat of the Nidaros province.¹⁷³ By the late-medieval period there was a

¹⁷¹ Graves, “Social Space”, 306 – 307.

¹⁷² “Tha offersangin ær ute wender prestin sik um til folkit. (..) Tha skalt thu falla a knæ oc læsa thessa bøn.” in Henning, *Sælinna Thrøst*, 142.

¹⁷³ Nidaros was the medieval name of Trondheim, a name that came into use by the end of the fifteenth century (for the region). In 1929, the name was changed back to ‘Nidaros’ only to again being altered back to ‘Trondheim’ after a few months of public debate. Since the name of the cathedral and diocese were not changed, the cathedral is still known today as ‘Nidarosdomen’ or ‘Nidaros Cathedral’ in Norwegian, causing some confusion in international research on the building and its history.

renewed interest in St Olav's cult which spread beyond the Norse cultural sphere.¹⁷⁴ As the patron saint for merchants and seafarers, he became venerated across Northern Europe, and his popularity is evident in preserved images and church dedications.

The high altar with St Olav's shrine was the focal point of the Trondheim Cathedral, situated above the presumed grave in the easternmost part known as the Octagon (fig. 2.4).¹⁷⁵ This space was enclosed by a wall with open tracery running around seven sides, creating an ambulatory, and a stone screen that joined the Octagon to the nave. The eastern limb of the nave was finished around 1230 and housed the choir and a presbytery or circulation area before the entrance of the Octagon.¹⁷⁶ Øystein Ekroll argues that the canon's choir was likely a screened-off space situated within the three westernmost bays of the upper nave, housing choir stalls and an altar for the canons.¹⁷⁷ The Octagon established a dynamic of spatial and visual enclosure and access through screens and arcade walls with open-work tracery (fig. 2.5). In addition to the high altar, the Trondheim Cathedral would have had at least seventeen altars situated in chapels and the nave.¹⁷⁸

The medieval beholder could walk through the spacious aisles of the nave and enter the ambulatory enclosing the octagonal choir. In doing so, she could get a view of the magnificent shrine and the vested high altar through the quatrefoil openings in the Octagon's central arcade walls. The foliate capitals and figurative sculpture of the Octagon's ambulatory screen animate the space; as the viewer enters the ambulatory she is greeted by a sculpture of a grinning man pulling off his hood (as seen in fig. 2.5).¹⁷⁹ From the nave, laypeople could also enter the open space directly in front of the octagonal structure and view the shrine and high altar through the choir screen.¹⁸⁰ Ekroll argues that the rebuilt screen wall created a "new kind of visual contact

¹⁷⁴ Saint Olav's cult was important for the country's consolidation and Christianization and he was posthumously given the title *Rex Perpetuus*, Eternal King of Norway. Saint Olav or Olav II Haraldsson (c. 995 – 29 July 1030), also known as St. Olaf, was King of Norway from 1015 to 1028 and killed in the battle of Stiklestad in 1030 and became one of the most popular saints within the Norse cultural sphere.

¹⁷⁵ Øystein Ekroll has argued that the Octagon was built c. 1200 – 1220; the building could not have started before c. 1200 and not 1183 which has been the prevailing view of previous research. For a thorough discussion of the building history of the Octagonal Shrine Chapel, see Øystein Ekroll, "The Octagonal Shrine Chapel of Saint Olav at Nidaros Cathedral" (PhD diss., Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2015).

¹⁷⁶ Ekroll suggests that the Eastern arm of the nave was completed for a Synod in 1229 when Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson. (d. 1188) was enshrined. Ekroll, "The Octagonal Shrine," 193.

¹⁷⁷ Ekroll, "The Octagonal Shrine," 195.

¹⁷⁸ Helge Fæhn, "Gudstjenestelivet i Nidaros Domkirke i Middelalderen," in *Nidaros Erkebispestol Og Bispesete 1153–1953*, ed. Arne Fjellbu et al. (Oslo: Forlaget Land og Kirke, 1955), 620.

¹⁷⁹ Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290-1350* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 241. The sculpture is situated in the junction between the 'roof' and pier one as described in Ekroll, "The Octagonal Shrine," 227.

¹⁸⁰ For discussions on the fourteenth century choir screen, rebuilt after the 1328 fire, see Ekroll, "The Octagonal Shrine," 201 – 222, and "Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, 239 – 245.

between the interior of the Octagon and the choir,” emphasising the screening structure’s function as a focal point of the Trondheim Cathedral’s interior.¹⁸¹ No medieval altar textiles are preserved from Trondheim Cathedral, but the textiles clothing the high altar must have reflected the religious and symbolic importance of the site. One liturgical source that gives some insight in the use of textiles is the *Ordo Nidrosiense Ecclesia* describing the liturgy used in Trondheim Cathedral in the first half of the thirteenth century.¹⁸² According to the *Nidaros Ordinal*, the high altar frontal, which may have been gilded or painted, was exposed only on the greatest feast days, and was covered by a precious textile frontal “*preciosissimo velamine operitur*” on certain Feast octaves.¹⁸³ For these ceremonies, the altar was incensed with three censers, acolytes illuminated the material with additional candles, and there were a greater number of clerics, choristers tailored to enhance the liturgical circumstance.¹⁸⁴ This liturgical richness demonstrates how textiles, together with the greater installation of the sanctified space and human action and rituals, established occasion and contributed to a rich sensory experience including vision, smell, sounds and movement.

A pontifical Mass – when the archbishop celebrated Mass – was distinguished with textiles as well, most notably through the greater number of precious vestments worn by the pontiff and his clerical entourage. The *Nidaros Ordinal* states that the archbishop was accompanied by seven deacons, seven sub-deacons and ten acolytes where seven held processional candles and three held censers.¹⁸⁵ Thus, a group of twenty-four clerics vested in the liturgical clothing representing their ecclesiastical rank saturated the space with a myriad of precious textiles. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the archbishop himself was fully vested in as many as sixteen separate layers of sacred vestments including magnificent ‘top layers’ such as bejewelled mitres and richly embroidered copes.

Experiencing Mass in Trondheim Cathedral, then, did not only include the grander celebrations in the Octagon Chapel and Choir, but frequent low masses where laypeople could participate and observe at close quarters. In cathedrals such as Trondheim, people could attend low masses at the many altars in the nave or in smaller chapels. Eamon Duffy has argued that

¹⁸¹ Ekroll, “The Octogonal Shrine,” 209.

¹⁸² Lilli Gjerløw, ed., *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae (orðubók)*, vol. 2, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968). Gjerløw argues that the Ordinal can be dated to 1205 – 1213, and the Ordinal is mentioned in the Episcopal Statutes of Bishop Magnus of Skálholt dated c. 1224. See pages 29-20, 322 and 386 – 87. For discussions of the liturgy in the Ordinal see also Margrete Syrstad Andås, “Art and Ritual in the Liminal Zone,” in *The Medieval Cathedral of Trondheim. Architectural and Ritual Constructions in Their European Context*, ed. Margrethe Syrstad Andås et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 49 – 50.

¹⁸³ Oluf Kolsrud, “Korsongen i Nidarosdomen,” in *Festskrift til O. M. Sandvik*, (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1945), 86, 92.

¹⁸⁴ Kolsrud, “Korsongen,” 86.

¹⁸⁵ Kolsrud, “Korsongen,” 86 – 87.

the importance of low masses said openly in the nave has been neglected.¹⁸⁶ At these masses, people could observe and participate at close proximity as illustrated in a detail of the Seven Sacraments by Rogier van der Weyden (fig. 2.6). In Trondheim, one can estimate that the seventeen or more altars would require at least fifty altar cloths (altars were dressed in several layers of white cloths), more than twenty altar frontals (most altars would have had several textile frontals changed according to liturgical season and occasion). Moreover, the Trondheim Cathedral had around twenty canons requiring copes, a great number of chasubles and dalmatics as well as white albs for dressing all of the sub deacons, deacons, priests and bishops. In addition, textiles were present as baldachins and curtains framing altars and sculptures, processional banners, wall hangings, carpets and pillows. In other words, Trondheim Cathedral, now almost devoid of textiles, would have been experienced fundamentally differently as a textile space in the fifteenth century.

With the exception of a sixteenth-century chasuble now preserved in Denmark and some fragments found in archaeological excavations, all of these textiles are lost today.¹⁸⁷ However, a 1577 document reveals that the Trondheim Cathedral owned forty-seven chasubles and altar textiles forty years after the Reformation reached Norway.¹⁸⁸ Among these vestments were a white chasuble embroidered with pearls, five wool and silk chasubles with “golden crosses” (indicating gold and silk-embroidered orphrey crosses on the dorsal (back) side of the garments), and other chasubles embellished with “lettered orphrey crosses”.¹⁸⁹ However, this collection of vestments only represents a small fraction of the ecclesiastical textiles present in the Cathedral before the Reformation, as many of the most valuable textiles were among the goods the last Catholic Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson brought with him when he fled the town on Easter Day 1537. The Lutheran King Christian III of Denmark controlled western and southern Norway, and a siege of Trondheim was imminent. At the eleventh hour, the Archbishop collected treasures from the cathedral and the churches in his diocese, among them some of the most magnificent vestments in the cathedral. Inventories of the goods Olav Engelbrektsson brought with him to the Netherlands give a unique insight into the extensive

¹⁸⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 92 and 111.

¹⁸⁷ For the chasuble, known as Archbishop Engelbrektsson’s chasuble, see Helen Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud: middelalderske paramenter i Norge* (Oslo: Cammermeyers boghandel, 1941), 100 - 103, cat.no. 38. For archaeological textiles from Trondheim Cathedral, see Agnes Geijer and Anne Marie Franzén, “Textila gravfynd Från Trondheims Domkyrka,” in *Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum. Årbok*, (Trondheim: F. Bruns Bokhandels Forlag, 1956), 9–42.

¹⁸⁸ The document is published in Audun Dybdahl (ed.), *Nidaros Domkirkes og geistlighets kostbarheter: Belyst ved 17 skriftlige kilder 1307-1577 med oversettelser og kommentarer* (Trondheim: Tapir, 2002), 171 – 173.

¹⁸⁹ Dybdahl, *Nidaros Domkirkes og geistlighets kostbarheter*, 171 – 173.

textile treasury of Trondheim Cathedral. Among the eight copes was a magnificent silver brocaded velvet garment with a gilded brooch decorated with the Danish Royal Arms. The ornamental hood was embroidered with an image of St Olaf holding an axe and the year 1513, probably the date the vestment was donated to the Trondheim Cathedral. A gilded ball-shaped pendant was suspended from the cope hood. Other copes were of black floral-patterned velvet and of gilded silks. The textile treasures also included chasubles, dalmatics and a precious mitre embellished with jewels and precious stones.¹⁹⁰

In this chapter I presented case studies on Endre Church and Trondheim Cathedral to explore two different spatial, social and visual environments that informed the experience of the lay viewer. Of course, the context of experience in late-medieval Scandinavian churches and cathedrals cannot be reduced to these two examples. For instance, while Trondheim Cathedral provides a general framework for a pontifical Mass, there were nonetheless variations in the spatial design, liturgical practice, visual milieu of the images and broader installation of cathedrals across late-medieval Scandinavia. I will attend to the varied considerations of a number of textiles used in cathedrals like Hólar, Skálholt, Uppsala, Linköping, Strängnäs and Turku throughout this study. Additional context for late-Scandinavian lay viewer experience is provided by Vadstena Abbey, which preserves a considerable number of vestments and will be introduced in the following chapter. In Chapter Four, the small wooden church of Reykír in Iceland further nuances our understanding of parish church environments. In analysing textiles in their ecclesiastical contexts, I hope to suggest how a medieval parish church or cathedral might have been perceived in the late-medieval period

2.6 Conclusion

Returning to the Linköping Mitre presented at the opening of this chapter, the question of what medieval vestments accomplished in the church must be understood in the broader context of the occasion established through the presence of ornate episcopal vestments in a cathedral. These textiles were perceived and experienced within the visual environment, and visual access was both enhanced and obscured by architectural space and screens. In addition to spatial context, experience was socially embedded. This is especially true of liturgical clothing, which

¹⁹⁰ The treasures of archbishop Engelbrektsson's ships are documented in an inventory over the goods made in Brussels in 1548, a five-page document listing both household goods, liturgical objects such as the textiles discussed here. Dybdahl, *Nidaros Domkirkes og geistlighets kostbarheter*, 162 – 165.

was worn and experienced within the immediate context of the human body of its wearers. Thus, the imagery of the textiles— such as the dorsal chasuble Crucifix – was animated through the celebrant’s movements. Embodiment did not only affect images but also viewing. The glimmering of gold embroideries, metal embellishments and lush velvets would have been enhanced by the movements of clerics wearing the vestments.



Figure 2-1: *The Linköping Mitre*, mid fifteenth century, h. 143 cm (cat.no. 23). Stockholm: SHM. Photo: © SHM



Figure 2-2: Interior of Endre Church, Gotland. This photo shows part of the nave wall paintings, the wide chancel opening with the thirteenth-century rood crucifix and the tripartite glass window illuminating the altar. Photo: Per-Erik Skramstad



Figure 2-3: Screen-shot from the documentary “Ecclesia Endre Anno Domini MCCCCL. Medeltidsmessa inspelad i Endre kyrka, Gotland, hösten 1989”, openly available on YouTube. This rather blurry image suggests how a lay viewer could see the celebrant and the dorsal side of the chasuble through an open tracery screen.



Figure 2-4: Photo of the Trondheim Cathedral Octagon, view from the nave. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth.



Figure 2-5: The arcade walls of the Trondheim Cathedral Octagon, view from bay 1 where the pilgrims and laypeople could enter the Octagon ambulatory. Open work tracery allows for visual access to the main altar where St. Olav's shrine was located. On the top right is a sculpture of a grinning man, removing his hood. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth.



Figure 2-6: Detail of Rogier van der Weyden's *The Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*, c. 1445 – 1450, oil on panel, 200 cm × 223 cm, Antwerp: The Royal Museum of Fine Arts. This detail shows the celebration of a low mass in the nave of a cathedral. Photo: public domain.



3 Wrapping Sacred Matter: Relics, Reliquaries, Shrines and Tombs

In July 1489, a great feast was prepared at the Abbey Church of Vadstena in Sweden, one of the most influential and wealthy monasteries in medieval Scandinavia.¹⁹¹ The Church was cleaned, and all moveable furnishings were removed so that it appeared spacious and beautiful. In order to prevent stale air in the Church during the celebration, glass was removed from several windows, letting fresh air into the space. Beautiful carpets were spread on in the Church, and the altars were framed by silk curtains. Chairs with colourful coverlets were placed in the choir for the revered guests, and wall hangings with painted imagery were suspended from the walls. A large chandelier shaped like a Birgittine nun's crown – a white metal corona with red stones at each joint – was built and filled with sixty-three burning lamps. The occasion for this visual splendour was the long-anticipated translation of St Katarina of Vadstena, the daughter of the founding mother of the abbey, St Birgitta.¹⁹² Translation rituals (*translationes*) were occasions of great celebration wherein a saint's body was ceremonially reburied in a reliquary shrine.¹⁹³ After a lengthy canonisation process, Katarina was finally beatified a century after her 1381 death and her bones were translated from her grave to proper reliquaries.¹⁹⁴

This event was chosen as the framework for this chapter because it provides a good case study for understanding the fundamental role of textiles in the medieval cult of relics. A remarkably diverse collection of material associated with Katarina's extant relics and an

← Detail of the Shrine of Saint Birgitta, as presented in fig. 3.12.

¹⁹¹ Birgitta Fritz, "The History and Spiritual Life of Vadstena Abbey," in *A Companion to Birgitta of Sweden and Her Legacy in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Maria H. Oen, vol. 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 133.

¹⁹² Saint Katarina (c. 1332 – 24 March 1381) is also known as Katarina of Vadstena, Katarina Ulfsdotter or anglicized forms Saint Catherine of Sweden or Catherine of Vadstena. Saint Birgitta (c. 1303 – 23 July 1373) is also known as Birgitta of Vadstena or Bridget of Sweden in anglicized form. The preparations for the feast and the decoration of the church is described in Lars Elfving and Brigitta Friz, *Den Stora Kyrkofesten För Sankta Katarina i Vadstena År 1489: Samtida Texter Med Översättning Och Kommentar* (Stockholm: Kungl. Samfundet för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 2004).

¹⁹³ Processes of translation (*translatio*) varied greatly throughout the Middle Ages but commonly meant the ritual transfer of relics from one container (tomb) to another (shrine). For a discussion of the term "translatio" as both ritual and metaphor, see Robyn Malo, *Relics and Writing in Late Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 8.

¹⁹⁴ The beatification was an official confirmation from the papal church that she had indeed lived a holy life and was an important first step in declaring Katarina's sainthood.

eyewitness account by the Birgittine monk Nils Ragnvaldsson both show that textiles were present at every stage of the ceremonies. Firstly, the stone sarcophagus where Katarina's remains were originally buried was covered with a heavily embroidered tomb cover. Secondly, precious silks wrapped the holy bones both in the coffin and as they were transferred to the new reliquaries. Such wrappings were hardly unusual, as even the smallest medieval relics – bone fragments, particles of holy dust or earth - were frequently swaddled in valuable silk and tied into a bundle. Thirdly, Katarina's shrine was itself entirely fashioned out of textiles, one of multiple late-medieval fabric reliquaries.¹⁹⁵ In every one of these instances, textiles wrapped sacred matter. In addition to the richness of Vadstena's medieval collections and Ragnvaldsson's account, a significant body of scholarly literature on the abbey provides insight into how medieval people could encounter and perceive textiles in the church during the 1489 translation.¹⁹⁶

This chapter asks what silks and precious fabrics 'do' for relics. The question paraphrases the title of Cynthia Hahn's 2010 article on the relationship between relics and reliquaries entitled "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?".¹⁹⁷ Hahn's contributions to the field of relic studies interrogate the interplay between container and contained, asking questions of materiality, beauty, social environment and visibility.¹⁹⁸ In *The Reliquary Effect* (2017) Hahn

¹⁹⁵ As Hahn and Klein have pointed out, reliquaries were not solely made of gold and gems; wood, ceramics, base metal, glass or stone were frequently employed. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein, "Introduction," in *Saints and Sacred Matter. The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond.*, ed. Cynthia Hahn and Holger A. Klein (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2015), 7. Textiles were another common but often overlooked reliquary material. The most common textile reliquaries were relic purses, preserved in many European collections, see Joseph Braun, *Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes und Ihre Entwicklung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1940), 505.

¹⁹⁶ As described by Birgitta Fritz: "The source material for the abbey's history is extensive, at least by Scandinavian standards, and therefore it is comparatively well known, and the literature about Vadstena is rich." See Fritz, "The History and Spiritual Life of Vadstena Abbey," 134. Fritz's article offers a comprehensive introduction to the sources and research on Vadstena Abbey Church.

¹⁹⁷ Cynthia Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?," *Numen* 57, no. 3/4 (2010): 284–316. This article introduced prominent issues that surround the Christian use of reliquaries, first discussing examples from Trier made by the renowned Archbishop Egbert in the tenth century, then turning to early Christian texts to investigate the beginnings of relic practice and belief. Of special interest are the letters and poems of Paulinus of Nola, as well as the commentaries of Augustine, Ambrose, Victricius of Rouen and others that flesh out an understanding of how reliquaries were essential to the project of creating an appropriate *reverentia* for relics (Peter Brown's term). The materiality of reliquaries, their creation of social relations, particular issues of enclosure and beauty, and questions of potential visibility are given special consideration.

¹⁹⁸ Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400 - circa 1204* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012). Cynthia Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016). Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?," Cynthia Hahn, 'Metaphor and Meaning in Early Medieval Reliquaries', in *Papers from 'Verbal and Pictorial Imaging: Representing and Accessing Experience of the Invisible, 400-1000'*, eds. Giselle de Nie, Karl Krederick Morrison and Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 239–63. Cynthia Hahn, "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines," *Speculum* 72, no. 4 (1997): 1079–1106, "Reliquaries," in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad

presents a model of interpretation that in many ways answers the main question of her 2010 article: reliquaries “establish value, presentation and context” for the relics enclosed within.¹⁹⁹ This reliquary effect is not only found in the container, but in the process of encapsulating, or wrapping, unwrapping and displaying the sacred:

Through a framing action of physical context, legends and rituals, relics are identified and defined as *unique, authentic, powerful* and *effective*. Most importantly for our concerns, an object is most clearly identified as a relic when it is enclosed and presented in a reliquary (or other similarly definitive frame).²⁰⁰

This chapter expands Hahn’s model to include textile wrappings, shrines and reliquaries. Silks and other precious fabrics used to wrap sacred bodies, relics, tombs and shrines, as well as textile reliquaries, will be examined to unveil the performative and rhetorical potential of textiles in the medieval cult of relics. The interrelated concepts of display and enshrinement will frame the discussion of wrapping as both a revealing and concealing process.

Despite the fact that silks and other fabrics were present in a large number of medieval reliquaries, from lavish shrines to small portable reliquary purses (*bursa*), textiles have been given little attention in the vast literature on relic studies.²⁰¹ A notable exception is Martina Bagnoli’s essay on relic wrapping, which points out that “more often than not, the chambers of reliquaries present but a handful of relic pouches, the *bursa*.”²⁰² Bagnoli challenges the notion of ‘naked’ relics displayed in late-medieval transparent reliquaries, and argues that such containers more often displayed textile relic wrappings and *bursae*. Both reliquary *bursae* and textile relic wrappings exist in large numbers across European museum collections and church treasuries. In the introduction to the 2015 volume *Saints and Sacred Matter*, both Hahn and Holger Klein emphasize relics’ manufactured nature, employing the term *relic-ing* to describe the process of relic making.²⁰³ Hahn and Klein acknowledge the importance of textiles in *relic-ing*, although the topic of relic silks or wrappings is not discussed further:

Rudolph (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 681–703, and Cynthia Hahn, *Passion Relics and the Medieval Imagination: Art, Architecture, and Society* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

¹⁹⁹ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 6.

²⁰⁰ Hahn, 7.

²⁰¹ For instance, only one of the 139 objects in the catalogue of the travelling exhibition *Treasures of Heaven* (2010/ 2011) is a textile one, a twelfth or thirteenth century silk fragment of a relic shroud (cat.no. 68, see Martina Bagnoli et al., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (London: The British Museum Press, 2011), 128 – 129).

²⁰² Éric Palazzo, “Relics, Liturgical Space, and the Theology of the Church” in *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, eds. Martina Bagnoli et al. (London: The British Museum Press, 2011), 102. In this study, I will consistently use the term ‘*bursa*’ rather than modern English ‘*burse*’, and plural form ‘*bursae*’ (as presented in the *OED*).

²⁰³ Hahn and Klein, “Introduction,” 6. see also Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 9.

Although we do not engage this aspect of the reliquary apparatus with a separate study here, the practice of surrounding sacred matter with cloth and an identifying label is a very important first step in the process of *relic-ing*. These fabrics, frequently exotic silks of the finest sort and even reused antique fabrics, were often more valuable than other parts of the reliquary.²⁰⁴

Exploring textiles beyond this first step in a process of '*relic-ing*,' this chapter shows that fabrics were in fact integral to practices of handling, experiencing and perceiving relics in medieval society.

Medieval relics and reliquaries were largely removed from Scandinavian churches and cathedrals during the Reformation. However, a recent PhD dissertation by Sofia Lahti has demonstrated the extent of preserved material; her study presents the first comprehensive survey of preserved relics and reliquaries as well as written sources describing medieval Scandinavian relic collections, and provides a valuable resource for future studies.²⁰⁵ In addition, Lena Liepe's scholarship has explored the material, visual and social significance of relics across a range of media such as altarpieces, sculptures and arm reliquaries in Scandinavia.²⁰⁶ Liepe's examination of works like a group of arm reliquaries preserved in Denmark or the relics kept in a wooden sculpture from Torsken Church in Norway acknowledges the presence of textile wrappings and their importance for how medieval viewers saw and interacted with relics.²⁰⁷

Despite the importance and relative frequency of translation rituals, few treatises specifically discuss the medieval understanding of relics and reliquaries. A notable exception is the early twelfth-century *Flores epytaphii sanctorum*, the only medieval treatise dedicated

²⁰⁴ Hahn and Klein, "Introduction," 6-7.

²⁰⁵ Sofia Lahti, "Silver Arms and Silk Heads Medieval Reliquaries in the Nordic Countries" (PhD diss., Åbo Akademi University, 2019).

²⁰⁶ Lena Liepe, "The Multi-Materiality of St. George and the Dragon," in *Art, Cult and Patronage: Die Visuelle Kultur im Ostseeraum zur Zeit Bernt Notkes*, eds. Uwe Albrecht and Anu Mänd (Kiel: Verlag Ludwig, 2013), 199–207, Lena Liepe, "The Presence of the Sacred: Relics in Medieval Wooden Statues of Scandinavia," in *Paint and Piety: Collected Essays on Medieval Painting and Polychrome Sculpture*, eds. Noëlle Lynn Wenger Streeton and Kaja Kollandsrud (London: Archetype Publications, 2014), 39–50, Lena Liepe, "Det befolkade rummet. Relikfyndet från Torsken Kyrka", *Nordlit* 36 (2015): 261–74, Lena Liepe, "Kyrkans sanna skatter: Relikerna i Oslo Mariakyrka och kungliga relikdonationer i det senmedeltida Norden," in *En aktivist för Middelalderbyen: Festskrift til Petter B. Molaug i anledning hans 70-årsdag 19. Desember 2014*, eds. Lise-Marie Bye Johansen et al. (Oslo: Novus Forlag, 2015), 75–100, Lena Liepe, "Arm i arm. Om form och innehåll hos medeltida armrelikvarier," *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, 102, no. 4 (2018): 640–61, Lena Liepe, "Holy heads. Pope Lucius' skull in Roskilde and the role of relics in medieval spirituality" in *Materiality and Religious Practice in Medieval Denmark*, ed. Sarah Croix and Mads Heilskov (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

²⁰⁷ See for example Liepe's discussion of relic wrappings in Liepe, "Arm i arm," 651 – 652, and Liepe, "Det befolkade rummet," 270.

solely to relics and reliquaries.²⁰⁸ Thiofrid of Echternach describes a reliquary as a “skilfully wrought garment” emphasising the close relationship between textiles and relic enshrinement.²⁰⁹ Although the cult of relics and its visual and material expressions changed during the Middle Ages, the fundamental understandings of relics and their containers remained broadly the same.²¹⁰ Thiofrid’s statements regarding the cult of relics are thus relevant to the translation occurring some 300 years after he wrote his treatise. By describing translation ceremonies as a process where the bones are clothed in the finest garments available and by likening the relic shrine to a skilfully wrought garment, Thiofrid emphasizes the importance of luxurious textiles in fashioning the cult of saints.²¹¹ Like the reliquary effect, this chapter works to unveil the silk layers covering relics, tombs, and shrines as a means to examine how silk textiles fundamentally shaped the late-medieval experience of sacred matter.

3.1 Translation of Katarina of Vadstena 1489

Katarina of Vadstena (1332 - 1381) was one of the most popular saints in late-medieval Scandinavia.²¹² Despite her esteem among the laity as well as the secular authorities in the fifteenth century, she is often overshadowed by her famous mother Birgitta (c. 1302 – 1373) whose mystic revelations and saintly reputation were well-known outside the Swedish realm.²¹³ In contrast to her mother, Katarina did not produce any writings of her own.²¹⁴ Her *vita* was written down in the 1420s relying on the oral tradition at the abbey, and more miracles were

²⁰⁸ Thiofrid of Echternach, *Thiofridi Abbatis Epternacensis Flores Epytaphii Sanctorum*, ed. Michele Camillo Ferrari (Turnholt: Brepols, 1996).

²⁰⁹ “arteque elaboratas uestes” in Thiofrid of Echternach, *Flores Epytaphii Sanctorum*, 33.

²¹⁰ For a longue durée study of reliquaries through the medieval era, with examples from non-Western cultures as well, see Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*. In this book, Hahn makes the argument that the Christian relic doctrine changed very little during the Middle Ages; Hahn, 88.

²¹¹ Thiofrid of Echternach, *Flores Epytaphii Sanctorum*, 32 - 33. Thiofrid describes translation rituals as being “clothed in the softest and finest garments” and the reliquary as a “skillfully wrought garment” in Book II, 1.75 and 1. 59.

²¹² Katarina was never officially canonised as a saint but worshiped as a saint in Sweden, and beatified as discussed above. She is described by Thomas Dubois as “one of the best-known but least-studied saints of medieval Scandinavia.” Thomas A. Dubois, “St Katarina in Her Own Light,” in *Sanctity in the North: Saints, Lives, and Cults in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. Thomas Dubois (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2008), 271.

²¹³ The scholarship on Birgitta is vast. For a recent companion to her life, revelations and influence, see the collection of essays in Oen, *A Companion to Birgitta of Sweden*.

²¹⁴ On Saint Katarina and her cult, see Dubois, “St Katharina,” 271–303. See also Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, “Devotional Strategies in Everyday Life: Laity’s Interaction with Saints in the North in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” in *Lived Religion and the Long Reformation in Northern Europe c. 1300–1700*, ed. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

recorded in the 1470s.²¹⁵ Vadstena was supported by the Crown and the richest and most powerful families in Sweden, all of whom had been involved in the canonisation process of Katarina.²¹⁶ In fact, the late-medieval Swedish cults of saints have been described as some of the most active and innovative in Europe; several hundred miracles were written down between 1351 and 1450 and canonisation processes were opened for Brynolf of Skara, Ingrid of Skänninge and Nicholas of Linköping as well as Katarina of Vadstena.²¹⁷ However, none of these local saints were officially canonised. The initiation and success of such canonisation processes relied as much on an active lobbying group at the papal curia and substantial finances as on local devotion to the cults in question.²¹⁸ In 1489 Katarina was finally beatified, and her bones were translated to various reliquaries. She is known to this day as “Sankta Katarina av Vadstena” (Saint Katherine of Vadstena).

An eye-witness account recorded by the Birgittine monk Nils Ragnvaldsson describes the preparations for the feast, the delegates and their beautiful garments, and the ecclesiastical ceremonies that took place during the four-day-long celebrations in August 1489. The following description is rephrased from his account of events, known as *Nils Ragnvaldssons berättelse* (hereafter NRB).²¹⁹ In addition to the various preparations described in the introduction to this chapter, a new altar was built in the “choir of the Holy Cross” and the tomb of Katarina was rebuilt to better facilitate the ritual. Furthermore, a glorious image of St Katarina was commissioned and displayed in the “Brethren’s Choir,” and was said to be so beautiful that the clerical visitors wept when they saw it. After Archbishop Jakob Ulvsson had consecrated this image, he granted forty days of indulgence for those who prayed before it. Candles burned around Katarina’s tomb the night before the translation. The following morning the ceremonies began. Ragnvaldsson describes how the Archbishop, bishops, priests and members of the secular elite were dressed in their finest garments. As the entourage approached Katarina’s tomb after the singing of hymns and swinging of censers carried by the six bishops, the Archbishop unlocked the chest and unfolded the silks that had covered the holy bones. Everyone there wept with joy.²²⁰ While the clergy sang the responsories *Regnum mundi* and

²¹⁵ Her vita was written by the general confessor Ulf Birgersson and is published as Tryggve Lundén, ed., *Vita Katherine: Facsimile Tryck Av Bartholomeus Ghotansi Stockholm 1487 Tryckta Bok* (Uppsala: Pro Veritate, 1981).

²¹⁶ Dubois, “St Katharina,” 287.

²¹⁷ Katajala-Peltomaa, “Devotional Strategies,” 39

²¹⁸ Katajala-Peltomaa, 39 – 40.

²¹⁹ Nils Ragnvaldsson’s text is published in Elfving and Friz, *Den stora kyrkofesten*, 30 – 61.

²²⁰ “Sedan læste archieviscopen up kistona och slogh uth silkit som lagh öfver hæolt benen, så att benen syntes allom bar. Tha greto alla i hiertans glædi.” Elfving and Friz, 46.

Concede nobis, all the bishops present at the ceremony kissed Katarina's head as the Archbishop passed the censer over it, before putting the skull in a richly decorated shrine.²²¹ The process was repeated with the jawbone, which was then put in a reliquary made of crystal, gold and silver. One of the arms was treated in the same manner; the Archbishop censed it, kissed the bone and put it in a container. These three reliquaries were then placed on the high altar. Next, the Bishop of Linköping, with great reverence, picked one or two bones at a time and gave them to the Archbishop. The Archbishop then carefully laid them in precious silk within the smaller shrine.²²² This went on for a long time. During the process, censers were again swung over the relics as they were placed in the small shrine. Afterwards, the shrine was closed and placed in the larger reliquary, which was closed and locked by the Archbishop. This larger shrine was carried into the nave and placed on a high table in the middle of the Vadstena Church. The congregation was deeply moved by the sight of the shrine; Ragnvaldsson described how tears streamed down their faces as they stretched their arms upwards and cried for the holy Katarina to pray for them.²²³

The Church feast of Katarina's translation and Ragnvaldsson's account witness how textiles were instrumental to the medieval cult of relics, and how holy bones were unwrapped and rewrapped in layers of precious fabrics. This chapter will unpack how these textile layers participated in the 'nesting' of relics, to borrow Hahn's terminology. 'Nesting' describes the strategy of presenting and displaying relics in "layers upon layers of precious materials" in which wrapping in cloth represents a "primary layer and action".²²⁴ With this in mind, let us return to the beginning of Katarina of Vadstena's beatification process, when her tomb was elevated and adorned with a textile covering.

3.2 Textile Tomb Covers

It was a common belief that a holy person should not be laid to rest below ground, and the bishop could prescribe a reburial in a proper tomb monument in an *elevatio* ceremony.²²⁵ In the case of St Katarina, we know that her remains were moved from a coffin in the church floor to

²²¹ "iðth væl prydt kar" Elfving and Friz, 46.

²²² "i purpuraklædhet som lågh i lisslo kistone" in Elfving and Friz, 48. The silk is described as a «iðthrodt purpura klædha.»

²²³ Elfving and Friz, 49.

²²⁴ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 60

²²⁵ In the early Middle Ages, tomb-chests were reserved for saints. Colum Hourihane, ed. *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 114.

an elevated limestone tomb chest in the mid-fifteenth century.²²⁶ Parallels can be drawn to the cult of Nils Hermansson in Linköping; his remains were moved to a tomb chest in the northern choir chapel of Linköping Cathedral at the beginning of the fifteenth century.²²⁷ According to Colum Hourihane, carved effigies and elevated tombs, such as the one in Linköping, emphasised saintly presence.²²⁸ For the grave of Katarina, however, an embroidered textile cover with a full-size image of the saint was commissioned in the second half of the fifteenth century. NRB describes the textile as embroidered with the image of St Katarina, beautifully executed and probably made of gold threads, pearls and silk.²²⁹

Parts of Katarina's Tomb Cover were discovered in the 1960s during the conservation of the seventeenth-century antependium from Öreby Church located some two hundred kilometres west of Vadstena. Anne Marie Franzén convincingly argued that four bands of red velvet with embroidered minuscule letters and four pairs of heraldic shields embroidered on the same red velvet originally formed the frame of the tomb cover described in NRB.²³⁰ During conservation work, the medieval embroideries were unfastened from the seventeenth-century antependium, and Franzén discovered that they were originally placed in a rectangular frame with a pair of heraldic shields in each corner. In keeping with her findings, the fragments were applied to a red rectangular fabric to reflect their original arrangement (figs. 3.1 and 3.2; cat.no. 1). The text reads:

Salve mater inclita // suecie patrona // Katerina predita // virtutum corona // seruis tuis
flagita // gra

Unfortunately, some parts are missing so the text now stops in the middle of the word 'gracianum' (*sic, graciarum*). Franzén identified the text as a prayer to St Katarina written in a Vadstena prayer book in the 1470s. It is likely that the missing parts were formulated as in the prayer book:

// gra (cianum dona // et celorum hadita // fac videre bona).²³¹

²²⁶ Andreas Lindblom, *Birgittas gyllene skrin* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1963), 18. For a recent discussion on Katarina's elevated tomb, see Lahti, "Silver Arms and Silk Heads," 82 – 83.

²²⁷ Hanna Källström, "Holmger Knutsson – En langlivad lokal Helgonkult i Uppland," *Fornvännen* 107, no. 3 (2012): 180 – 181.

²²⁸ Hourihane, *The Grove Encyclopedia*, 115.

²²⁹ "besänkt var Sanctæ catharinae belæte mycket prydeliga gjort" in Elfving and Friz, *Den stora kyrkofesten*, 32.

²³⁰ Anne Marie Franzén, "Ytterligare ett medeltida gravtäckte", *Fornvännen*, 4 (1963): 192.

²³¹ This Latin prayer is published in the Introduction of Robert Geete, ed. *Svenska böner från medeltiden: efter gamla handskrifter*, vol. 1 (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & söner, 1907-9), XVI. The prayer is described as a «memoria» of the Holy Katarina of Sweden.

The text is a tribute to the saint, who is described as a Swedish patron saint 'suecie patrona' crowned with virtues 'virtutum corona'. The latter part is worded as a prayer, asking the saint to grant her servants the gifts of mercy so that they can behold the heavenly glories. Franzén calculated the remaining letters and concluded that the rest of the text would have fitted perfectly within the frame of the tomb cover.²³²

The heraldic shields are all related to the Tott family; every pair represents either the male or female side. The Totts were one of the most powerful families in fifteenth-century Sweden and were likely the covers' donors. As Franzén pointed out, it is likely that this donation was made in the 1470s when the relations between two of the most powerful men represented in the heraldic shields - Ivar Axelsson (Tott) and Sten Sture (the elder, who became Regent of Sweden in 1470) - were still favourable.²³³ Several persons represented in the embroidered heraldry took part in the preparations for Katarina's canonisation, a process that was officially undertaken in 1475 – 77.²³⁴

Unfortunately, the central figure of Katarina is now lost and was likely confiscated during the so-called 'silver-recessions' in the sixteenth century.²³⁵ At this time, the embroidered bands (of less monetary value) were probably cut off and found their way to Öreby, where they are mentioned as "embroidered in 'monk-style' (*munkestyl*) of silver" and were re-used as part of a new antependium for the church.²³⁶ Since the embroideries are of high quality but of a different style than that of contemporary Vadstena work, previous research has attributed the tomb cover to a Stockholm workshop.²³⁷ Regardless of the place of production, the work must have been both expensive and prestigious.

Textile wrappings, *tomba palla*, for shrines were well-known in the Middle Ages. During requiem masses, the coffin was often covered with a precious cloth or a funerary pall. Saint's shrines were likewise decorated with beautiful cloths. Xinru Liu argues that by the sixth century, "lay people regarded silk clothes placed over a tomb as a testimony of a canonised

²³² Franzén, "Ytterligare ett medeltida gravtäck," 196.

²³³ Franzén, 204.

²³⁴ For example, during a hearing at Vadstena in 1475 regarding the miracles of Saint Katarina, Margareta Karlsdotter Bonde, represented in the textile with her husband Ivar Axelsson (Tott) witnessed before the committee. Franzén, 204.

²³⁵ For the silver and valuables confiscated from Vadstena in the sixteenth century, see Olle Källström, *Medeltida kyrksilver från Sverige och Finland förlorat genom Gustav Vasas konfiskationer*. (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelsens bokförlag, 1939), 279 – 285. See also pages 130 – 133 for silver confiscated from medieval vestments and other textiles.

²³⁶ "broderat med munkestylaf Sölf" in Franzén, "Ytterligare ett medeltida gravtäck," 201.

²³⁷ Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom, *Medeltida vävnader och broderier i Sverige*, facsimile of original publication from 1928 – 1929 (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1997) 108 – 110. Agnes Geijer, has argued that the embroidery was made by the famous Albert Pärlickare in Stockholm, see Agnes Geijer, *Albertus Pictor: Målare och pärlstickare* (Stockholm: Statens historiska museum, 1949) 34 – 35.

saint".²³⁸ In *Olav Haraldsson's Saga*, the king's body is brought to St Clement's Church in Trondheim, where the coffin was placed near the high altar. The Icelandic historian and saga-writer Snorre Sturlason (1170 – 1240) emphasizes the textile adornment, particularly the coffin's costly cloth cover, *pell*, and the gold-embroidered canopy, *gudvefr*, that hung above it.²³⁹ Likewise, a silk cover found in the shrine of St Erik in Uppsala, Sweden (d. 1160) originally might have been used as a cover for the older wooden shrine for the saint.²⁴⁰ Such tradition of using silk coverings to clothe saint's shrines and communicate saintly status may have influenced the use of textile tomb covers in fifteenth-century elevation ceremonies.

Although there are many references to *tomba palla* in medieval sources, to my knowledge there is only one other example of an embroidered tomb cover akin to Katarina's preserved from medieval Scandinavia.²⁴¹ The tomb cover in question is associated with Sko Abbey, located north of Stockholm, where the cult of the local saint Holmger Knutsson was active since the thirteenth century (fig. 3.3; cat.no. 2). Interestingly, this textile is contemporaneous with the fragments discussed above. However, there is a distinct difference in the quality of the work between the embroidered figure and its surrounding frame. This led Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom to suggest that the lettering, the floral scrolls and the heraldic shields were embroidered by the Cistercian nuns at Sko Abbey, whereas the main motif – the life-sized figure of Holmger Knutsson – was commissioned from a Stockholm workshop.²⁴²

Archaeological evidence suggests that Holmger Knutsson was buried in an elevated tomb chest in the choir of Sko Abbey Church.²⁴³ The embroidered tomb cover that shrouded the chest is remarkably well preserved and is one of the masterpieces of the textile galleries at the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm.²⁴⁴ The rectangular panel is framed by Latin

²³⁸ Xinru Liu, *Silk and Religion: An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People, AD 600-1200* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) 114.

²³⁹ "Var kistan sveipð pelli oc tialldat allt guðvefíom" in *Saga Ólafs konungs hins helga: Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kungliga biblioteket i Stockholm nr. 2 4to*, eds. Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason (Oslo: Dybwad, 1941) 601.

²⁴⁰ Agnes Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin", in *Erik Den Helige. Historia - Kult - Reliker*, ed. Bengt Thordeman (Stockholm: Nordisk rotogravyr, 1954), 290.

²⁴¹ A group of embroidered tomb covers dated to 1476 – 1513 are preserved in Putna monastery in Romania. One of these has a full-size figure of the princess de Mangop embroidered on red silk framed by a Latin inscription. Franzén suggests that the embroiderer was influenced by textiles used in the Eastern Orthodox Church in the design of the Swedish embroidered tomb covers: Franzén, "Ytterligare ett medeltida gravtäcke," 208.

²⁴² Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida vävnader och broderier*, 115. See also Jan Svanberg, *Furstebilder från Folkungatid* (Skara: Skaraborgs länsmuseum, 1987) 93.

²⁴³ Källström, "Holmger Knutsson," 180.

²⁴⁴ Inv. no. SHM:350.

minuscule letters embroidered in yellow, green and white silk. Inside this frame is a life-size figure of Holmger Knutsson with a sword in his right hand symbolising his status as a martyr. He wears a golden mantle over a long silk brocade tunic and dark purple shoes (fig. 3.4). On his head, he has a garland and his blonde hair curls out in a style typical of earlier gothic art (fig. 3.5). His royal ancestry and martyrdom are evident in a crown floating over his head, flanked by the letters "b" and "o" denoting "beatus (h)olmngerus".

The Latin text along the frame translates as:

Holmger, born of the luminous Swedish royal family, himself a mirror of good deeds, fallen to the bitter death and lies here decapitated. But his precious death is shown to be truly glorious through many omens.²⁴⁵

Holmger Knutsson, the son of King Knut Långe (r. 1229-34), claimed the Swedish throne after his father's death but was beheaded in 1248 after an unsuccessful attempt for the Crown.²⁴⁶ Knutsson was buried in Sko Abbey and was revered as a saint after his death. In the fifteenth century, his grave was probably an elevated stone sarcophagus in the choir, similar to those discussed for St Katarina and Bishop Nils Hermansson. The textile that covered it has inspired many studies. Hanna Källström points to a renewed interest in Holmger's cult in the fifteenth century, suggesting that the embroidered tomb cover can be understood as an attempt to revitalise his cult.²⁴⁷ Moreover, Källström propose that an elevation ceremony took place as his remains were moved from a previous grave to the stone sarcophagus, and the textile might have been commissioned for this event.²⁴⁸ Jan Svanberg suggests that the old-fashioned style of the central image, reminiscent of thirteenth-century figures, could be an intentional copy of or stylistic reference to a previous grave slab on the floor level of the choir, as the design of the cover has much in common with earlier medieval low-relief grave slabs.²⁴⁹

The tomb covers of Katarina and Holmger functioned as an external textile wrapping of the tomb, elevating its status and visual appearance and establishing parallels with carved stone effigies. If we accept Franzén's argument that the embroidered tomb cover of Katarina was donated to Vadstena Abbey Church in the 1470s by the powerful promoters of her cult, this

²⁴⁵ The latin reads: "DATUM PRECLARA REGALI STIRPE SUEORUM HOLMGERUM MORU[M] SPECULU[M] MORS STRAUIT AMARA HICQUE CUBAT CAPITE PLEXUS S[ED] MORS PRECIOSA MONSTRATUR RITE MULTIS SIG[N]IS SPECIOSA." For discussion of this inscription, see Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida vävnader och broderier*, 114.

²⁴⁶ Swedish King Knut Långe is also known as *Knut Holmgersson* or the English version King Canute II.

²⁴⁷ Källström, "Holmger Knutsson," 184.

²⁴⁸ Källström, 180 – 181.

²⁴⁹ Jan Svanberg, *Furstebilder från Folkungatid*, 93.

donation could very likely have coincided with an *elevatio*-ceremony moving her coffin to an elevated tomb monument or sarcophagus.

3.3 Swathed in Silk: Wrappings, Pouches and Parchment

At the translation in 1489 Archbishop Jakob Ulvsson uncovered Katarina's tomb, opened it and unfolded precious silks in order to reveal the 'bare' saint's bones.²⁵⁰ The use of silks in the translation of Katarina's bones can only be understood in a wider context of medieval European silks and relics. Relic silks are preserved in large numbers across European museum collections and church treasuries. Anna Muthesius estimates that more than 2000 fragments of medieval silks related to relics survive.²⁵¹ However, this number represents only a small fraction of the silks present in medieval churches, cathedrals and monasteries throughout the Middle Ages. Given that these fabrics easily deteriorate and that much was lost during later reformations and revolutions, the original number was much higher. One of the best-preserved collections of relic silks is found in the treasury of St Servatius, Maastricht, and includes more than 450 silks.²⁵² Even less comprehensive treasuries, and literary accounts, testify to the importance and antiquity of the relic wrapping process.

The practice of wrapping saints' bones in silk dates back to Early Christianity. Known examples of the use of silks in relic shrines illustrate how silks could be used in different ways to wrap a saint's bones: as a pillow, as a shroud to cover the entire body, as silken veils inside the shrine, and as the wrappings for the skull and individual relics. At St Paulinus of Trier, relics were wrapped in silk as early as c. 300 CE.²⁵³ When the first saintly shrines appeared in Scandinavia, the association between relics, silks and canonisation was already established. In Odense Cathedral in Denmark, the remains of St Canute (d. 1086) were wrapped in precious silk with eagle motifs, probably an eleventh-century Byzantine silk.²⁵⁴ The saintly king's head rested on a pillow of yellow silk with bird motifs, identified as a silk from central Asia from

²⁵⁰ "archiebisopen [...] slogh uth silkit som lagh øfverholt benen, så at beenen syntes allom bar" in Elfving and Friz, *Den Stora Kyrkofesten*, 63.

²⁵¹ Anna Muthesius, "Silks and Saints: The Rider and Peacock Silks from the Relics of Saint Cuthbert," in *St Cuthbert, His Cult and His Community*, eds. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1995), 343.

²⁵² Muthesius, "Silks and Saints," 343, see footnote 1.

²⁵³ Anna Muthesius, *Studies in Byzantine, Islamic and Near Eastern Silk Weaving* (London: Pindar, 2008) 89. One example is the sarcophagus of St Apulinus of Trier (d. 358). See Muthesius, "Silks and Saints," 344.

²⁵⁴ Anne Hedeager, "Byzantine and Oriental Silks from a Royal Shrine in Denmark AD 1100," *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings* 987 (2016): 184.

the beginnings of the 900s.²⁵⁵ The shrine of St Erik (d.1160) in Uppsala Cathedral in Sweden also contained several precious silks, including silk brocade with peacocks and winged gryphons, identified by Agnes Geijer as Northern Italian work from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.²⁵⁶ This silk was probably a late thirteenth-century gift to the saintly king's shrine.²⁵⁷ Another bundle of textiles and fragments, many of which were silks, was also found in the shrine.²⁵⁸ An account from 1303 describes the opening of the relic shrine which contained "sex ligaturis," six relic bundles or relic wrappings with relics, including the royal saint's head.²⁵⁹ During Katarina's translation, her bones were again wrapped in silk as they were laid in the new reliquary shrine: "iðh rødt purpura klædha", a red *purpura* cloth.²⁶⁰ As will be discussed below, the medieval Latin term *purpura* denoted a fabric, not a colour, and usually referred to types of silk or shot-silk taffeta. Silks were not only used as layers covering saints enshrined in large reliquaries, but also to wrap and protect smaller relic fragments and relics in altars.

3.3.1 Relic Bundles and the Reliquary Bursa

Fabrics were often arranged in a 'bundle' around the relic, with layers tied to form a small pouch. Each relic bundle often had a small strip of parchment attached, an *authentic*, with the name(s) of the saint's bones carefully written.²⁶¹ Such bundles or textile relic wrappings exist in large numbers across European museum collections and church treasuries. Since layers of silk and other fabrics completely concealed the sacred matter enclosed within, the authentic provided the only visual clue of the identity of these wrapped relics. Several relic wrappings could also be tied together in a larger textile bundle or kept in a reliquary bursa. The term bursa

²⁵⁵ Anne Hedager points to a group of Sassanid Persian silks from around 700 – 900. Hedager, "Byzantine and Oriental Silks," 183.

²⁵⁶ Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks skrin," 289.

²⁵⁷ This coverture is probably identical with a "*Baldecinum Preciosum*" mentioned in a 1293 document as a gift to St Erik's reliquary. See: Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks skrin," 289, and Inger Estham, "Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-talet," in *Uppsala Domkyrka, V. Inredning och inventarier.*, eds. Herman Bengtsson et al (Uppsala: Upplandsmuseet. 2010), 248 – 249.

²⁵⁸ See catalogue in Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin," 299 – 301.

²⁵⁹ SDHK No: 2021. (Medieval letter dates 4th of May 1303 confirming that the archbishop has opened St Erik's shrine).

²⁶⁰ Elfving and Friz, *Den Stora Kyrkofesten*, 48.

²⁶¹ 'Authentic' is a modern term for these parchment strips, also known as *cedula*. See Martina Bagnoli, "Dressing the Relics. Some Thoughts on the Custom of Relic Wrapping in Medieval Christianity," in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period.*, eds. James Robinson, Lloyd De Beer, and Anna Harnden (London: British Museum, 2014), 106.

could denote both purses for secular use and liturgical purses for containing hosts (as will be discussed in Chapter Five). This section focuses on reliquary textile bursae.²⁶²

One such textile bursa from Vadstena is now in the collections of the Swedish History Museum. This small reliquary bag measuring nineteen centimetres in length is made of brown velvet embellished with discs of gilded metal and gold bands in the shape of a cross (fig. 3.6; cat.no. 3). A golden band at the top forms a curtain hem, and an interior blue silk cordon band was used to close the purse. Each end of the band has a silver-gilt acorn. Although only two circular gilded metal spangles remain, traces of additional applied decoration can be seen on the velvet surface and in an old photograph showing the bursa with rows of metal spangles still intact (fig. 3.7).²⁶³ The original appearance of the lush velvet, glimmering gold disks and bands, and detailed ribbons with gilded acorns is hard to imagine when faced with the faded and fragmented textile today. The reliquary bursa is believed to have belonged to Vadstena Abbey before it was deposited in the Swedish College of Antiquities (Antikvitetskollegiet) sometime before 1693, when it is mentioned in their inventory as a purse with some smaller holy relics; “pungh medh någre små Sannctorum reliquiis”.²⁶⁴ The use of brown velvet in combination with gilded metal spangles indicate that it was made by Birgittine nuns at Vadstena in the fifteenth century, meaning it could have been used at Katarina’s translation since a relic associated with her was wrapped in one of the enclosed silk bundles.²⁶⁵

Reliquary bursae were lightweight, wearable and suitable for trade and gift exchange.²⁶⁶ Lahti argues that such practical purposes should guide our understanding of textile bursae, stating that their ‘visual contribution’ was less significant than metal reliquaries and those with narrative or ‘representative illustrations’:

“(…) the rather simple cloth bursa was not so much a visual contribution to the cult of relics, but a practical one. Instead of representative illustrations, most of them are only ornamentally decorated.”²⁶⁷

Although the Vadstena Bursa lacks narrative embroidery, the visual effect of costly velvet, gilded metal embellishment and pleated silk and gold ribbons should not be underestimated. A

²⁶² While smaller wooden, metal and ivory containers could be described as a burse, the most common type was small purse-like containers made of cloth.

²⁶³ The photograph is published in Braun, *Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes*, image number 589, Tafel 154

²⁶⁴ Ture J. Arne, “Antikvitetskollegiets och Antikvitetsarkivets samlingar,” *Fornvännen* 26 (1931): 69.

²⁶⁵ This specific combination of brownish velvet and gilded metal spangles is very similar to the design of another Vadstena reliquary, the reliquary box presented in Figure 1.15, inv. no. SHM 349:3.

²⁶⁶ Reliquary bursae could also be suspended around the neck of sculptures or used for enclosing relics within a sculpture. Lahti, “Silver Arms and Silk Heads,” 157 – 158.

²⁶⁷ Lahti, 158.

main argument in this study is that so called ornamental or mixed-media embroidery employing pearls, gilded metal and silks was central to medieval textile aesthetics. As will be discussed in the following chapter on altar textiles, ornamental and three-dimensional embroideries have been less valued than flat, narrative embroideries known as “needlepainting” within art historical scholarship. However, the inclusion of gilded metals and silk ribbons in the Vadstena Bursa created aesthetic effects that, in a dimly lit church, could ‘work’ on the beholder in ways that are easily overlooked today. While metal reliquaries were certainly of a higher monetary value, this does not mean that the Vadstena Bursa could not produce reliquary effects establishing “value, presentation and context” for the relics enclosed within.²⁶⁸

It is quite rare in a Scandinavian context to have a reliquary container with wrappings and relics preserved, as most of them were destroyed during the Reformation. Other known examples include a bursa from Turku Cathedral and one from Uppsala.²⁶⁹ The Vadstena reliquary bursa with its relic bundles demonstrates one common characteristic of medieval textiles clothing the sacred: the layer-upon-layer application of precious fabrics (Figure 3.8). After an initial layer of linen, each bundle was carefully tied together in blue silk before being deposited in the ornate velvet purse. This multi-layered application of one or more initial layers of linen with layers of silks around them is a common formula for relic wrapping.²⁷⁰ Each bundle was rarely opened, so the parchment strips identified the sacred matter within. Looking at and interacting with these relics in most cases meant encountering multi-layered and costly textiles.

3.3.2 Silk Skull Reliquaries

In other cases, the relationship between content and wrapping was even more blurred. A relic skull from Turku Cathedral in Finland is swathed in multiple layers of textiles (fig. 3.9; cat.no. 4). In this case, however, textiles are not only wrapping the sacred bones but are integral to the construction and assemblage of the relic itself.²⁷¹ While the provenance and dating of the relic

²⁶⁸ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 6.

²⁶⁹ The Turku bursa is made of linen in blue, red and green and contained small relics with parchment *cedula*. The Uppsala bursa is made of a red Italian silk brocaded with patterns in gold and contains a cervical vertebra traditionally attributed to St Erik. See Lahti, “Silver Arms and Silk Heads,” 158.

²⁷⁰ Lahti, 303.

²⁷¹ The textiles and embroidery are discussed in Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida vävnader och broderier*, 30, Geijer, «Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin,» and Carl Axel Nordman, «En relik av Erik den Helige i Åbo Domkyrka,» in *Erik den Helige. Historia - Kult - Relikier.*, ed. Bengt Thordeman (Stockholm: Nordisk rotogravyr, 1954), 303–20. Recent discussions include Lahti, “Silver Arms and Silk Heads,” 294 – 314, Aki Arponen, “The Medieval Skull Relic of Turku Cathedral. Preliminary Results of Analyses,” *Mirator* 16, no. 1 (2015): 104–16. and Visa Immonen and Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen, “Finger of a Saint, Thumb of a Priest:

skull from Turku have been much debated, stylistic analysis and radiocarbon dating suggests it was made in the mid-fourteenth century.²⁷² The Turku skull reliquary is therefore slightly older than the focus of this study, nonetheless fifteenth-century alterations testify to continued usage and possibly renewed cult practices in Turku Cathedral.²⁷³ Lahti's survey identifies around fifty preserved or documented Scandinavian head relics.²⁷⁴ Skull relics were commonly wrapped in layers of silk and linen before being deposited in wood or metal reliquaries. One such example is the silk 'cap' preserved at the National Museum in Copenhagen, which probably wrapped the skull of St Lucius inside a reliquary bust in Roskilde Cathedral.²⁷⁵ Lahti argues that the practice of wrapping skulls in layers of linen and silk before depositing them in metal or wooden reliquaries influenced the development of silk skull reliquaries.²⁷⁶ Such silk skull reliquaries are found across medieval Europe, but are especially associated with the cult of the 11,000 Virgins in Cologne.²⁷⁷ The Turku skull relic differs from the Cologne skulls by its composite design of many individual bone fragments rather than a complete skull.²⁷⁸ Each bone fragment was wrapped in linen, and the textile pouches were then stitched together to create a small skull-like structure. Linen padding and additional textile layers were then applied. Technical analysis by Aki Arponen has discerned three additional layers of fabric: a linen cover with two layers of silk on top.²⁷⁹ The outermost layer is a costly Chinese silk in red with animal motifs, with a damaged or incomplete embroidery depicting a beheading on the front (fig. 3.11).²⁸⁰ This unique embroidered scene, stylistically dated to the mid-fourteenth century, has puzzled scholars. While interpretations including the decapitation of St Erik of Sweden have been

Medieval Relics in the Diocese of Turku, and the Archaeology of Lived Bodies," *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 23 (2011): 141–73.

²⁷² The most recent contribution to the discussion of provenance and dating is given by Lahti, estimating c. 1350 in her catalogue: Lahti, "Silver Arms and Silk Heads," 604 (cat.no. 631). As Lahti acknowledges in her discussion or the relic construction and dating, the issue is complicated by issues of reuse and remodelling, and the skull reliquary textiles radiocarbon dating spanning from the from between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Lahti, 299.

²⁷³ Lahti, 305.

²⁷⁴ Lahti, 239.

²⁷⁵ Lahti, 250 – 251. See also *Lena Liepe*, "Holy heads," forthcoming.

²⁷⁶ Lahti, "Silver Arms and Silk Heads," 286 – 287.

²⁷⁷ Aki Arponen, Visa Immonen and Heli Maijanen, "From Bones to Sacred Artefact: The Late Medieval Skull Relic of Turku Cathedral, Finland," *Temenos* 54, no. 2 (2018): 168 – 169.

²⁷⁸ For detailed discussion and radiocarbon dating on the various bone fragments in linen pouches that constructed the skull, see Arponen, "The Medieval Skull Relic," 107 – 113.

²⁷⁹ Arponen, 112. See also analysis of a fabric that is made of cotton in Aki Arponen, Ina Vanden Berghe and Jussi Kinnunen, "Red Farbrics in the Relic Assemblage of Turku Cathedral," in *Relics @ The Lab, An Analytical Approach to the Study of Relics*, eds. Mark van Strydonck, Jeroen Reyniers And Fanny van Cleven (Peeters: Leuven, 2018), 7 -8.

²⁸⁰ Geijer suggest a probable date of the silk to early fourteenth century, certainly in the first half of the thirteenth century: Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin," 293. Geijer's stylistic dating corresponds with recent radiocarbon determining as stated by Arponen: "The radiocarbon dating result, 1220–1310 and 1360– 1390 calAD, does not contradict Geijer's dating." in Arponen, "The Medieval Skull Relic," 113.

proposed, the iconography remains uncertain.²⁸¹ Nevertheless, the presence of an embroidered decapitation on a skull relic provided an impactful visual reminder of the martyrdom of the saintly remains wrapped within. These outer silk layers physically bound the construction together and were tightly sewn around the skull in order to create its skull-shaped appearance. Thus, the Turku skull is an intriguing example of the interwoven relationship between relic and reliquary: fabrics both built the relic and enshrined it in a reliquary silk container. In short, linen pouches and layers of silk were stitched together to create a body-shaped relic *and* its reliquary.

Alterations to the Turku reliquary give some insight into how these silk skulls were displayed in the fifteenth century. A green plaited silk ribbon is arranged under the outer layer of silk, sticking out on the damaged right side and forming a small loop on the left (fig. 3.10). These green plaited silk ribbons were probably added sometime after 1400 in order to suspend the reliquary skull.²⁸² However, as both Geijer and Lahti have pointed out, the arrangement of the loops could not carry the full weight of the skull.²⁸³ Therefore, Geijer proposed that the ribbons attached the relic to a gilded ostensorium designed to support and frame the relic for public veneration. At the turn of the fifteenth century, reliquary ostensoria made of rock crystal and metalwork became hugely popular, and the remodelling of the Turku Silk Skull Reliquary may reflect a desire to display the Cathedral's precious relic in a more impactful manner.²⁸⁴ Moreover, Geijer suggests that the mostly-lost metal embellishments, pearls and corals may have been part of a fifteenth-century re-fashioning of the Turku reliquary. While such bead and metal embellishments are characteristic of fifteenth-century embroidery, they are considerably less common before 1400.²⁸⁵ Since traces of such embellishments are found on the back of the silk skull, Geijer argues that the reliquary was intended to be viewed in the round, both in processions and in the ostensorium.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Since this embroidery is dated earlier than the main focus of this study, I will not go into detail of its technical analysis, iconography and research history. For a recent discussion and survey of its research history, see Lahti, "Silver Arms and Silk Heads," 306 – 310.

²⁸² Both radiocarbon dating by Aki Arponen and textile analysis by Agnes Geijer determine that this silk ribbons are younger than the rest of the reliquary. Geijer points to the fifteenth century, while radiocarbon dating indicated that it was made after 1395. Geijer argues that the green ribbons cannot be dated before 1400, see Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin," 296. Radiocarbon results for the ribbons were 1395 – 1435 with 68,2% probability, see Arponen, "The Medieval Skull Relic," 115.

²⁸³ Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin," 294, and Lahti, "Silver Arms and Silk Heads," 305.

²⁸⁴ Geijer points to the relic collection of St Moritz Church in Halle, Germany, where a c. 1400 silver ostensorium display a rock crystal dove in a similar manner as she imagines the Turku ostensorium. Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin," 294 – 295.

²⁸⁵ Geijer, 296.

²⁸⁶ Geijer, 294.

3.3.3 Relic Silks in Altars

Most medieval relics were tiny fragments of sacred matter encapsulated in a variety of types of smaller containers. Altar reliquaries made of lead, wood, or occasionally textile or ceramic, differ from the other reliquaries discussed here in that the vessels were never supposed to be taken out for public veneration. Relics deposited in altars were commonly wrapped in silk and linen before being enclosed in their small containers. Lahti underlines the protective and functional aspects of such containers for altar relics:

Relics in *sepulchra* are usually wrapped in simple, visually plain packages of protective material. This implies that it was their presence that mattered in this case, rather than any aesthetic design, and that they would only be seen by few people during the brief moments of the consecration.²⁸⁷

This statement is true for the plain and functional lead containers, but inside these boxes were precious silks and finely woven and dyed linens wrapping the relics, often arranged in many layers.

Wrapping relics in fabrics before depositing them in the altar was the norm in medieval Scandinavia. Sixty-three relic containers and bundles from medieval Danish altars are preserved in the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen. In surveying this collection, I found that the fifty-six objects with intact or partly intact contents all contained fabrics or fragments of fabrics. Of these fifty-six cases, more than half contained textiles that can be identified as silks.²⁸⁸ Moreover, seven boxes were empty and without their original contents.²⁸⁹ While red or purple-reddish colours are most common, a variety of hues were found and some silks have faded and lost their original appearance. Sixteen objects had fabrics that were so fragmented or disintegrated that the type of textile could not be determined, and eight had linen wrappings, most commonly dyed in blue.²⁹⁰ This innermost layer of precious textiles was about protection, yet the aesthetic effects of precious fabrics dignifying the concealed sacred matter, was also a cause of concern. For instance, a lead box with unknown provenance measuring 5,1 x 3,6 x 2,2 centimetres contains a bone fragment and a piece of wood wrapped in a luxurious Sassanian silk in yellow, white and brown (these colors may have originally appeared quite different)

²⁸⁷ Lahti, "Silver Arms and Silk Heads," 49.

²⁸⁸ 32 objects had silk wrappings: inv. nos. D58, D59, D60, D61, D63, D64, D65, D67, D68, D72, 213, 277, 281, D283, D1004, 3600, 6358, D6599, D7230, 9086, 9544, 9746, 10371, 10373, D10971, D12248, 12359, 13721, 13968, 19750, 20950 and 21237, all DNM.

²⁸⁹ Inv. nos.: D57, 346, 406, 761, D12094, 22403 and DCCLVII, all DNM.

²⁹⁰ Eight objects had linen wrappings: inv. nos. D26, D73, D96, D724, 7109, D9492 and DXXV, all DNM.

patterned with medallions framed by pearl borders and eight-pointed stars.²⁹¹ Another lead container measuring 4,4 x 2,9 x 1,5 centimeters contains a bone fragment wrapped in an inner layer of white linen and an outer silk brocade.²⁹² ‘Clothing the bones’ before they were encapsulated in containers and deposited in the altar stands as strong material evidence for the importance of relic wrappings beyond practical function. By far the most common textile for relic wrappings were silks. Although relics could be wrapped in linen, silks were likely favoured in part because the material conjured up specific cultural and religious meanings.

3.4 The Material Significance of Silk

Since the early Middle Ages, silk was the preferred material used to wrap holy bones. The raw material of silk is the thread secreted from silkworms and spun into a cocoon. Isidore of Seville writes in his bestiary about different worms: “Silkworms (*bombyx*) are leaf vermin. Silkcloth (*bombycinum*) is prepared from their web.”²⁹³ While there are few technical studies determining specific dyestuffs used in medieval silks preserved in Scandinavia, raw silk was dyed using various plants, insects, shells, shellfish and metals.²⁹⁴ After the dyeing, threads could be used unspun, or they could be spun in order to manipulate the fibres and produce silk thread from waste material such as damaged cocoons and surface floss.²⁹⁵ Weave structures are important for the aesthetic effects of silk surfaces, which could be plain, patterned or velvet. Moreover, silk could also be used for tablet weaving, embroidery and the production of metal-wrapped silk thread. Gold brocades were created by interweaving silk and golden threads.²⁹⁶ Metal-wrapped thread was made by cutting thin sheets of gold or silver into narrow strips (*lamellae*) which were wound around a core of silk or linen thread. ‘Membrane gold’, a technique where gold sheets are hammered onto an animal membrane which is then cut into lamellae and wound around a core of silk thread, is also known.²⁹⁷ This inclusion of gold in brocades or velvets

²⁹¹ Inv. no. D61, DNM, unknown provenance

²⁹² Inv. no. D65, DNM, unknown provenance.

²⁹³ *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 259 (XII.5.8).

²⁹⁴ Marianne Vedeler, *Silk for the Vikings* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014) 49. For a comprehensive introduction to pre-modern dyeing, see Dominique Cardon, *Natural Dyes: Sources, Tradition, Technology and Science* (London: Archetype, 2007).

²⁹⁵ On the spinning of silk threads, see Vedeler, *Silk for the Vikings*, 52. See also analysis of dye stuffs in the Turku Relic Silk Skull in Aki Arponen et al, Red Farbrics in the Relic Assemblage of Turku Cathedral,” 7-8.

²⁹⁶ Diasper weave is characteristic for Italian silk weaves from around 1200 to the beginning of the fifteenth century. For technical description, see Agnes Geijer, *Ur Textilkonstens Historia* (Stockholm: Gidlunds förlag, 2006) 77.

²⁹⁷ A more detailed discussion of these two types of metal threads is presented in Vedeler, *Silk for the Vikings*, 54 – 55.

enhanced the shimmering effect of silk surfaces. Since the Viking age, silk was a sought-after and precious commodity in Scandinavia and the silk trade flourished through eastern trade routes along the Russian river system.²⁹⁸ Until silk production was established in Northern Italy in the fourteenth century, silks came from Byzantium, Persia, Islamic Egypt and the Near East, and Central Asia.²⁹⁹ By the fifteenth century, North Italian silks dominated the market, and there is a considerable quantity of Italian silks and velvets preserved in Scandinavian collections, especially in the Swedish cathedral treasury of Uppsala.³⁰⁰

Since silk was made from worms, it was understood as especially pure and suitable for liturgical textiles. Durand states that silk was made without intercourse, and thus symbolised chastity and humility.³⁰¹ In the visions of Birgitta of Vadstena, Christ speaks to her about three materials for clothing: linen, leather and silk. Although silk was more costly than the other fabrics, the expense was justified by the sheer beauty of the material and its associations with innocence and chastity: “Although the latter is more expensive than the rest, it is also so much more beautiful than the other clothes that no other virtue seems beautiful without it.”³⁰² Christ then proceeds to liken silk, made with abstinence, with himself: “for I became like a worm for the sake of humankind”.³⁰³ Bagnoli points out that since silk became a symbol of being in “a state of grace” it is significant that Adam and Eve were clothed in tunics made of animal skin instead of linen or silk (both made without sin) after the Fall of Man.³⁰⁴ Thus, silk was understood as a pure and virtuous material appropriate for wrapping the most sacred objects and bodies.

In addition to the religious symbolism justifying the medieval taste for luxurious silks, the extensive use of silk for relic wrappings, tomb covers, and textile reliquaries can be seen in light of aesthetic experience. Silks were particularly suited for rhetorical displays both because of their sensuous and shimmering surfaces, and due to the flexibility of their soft, flexible fabric used to wrap and unwrap sacred bones. Issues of craftsmanship, such as an admiration for woven

²⁹⁸ Vedeler, *Silk for the Vikings*, 67.

²⁹⁹ Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta, “Introduction” in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, eds. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016) 8.

³⁰⁰ Agnes Gejer claims that there are more late medieval Italian silks preserved in Sweden than in Italy, referring to the vast amount of Italian silk preserved as vestments, relic wrappings and as fragments in Swedish collections: Gejer, *Ur Textilkonstens Historia*, 281.

³⁰¹ William Durand, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments: A New Translation of Books 2 and 3 of The Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (Chicago: University of Scranton Press, 2010) 176.

³⁰² Birgitta of Sweden, *Liber caelestis. The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume 1, Books I–III*, trans. Denis Searby. Introduction and notes by Bridget Morris. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 242.

³⁰³ Birgitta, *Revelations of St. Birgitta I–III*, 242.

³⁰⁴ Bagnoli, “Dressing the Relics,” 106.

fabrics of foreign origin made of golden and silk threads and featuring intricate patterns, played into the aesthetic appeal of silk.

Written sources further reveal a high level of textile knowledge and awareness of silk fabrics. Silks are described by at least twenty different fabric names in Old Norse, including *pell*, *gudvefr*, *silki*, *bissus*, and *baldrskinn*.³⁰⁵ In the Vadstena eye-witness account, the silks used for wrapping bones and clothing reliquaries are described as *silki*, *rødt sather* and *rødt purpura klædha*, all of which can designate various silks. However, tracing the exact terminology poses some difficulty since the text is written in Old Swedish (*fornsvänsk*) with a mixture of vernacular, Latin and German words. While the textile described as *rødt sather* was certainly in a red hue, Agnes Geijer argues that the term *sather* was used for fine cotton weaves while Hjalmar Falk points out that variations of the term described both silk fabrics (*setteni*) and a fine linen weaves (*setar*).³⁰⁶ In any case, the same term was used to describe a fabric owned by Queen Blanche of Sweden in her 1365 will, suggesting that it was a costly and rare fabric.³⁰⁷ The red *purpura* cloth described in NRB poses similar difficulties. While ‘purpur’ is used as a colour-term in Scandinavian languages today, the medieval Latin term *purpura* described high-quality woven fabrics in a range of colours made of silks and sometimes even wool.³⁰⁸ For example, the Icelandic inventories mention a chasuble made of white ‘purpura’; *purpurahokull hvitr*.³⁰⁹ As Lisa Monnas has pointed out, the colour-adjective *purpureus* co-existed with the noun, and referred to the red family of hues including dark red, red-violet or red-brownish colours.³¹⁰ Red silks, like the red ‘purpura’ used at Vadstena, were especially suitable for wrapping relics due to their association with martyrdom.³¹¹

³⁰⁵ Hjalmar Falk, *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Terminologie*, (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1919) 69 -73. Falk mentions: Bliat, Baldikin, Ciclad, Sindal, Strik, Eximi, Bastard, Fluel, Heidinsykki, Gullvefr, Osterin, Jacinctus, Setteni, Damask and Atlask.

³⁰⁶ Geijer, *Ur Textilkonstens Historia*, 245. While variations of the word ‘setteni’ denoted silks similar to today’s satin, ‘setar’ described dyed fine linen cloths. See Falk, *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde*, 63 – 64 and 72 – 73.

³⁰⁷ Postmortem inventory of Blanche of Namur (who died 1363 or 1364) DN II 271 (no 344).

³⁰⁸ C. R. Dodwell has suggested "a thick, shiny silk cloth, possibly shot-silk taffeta, that is taffeta with warp and weft in different colours." in Gale R. Owen-Crocker, "Brides, Donors, Traders: Imports into Anglo-Saxon England," in *Textiles and the Medieval Economy: Production, Trade, and Consumption of Textiles, 8th -16th Centuries*, ed. Angela Ling Huang and Carsten Jahnke (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 66 (footnote 8). Lisa Monnas points out that there is at least one known example of wool from the thirteenth century described as “*purpura*” although the term in most cases denoted an expensive silk textile in a range of colours. Lisa Monnas, “Some Medieval Colour Terms for Textiles,” in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, eds. Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker, *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, vol. 10 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), 48.

³⁰⁹ Falk, *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde*, 69.

³¹⁰ Monnas, “Some Medieval Colour Terms for Textiles,” 48. For medieval hue-families, especially the red-purple family, see John Gage, *Colour and Meaning. Art, Science and Symbolism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000) 71 – 73.

³¹¹ On red as a symbol of martyrdom in medieval culture, with its associations to blood and the Pentecostal fire, see Gage, *Colour and Meaning*, 70.

In addition to colour, patterns were important for the aesthetic effects of relic silks. Documentary sources from medieval Scandinavia often describe silks used for ecclesiastical textiles as *heidinstykki* or heathen cloths, suggesting that people in Northern Europe were aware of the Islamic origin of these fabrics.³¹² Islamic silks with gold brocading, animal or geometric motifs and Kufic lettering were highly sought after in the medieval West. Since these silks were traded over great distances, European users had little influence over patterns, and while there are examples of Islamic silks incorporating Christian iconography tailored towards an export market, patterns generally did not employ Christian motifs or symbols.³¹³ Avinoam Shalem's research has shed new light on the reframing and reuse of Islamic textiles in the medieval West.³¹⁴ He points out the apparent paradox that Islamic silks came to wrap relics, the most sacred matter in European Christian culture.³¹⁵ Shalem argues that Islamic textiles were desired for their luxurious materials, intricate patterns and highly skilled craftsmanship.³¹⁶ Silk then, was a language of holiness, one which the 'keepers' of relics and church treasuries could not control in terms of patterns or iconography. The foreign motifs and meanings were, however, incorporated into a Christian understanding of silk as a pure and suitable material for clothing holy bones.

Chinese silks also demonstrate how concepts of craftsmanship, foreign patterns and techniques and luxurious materiality played into the fabric's appreciation in the medieval West. One example is found in the top layer of the Turku skull relic, a Chinese silk with fantastical motifs emerging against a shiny red background. Clouds are scattered over the surface, framing a two-headed bird and a tortoise with an elongated neck and sharp claws. Aki Arponen argues that these are the phoenix Fenghuang and the tortoise Bixi known in Chinese mythology.³¹⁷ As with the Islamic silks discussed above, the patterns of Chinese silks did not incorporate Western-European Christian symbols, but the fabrics were nevertheless frequently used for relic wrappings and liturgical purposes. Rather than Christian iconography, these woven patterns suggest a playfulness resonant with medieval aesthetics. *Ludus*, as serious play, involved poesis and making and reflected the craftsman's ability to bend or break artisan

³¹² Falk, *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde*, 72.

³¹³ von Fircks and Schorta, *Oriental Silks*, 8.

³¹⁴ Avinoam Shalem, *The Chasuble of Thomas Becket: A Biography*, Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998).

³¹⁵ The religious significance of silk was also strengthened by crusaders sending home relics wrapped in Byzantine and Islamic silks

³¹⁶ Shalem, *The Chasuble of Thomas Becket*, 10.

³¹⁷ Arponen, "The Medieval Skull Relic," 113.

conventions. Mary Carruthers compares the concept of *ludus* to our modern-day notion of creativity, which is still closely connected to artistic skill and invention.³¹⁸ Paul Binski suggests that the playfulness found in hybrid mixtures and fantastical creatures may function as a means of persuasion, emphasising an artwork's potential to engage and draw us in: "in the witty manipulation of things lies their actual power to charm, move, and convince."³¹⁹ Such aesthetics of wonder and curiosity is found in the fantastical woven creatures in the Turku silk. At the time the Turku silk was made, nothing like it could be produced in Europe. In the fourteenth century, however, Italian weavers started to play with the Chinese aesthetic of silk, resulting in what Geijer described as a "stylistic explosion" of animal and floral patterns in the 'wild' or 'free' style characterised by asymmetrical and dynamic compositions. Among the relic silks from St Erik's shrine in Uppsala is a purse wrapping the saint's neck vertebrae, made of a North Italian silk with motifs influenced by Chinese patterns.³²⁰ The demand, trade and appreciation of silks were not only dependent on luxurious materiality, but also their intricate patterns. A certain playfulness can be found in Chinese textile motifs that did not reflect Christian theology. Rather, their power lay in their ability to engage, convince and move the medieval viewer. In order to better understand the role that silk played in the medieval cult of relics, issues of craftsmanship, religious and cultural association as well as the shimmering aesthetics of silk surfaces must be taken into consideration. In sum, these material histories and surfaces help to explain why silk became a sought-after material for wrapping, enshrining and adorning medieval relics.

3.5 The Shrine of St Katarina

Luxurious silks held a central position in Katarina's translation ceremony in 1489. The Birgittine saint was not only wrapped in layers of silks, but was also enshrined in a silk reliquary. Katarina's bones were veiled in purpura silk, put in a small shrine which was locked before it was placed in the larger reliquary shrine embellished with silk, gold, and precious stones. The encapsulating layers of textiles and textile shrines are characteristic of what Hahn and others have described as 'reliquary nesting', where multiple nested containers enshrine

³¹⁸ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 25.

³¹⁹ Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290-1350* (Yale University Press, 2014) 298.

³²⁰ The Uppsala relic silk is discussed in Geijer, "Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin," 290 – 293.

relics.³²¹ Known as ‘the Shrine of Birgitta’ and preserved at Vadstena Abbey, the object was originally made for the translation of Katarina’s mother a century earlier (fig. 3.12; cat.no 5). The shrine is made of wood and covered with crimson velvet and metal spangles. It resembles the wood and gilt-copper house-shaped reliquaries well-known from medieval Scandinavia.³²² The symbolism of these reliquaries as the eternal houses for the saints in the church was evident in their design. By the late fourteenth century, such modest houses had been supplanted by architectural shrines resembling cathedrals made in silver and gold. Why, then, was the old-fashioned reliquary type chosen? In contrast to the canonisation process of Katarina, Birgitta was declared a saint remarkably quickly, only eighteen years after her death in Rome. It is possible that they needed a shrine immediately after the arrival of her relics in Sweden, and that the wooden coffer embellished with silk and metal decorations was a quicker and more affordable option. Right after her translation, the Abbey started raising funds for a larger shrine made in gilded silver, probably in the shape of a Gothic cathedral. St Erik’s Shrine at Uppsala, known from a copper engraving, was of the same type. The 1412 Birgitta shrine, weighing over 90 kilos in silver, was melted down in 1573 to finance a war against Russia.³²³

Even though it could not compete with the 1412 shrine in visual splendour or monetary value, the house-shaped reliquary clothed with silks and metal spangles was considered a dignified resting place for Birgitta, and eventually her daughter Katarina. The shrine was originally fitted with 437 silver-gilt ornaments. There are several examples of wooden shrines adorned with stamped or pressed metal spangles similar to those of the Vadstena Shrine, including one in Aachen, Germany.³²⁴ Most of the Vadstena ornaments were stamped, while others were cast and decorated with precious stones and enamel (figs. 3.13 – 3.15). Many of these ornaments are armorial bearings and emblems, probably from the families who donated money towards the cost of the shrine or in other ways financially supported the convent in Vadstena. Others employed Marian iconography familiar from Birgittine embroideries. These metal embellishments are not in their original position today. A greater number of gilded ornaments would have covered the entire lid of the shrine and most of its sides, creating an impactful contrast between lush red velvet and gilded ornaments and making the shrine shine

³²¹ “Nesting effects” in reliquaries are discussed in Hahn, *Reliquary Effect*, 57 – 71. Architectural settings can also be discussed as additional “nesting” such as the Octagonal structure enshrining Saint Olav’s *chasse* in Trondheim Cathedral, as discussed briefly in Chapter One.

³²² House-shaped reliquaries are preserved in Danish, Swedish and Norwegian collections, surveyed by Lahti, cat.nos. 108, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 143, 144 and 145, see Lahti, “Silver Arms and Silk Heads,” 501 – 508. Similar Church- and Chapel-shaped caskets are also preserved and surveyed in Lahti’s catalogue.

³²³ Lindblom, *Birgittas gyllene skrin*, 20.

³²⁴ Braun, *Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes*, 149.

in a dimly lit church. Even today, the shrine glimmers in the candles lit before it, reminding us of its former glory and aesthetic effects. By the time of Katarina's translation, it was refurbished with a new silk lining decorated with embroideries in gold, silk and pearls. Again, the Abbey started raising funds for a metal shrine and the goldsmith Johannes Menss started working on it in 1513. However, the raw silver was confiscated by Gustav Vasa in 1524 before its completion.³²⁵

While few textile reliquary shrines are preserved, the practice of covering wooden reliquary shrines with layers of previous materials was common in the medieval period. Joseph Braun describes wooden reliquary shrines covered with metal, ivory, bone, leather, silk, velvet and embroideries.³²⁶ Shrines covered in embroidered textiles are preserved in St Ursula in Cologne, Germany and at Melk Stift in Melk, Austria.³²⁷ Four shrines covered with textiles are listed in records of ecclesiastical treasures confiscated by Gustav Vasa from the Birgittine Naantali Abbey near Turku in Finland.³²⁸ Braun points out the fragility of these materials and suggests that wooden reliquaries covered with textiles in silk, velvet and embroideries might have been more common than the few preserved examples indicate.³²⁹

3.6 Birgittine Textile Reliquaries

Thiofrid's description of a reliquary as a "skilfully wrought garment" plays on textile rhetoric and metaphors, evoking the reliquary's ability to clothe saintly bones and to animate and display saintly presence. Although textile reliquaries rarely survive, and thus are less discussed in scholarship than their crystal, metal and ivory counterparts, Braun argues that textile reliquaries in the form of clothed boxes, shrines and purses existed across Europe.³³⁰ According to Hahn's definition of a reliquary as a "container intended to protect its relic contents," Katarina's Shrine and the Vadstena relic bursa discussed in this chapter, as well as the smaller silks wrapping each relic in a bundle, are indeed textile reliquaries.³³¹ However, a small group of skull reliquaries made by the Birgittine nuns at Vadstena offer a more direct link to Thiofrid's account. This unique group consists of four oval boxes with lids on wooden feet, each of which

³²⁵ Lindblom, *Birgittas gyllene skrin*, 24 and Källström, *Medeltida kyrksilver*, 279 – 280.

³²⁶ Braun, *Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes*, 132.

³²⁷ Braun, 574.

³²⁸ Källström, *Medeltida kyrksilver*, 319. Naantali Abbey (also known as Nädendal Abbey) was a Birgittine monastery in operation from 1438 to 1591, where nuns were skilled in textile work.

³²⁹ Braun, *Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes*, 575.

³³⁰ Braun describes a considerable corpus of textile bursae, as well as a group of embroidered reliquaries, see Braun, 574 – 575, and 137 – 139.

³³¹ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 6

is entirely clothed in embroidered and woven textiles (figs. 3.16 – 3.19).³³² Described by Braun as 'Reliquienziborium,' the boxes are somewhat similar to metal ciborium-reliquaries.³³³ Both types mount circular or octagonal vessels on a foot, a form reminiscent of the chalice-shaped container for eucharistic hosts. Unlike ciboria, the Vadstena reliquaries are slightly oval in their shape, reflecting their use as containers for skulls. One of the reliquaries has an embroidered inscription at the top identifying the now- lost relic as the head of a martyr associated with St Gereon of Cologne.³³⁴ A written source describes a total of five textile reliquaries at the Abbey when the Birgittine monastery was closed in 1595.³³⁵

Another of these reliquaries was transferred to Linköping Cathedral, likely in the post-medieval period, and is therefore known as the Linköping Reliquary (fig. 3.16 and 3.20; cat.no. 6).³³⁶ The framework for the reliquary is an oval bentwood box mounted on a foot made of turned wood, with a detached lid. This structure is completely swathed in a variety of fabrics; the base of the foot is covered in embroidered silk taffeta and the turned foot is surrounded by red and gold brocade velvet and embroidered tabby weaves. The exterior sides of the box and lid were originally covered by silk embroideries and embellishments. Areas where applied décor have been removed reveal the unbleached tabby weave ground fabric, indicating the loss of several circular embellishments.

In contrast to areas of loss, the minute split stitches in red, green and blue silk are remarkably well preserved and show a high degree of artistic execution. Although the colours have faded, the sheen and movements of these silk surfaces are remarkable to observe. There is a certain dynamism in the stitching and the direction of threads creates prism-like structures that echo the shape of the red ornamental band running across the reliquary's exterior. Moreover, the exterior bottom of the box is covered by a pinkish (originally bright red) silk taffeta with multicoloured silk embroideries that depict peacock feathers. In addition to this

³³² SHM 349:1, SHM 349:2, SHM 349:3 Linköping 3920:6 (possibly new inv no in Linköping)

³³³ Braun, *Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes*, 222.

³³⁴ The embroidered inscription reads: "Istud capud est onnis sancti martiris qui fuit de co(n)soriis sancti gereonis martiris" which translates to "This head belongs to a martyr, which was among the followers of the martyr Saint Gereon." This reliquary is now in the Swedish History Museum, inv no SHM 349:1. For inscription, see Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida vävnader och broderier*, 95.

³³⁵ Eva Lindqvist Sandgren, "Ett "väl utsmyckat skrin" för Katarina av Vadstena? En omtolkning av det broderade relikvariet i Linköpings Domkyrkomuseum", *ICO Iconographisk Post. Nordisk Tidskrift För Bildtolkning – Nordic Review of Iconography*, no. 1–2 (2019): 41.

³³⁶ As will be argued below, a provenance of Vadstena and Katarina's translation in 1489 is proposed here, supported by new research by Eva Lindqvist Sandgren and Ingela Wahlberg. The oldest mention of the reliquary in any inventories from Linköping cathedral is from 1692, and it is possible that the reliquary ended up in Linköping after the closing of Vadstena monastery in 1595, as was the case for other known Vadstena works. For a discussion of inventories, see Inger Estham and Åke Nisbeth, *Linköpings Domkyrka III. Inredning Och Inventarier* (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2001) 128.

exterior textile splendour, the foot's underside as well as the interior of the box and lid are covered in dyed linen and silk taffeta. In terms of motifs, there is a wealth of vegetal ornaments such as embroidered oak leaves, fleur-de-lys and acorns in addition to the colourful peacock feathers. The red tendrils once framed lost enamels and crystals.

The interplay of green and blue background colours on the exterior surface of the reliquary resemble fourteenth-century Vadstena work and appear 'old-fashioned' compared to the design of the other three preserved textile skull reliquaries (all dated to the early sixteenth century). Textile analysis has shown that the reliquary was probably re-fashioned in the second half of the fifteenth century by re-using older embroideries.³³⁷ This would explain the insertion of extra fabric in the joining of the embroideries clothing the box and lid. Close examination of the embroidered surfaces has revealed that the reliquary would have appeared even more sumptuous in the late fifteenth century with extensive embellishments of gold, silver, freshwater pearls and probably enamels.³³⁸ For instance, below the woven band on the lower edge of the exterior box, a thin metal thread with loops for gilded pendant embellishments was discovered. Moreover, the larger circular areas revealing the background tabby indicate applied embellishments that were not translucent. The re-use of enamel plaques in Birgittine embroideries is known from contemporary Vadstena work, and scholars have suggested that these empty fields were originally covered by applied enamels framed by freshwater pearls and gold embroidery.³³⁹ Other embellishments may have been translucent materials like rock crystal, since the underlying surface was fully embroidered. Imitating precious stones by arranging rock crystal over red, blue or green textile surfaces was a well-known technique in late-medieval embroideries. In addition, small fragments of gilded metal plates and spangles

³³⁷ Sandgren and Wahlberg suggests that the embroideries covering the box of the reliquary were reused from an older object, possibly from an embroidery that was used for Saint Birgitta's translation a century earlier. This would explain the fourteenth century stylistic character of the embroideries. Moreover, we know that Birgitta's shrine was refurbished and reused for Katarina's translation, and this might have been the case for other reliquaries as well. This would also explain the inserted fabrics and bands used in order to make the embroideries properly fit around the box (i.e. they were not originally made for the exact size of this bentwood box). See Eva Lindqvist Sandgren and Ingela Wahlberg, "Det broderade relikvariet i Linköpings domkyrka," *Fornvännen* 113, no. 4 (2018): 194.

³³⁸ Sandgren, "Ett "väl utsmyckat skrin", Sandgren and Wahlberg, "Det broderade relikvariet," Estham and Nisbeth, *Linköpings Domkyrka*.

³³⁹ This argument was first proposed in Axel L. Romdahl, "En observation rörande Kettel Karlssons mitra," *Fornvännen*, 1929, 299. It is possible that the enamels used in Kettel Karlsson's mitre, discussed in Chapter 6, which came from at least two different set of older enamels, were kept at Vadstena and that six such enamel plaques that were left over from the making of Kettel Karlsson's mitre (sometime before 1465) were used in the Linköping Reliquary. Measurements and methods of application (traces of stiches fastening the plaques) support this argument. For a recent discussion of enamels in the reliquary, see Sandgren and Wahlberg, "Det broderade relikvariet," 192.

on the lid, box and foot together with traces of stitches for their application indicates gilded metal was laid over the embroidered surface to form patterns.

In 2018, the original appearance of the Linköping Reliquary was digitally reconstructed (fig. 3.21). This reconstruction was supported by a century of research on the object, particularly the recent textile analyses by Inger Estham (2001) and Eva Lindqvist Sandgren and Ingela Wahlberg (2018).³⁴⁰ The reconstruction allows us to imagine how the reliquary may have appeared before the colours faded and the myriad embellishments were removed, bringing us closer to the reliquary's original visual effect. As Kaja Kollandsrud has pointed out, such reconstructed medieval artwork with "its saturated colour and gilding" is often met by a negative reaction by the modern public, who perceive the works as "distasteful, almost to the degree of being offensive to the modern eye".³⁴¹ In the images of the reconstructed Linköping Reliquary, the intensity of colour and material mixtures may evoke similar reactions. However, the bright red, blue and green silk embroideries, shiny gold and pearls and a myriad of crystals evoking precious stones produced a polyfocal, luxurious and mixed surface resonant with the *varietas* so admired in medieval aesthetics.³⁴² As Mary Carruthers noted, *varietas* was characterized by "many separate colours, textures, savours, all experienced distinctively though at the same time within a single artefact."³⁴³ From the perspective of medieval rhetoric, one can argue that the artful complexity of the Linköping Reliquary made it particularly persuasive and engaging for a medieval audience. Despite its possible garishness to modern eyes, the medieval reconstruction highlights the vibrancy and variety that can no longer be perceived in the faded and stripped contemporary object.³⁴⁴

It was long believed that the Linköping Reliquary was part of a commission that included a chasuble and a pair of matching dalmatics, and that it was made for the skull of the blessed Bishop Nils Hermansson that was translated in Linköping in 1515.³⁴⁵ In a recent article, Sandgren and Wahlberg argued for a different provenance, pointing out that the design would

³⁴⁰ Sandgren and Wahlberg, "Det broderade relikvariet," 191 – 192. See also Estham and Nisbeth, *Linköpings Domkyrka*, 128.

³⁴¹ Kaja Kollandsrud, "Evoking the Divine: The Visual Vocabulary of Sacred Polychrome Wooden Sculpture in Norway between 1100 and 1350" (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2018), 17.

³⁴² The importance of polyfocal surfaces for medieval aesthetics is discussed in Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 155.

³⁴³ Carruthers, 135.

³⁴⁴ It is likely that the reliquary, which was kept at Linköping cathedral in the post-medieval period, was stripped from all of its metal ornaments and pearls in 1779 when the cathedral needed money for a new tower. A few individual pieces of small gilded metal plates from this reliquary and other vestment that received the same treatment in this year, is still preserved in the cathedral treasury. Estham and Nisbeth, *Linköpings Domkyrka*, 128.

³⁴⁵ Estham and Nisbeth, 105

have been distinctly old fashioned by 1515 and proposing a date of production in the latter half of the fifteenth century.³⁴⁶ A parchment fragment used as a support for the embroideries attached to the turned foot was found during conservation work, and has been dated to c. 1466 from palaeographic analysis. Thus, the reliquary must have been made after that.³⁴⁷ Moreover, the parchment confirms a Vadstena provenance, as was suggested in earlier scholarship based on iconographic and technical similarities with other Birgittine work. Rather than envisioning the reliquary as a c. 1500 commission for Linköping, Sandgren and Wahlberg argue that the box was originally made to be used at Vadstena, more specifically for the translation of St Katarina in 1489.³⁴⁸ This occasion corresponds with the new and earlier dating and is supported by a visual clue found on the reliquary lid. As is most clearly seen in the reconstructed image, the metal embellishments and red stones created a crown-like pattern closely resembling the shape of a Birgittine nun's crown (fig. 3.21).³⁴⁹ This white headpiece with five red dots symbolising Christ's wounds was the most distinctive part of the nun's garb and would have been recognised as a fitting adornment for a Birgittine saint. A reference in the 1489 eyewitness account describing the skull reliquary as a "well adorned container" supports this argument.³⁵⁰ While the Linköping Reliquary lacks embroidered descriptions identifying the enshrined saint, the embellished nun's crown may have worked as a visual indicator of her identity. The original appearance of this textile reliquary, with shimmering and colourful silks, golden embellishments and freshwater pearls provided a dignified display for the saintly skull, coronated in eternity by the golden nun's crown adorning the lid. The following section discusses how other textile reliquaries including silk wrappings and Katarina's shrine may have been encountered and perceived during the 1489 translation ceremony at Vadstena Abbey.

³⁴⁶ Sandgren and Wahlberg, "Det broderade relikvariet," 193 – 194.

³⁴⁷ This parchment fragment was found during conservation work 1979 – 81. Palaeographic analysis determined that the latest possible dating of this fragment was 1466, since it belonged to a Vadstena Abbey ledger-book that went out of use in 1466. Thus, it is likely that the nuns used parchment from this discarded ledger as support for embroideries sometime after this year. Estham and Nisbeth, *Linköpings Domkyrka*, 128.

³⁴⁸ Sandgren and Wahlberg, "Det broderade relikvariet," 194.

³⁴⁹ Sandgren and Wahlberg describes this nun's crown ornament as a gilded nun's crown with red semi-precious stones or rock crystal laid over red cloth to resemble the Birgittine crown with its five red dots: Lindqvist Sandgren and Wahlberg, 192. See also: Sandgren, "Ett "väl utsmyckat skrin," 51.

³⁵⁰ «iðh væl prydt kar» in Elfving and Friz, *Den Stora Kyrkofesten*, 46. Old Swedish "kar" translates to English "container" and the fact that the author describes the reliquary as "well executed" or "adorned" without mentioning goldsmith work or crystal, suggests it was not a gilded metal reliquary. In contrast, the reliquary for Katarina's jawbone is described as "crystal reliquary made of gold and silver".

3.7 Encountering Relic Textiles in Vadstena Abbey Church

Written accounts give insight into how laypeople encountered and interacted with the relics and the textiles wrapping and enshrining them during the feast at Vadstena Abbey in 1489. The large Vadstena Abbey Church differs from the spatial context discussed in the case studies of Endre Church and Trondheim Cathedral. The church in Vadstena became the largest and richest abbey in medieval Scandinavia, with an unusual structure to inclusively accommodate its diverse audiences: in addition to concealed and separated spaces for the sisters and brethren, it also provided room for large crowds of laypeople and pilgrims.³⁵¹ The limestone church was consecrated in 1430 and has three spacious aisles of equal height, divided by brick arcades and adorned with star-painted vaults.³⁵² In the late fourteenth century, there may have been around sixty altars in the nave, most of which had independent priests attached to them.³⁵³ The area where the laity could enter was separated from the main altar dedicated to St Peter, whose altarpiece concealed the rear brethren's chancel by iron railings. An extension of this space created a recessed chancel for the sisters. This chancel for the Birgittine sisters had an altar dedicated to the Virgin which the brethren could access through a gallery in the brick walls in order to celebrate Mass. This complex spatial arrangement of the eastern part of Vadstena Abbey Church ensured that the nuns could attend Mass and meet for canonical hours completely concealed from the laity in the nave as well as the brethren in the chancel behind the main altar.

The liturgical use of Vadstena Abbey Church is described by Birgitta Fritz as a “almost continual celebration of divine offices” including the daily Mass and Office celebrated by the brethren, the sisters' daily singing of the Mass of Our Lady, low masses at private altars, prayers and devotions from laypeople and pilgrims and a daily Swedish sermon given by one of the brethren.³⁵⁴ The use and experience of textile relic silks and reliquaries at Vadstena must be considered in the context of the church's installation and the people that inhabited the space. In her discussion of relic's functions, Lena Liepe argues that social space was not only defined by the performance and actions of clerics and laypeople, but also through the presence of saints established by the church's relics.³⁵⁵ The translation ceremony confirmed Katarina's saintly

³⁵¹ Fritz, “The History and Spiritual Life of Vadstena Abbey,” 133.

³⁵² Fritz, 140.

³⁵³ Fritz, 141.

³⁵⁴ Fritz, 142. The complex liturgical use is further discussed by Fritz in pages 140 – 142.

³⁵⁵ Liepe's concept of the “populated space” is translated from Swedish “det befolkade rummet”. See Liepe, “Det befolkade rummet,” 271.

presence in the Abbey Church, and the eyewitness account and preserved textiles demonstrate the central role of precious fabrics for this significant occasion.

For the great occasion of Katarina's translation in 1489, a series of preparations were made to facilitate lay viewing. NRB details how the iron rails were reinforced with a wooden structure to ensure that the enclosure could withstand the large crowds that would press against it to be close to the saintly shrine and relics in the chancel. According to NRB, so many people gathered at Vadstena during the four-day celebration, that it was a true miracle that no one was crushed to death by the large crowds.³⁵⁶ After the translation ceremony, Katarina's shrine was positioned against the railing and the reliquaries were displayed on the main altar to allow as many people as possible to approach them. NRB's description of the iron railing and its surrounding decorations indicate that it was an openwork structure of low to moderate height, allowing people unrestricted views into the elevated platform with the main altars and reliquaries. Moreover, the large altarpiece and another 'tabula' (either a freestanding altarpiece or a frontal) were removed in order to create more space around the main altar. The numerous wax candles and lamps would have illuminated the altar space, which was richly decorated with tapestries, silken cloths and luxurious carpets. A string of printed images with painted details was hung from the ceiling above the iron rails, further saturating the space with textile imagery. While artworks, liturgical performance, music, bells, incense and lights created a saturated sensorium for this great event, lay encounters with relic textiles and reliquaries would have been primarily through the act of looking. Visual access to the events unfolding by the main altar was ensured by reinforcing the iron railings, removing the large altarpiece on the main altar and illuminating the space with candles and lamps. A series of processions displaying the shrine and relics, described by Ragnvaldsson as "long and slow", further exposed these precious objects to large crowds of people. Thus, the NRB's account of the preparations and execution of the 1489 celebrations demonstrate an explicit concern for facilitating lay viewing.

3.8 Visuality/ Looking

Over the past decades, scholars of late-medieval religion have stressed the importance of the physical act of seeing. Based on medieval extramission-based optical theories, researchers have

³⁵⁶ Ragnvaldsson states that the church was "as full as it could be" and that it was a miracle from God that no one was crushed or trampled down by the large crowds: "Oc war thet mykit vndirlikt oc enkannerlikt aff Gud giffwit / at j swa store oc mykle samqwæmd wart enghin trudhin ælla trængdher til skadha". Moreover, people were not as drunk as usually when gathered for such great feasts. See Elfving and Friz, *Den Stora Kyrkofesten*, 55 – 56.

argued that the medieval beholder ‘touched’ relic bones with their eyes when they were displayed in luminous rock crystal containers. The 2010 exhibition *Treasures of Heaven* and other shows have sketched a chronology from the closed relic containers of the early Middle Ages to the open and visible displays of the late Middle Ages, pointing to the increasing importance of visuality in devotion.³⁵⁷ The transparency of rock crystal containers permitted the beholder to see the bones and engage with them.³⁵⁸ Transparent reliquaries are known from Scandinavian collections and documentary sources.³⁵⁹ At Katarina's translation, her jaw bone was deposited in a rock crystal reliquary described by Ragnvaldsson as a crystal container with gold and silver prepared for this purpose.³⁶⁰ Earlier research has presumed that rock crystal reliquaries – almost all of which are empty containers today – originally displayed bare relic bones inside, giving the viewer direct visual access to the holy matter.³⁶¹ Very few such reliquaries still contain their contents, but the treasury of Notre-Dame de Namur has several interesting examples. A reliquary for the rib of St Peter is shaped like a crescent mounted on a stand, with a rock crystal cylinder in the middle. Inside the crystal, the relic bone can be seen wrapped in red silk (fig. 3.22).³⁶² A smaller glass (or crystal) container with a silver lid also shows a red silk relic bundle inside (fig. 3.23). Bagnoli argues that displaying relics wrapped in textiles within transparent containers was the norm rather than the exception in the medieval period.³⁶³ While there are known examples of crystal containers displaying ‘bare’ bones that were not wrapped in textiles, the fact that many of these reliquaries are empty containers today complicates our understanding of them.³⁶⁴ In addition to the lost fragments of bone and other holy matter, the textile wrappings that covered most medieval relics (and often the reliquaries themselves) have been removed from the vessels we consider in isolation. The relic, the label,

³⁵⁷ Bagnoli et al., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*.

³⁵⁸ See for example Martina Bagnoli, “The Stuff of Heaven: Materials and Craftmanship in Medieval Reliquaries,” in *Treasures of Heaven. Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe.*, eds. Martina Bagnoli et al. (London: The British Museum Press, 2011) 141.

³⁵⁹ Lahti present thirty-eight crystal reliquaries known from medieval Scandinavian sources, of which the majority are from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (cat.nos. 173 – 210) and three preserved crystal reliquaries from Linköping Cathedral, Sweden, Västerås Cathedral, Sweden, and Naantali Abbey, Finland (cat.nos. 211 – 213). Lahti, “Silver Arms and Silk Heads,” 514 – 522.

³⁶⁰ “een crystal och tillreddan medh gull och silff som før var ther tillredd” in Elfving and Friz, *Den stora kyrkofesten*, 46.

³⁶¹ See for example Bagnoli, “The Stuff of Heaven,” 141.

³⁶² The reliquary was originally used in the priory of St. Nicholas, Oignies, and after 1818 in the Convent of the Sœurs de Notre-Dame de Namur. See cat.no. 111 in Bagnoli et al., *Treasures of Heaven*, 197 – 198.

³⁶³ Bagnoli, “Dressing the Relics,” 101.

³⁶⁴ As an exception to this rule, Martina Bagnoli and Lena Liepe points to as a cabochon reliquary containing the hand of St Attala in Strasbourg, Collège Saint-Etienne. Liepe, “Arm i arm,” 651, (footnote 26) and Bagnoli, “Dressing the Relics,” 102. For the Saint-Etienne reliquary, see Anton Legner (ed.), *Ornamenta Ecclesiae: Kunst und Künstler der Romanik: Katalog zur Ausstellung des Schnütgen-Museums in der Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle*, 3 vols (Köln: Schnütgen-Museum der Stadt Köln, 1985). volume III, pages 147 – 149, no H53.

and the wrapping were inherent to how the cult of saints was understood and experienced. Relics wrapped in textiles were occluded by relic shrines and other "closed" reliquaries. When on rare occasions such as feast days the priest opened the lid to display the holy contents, the viewer would not look at the bones but catch a glimpse of precious textiles. As the Lateran Council of 1215 confirmed, relics were not to be taken out of their containers for veneration.³⁶⁵ Looking at relics then in many cases meant looking at textiles.

Which implications does this above suggestion, that 'relic looking' often meant looking at textiles, have for our understanding of medieval beholder and the reliquary? K.L.H. Wells' argues that textile displays can transform the invisible into the visible.³⁶⁶ Following this argument, we have to discuss what *visible* really means in the context of religious art. In her discussion of Triptych Virgin sculptures, Melissa Katz challenges the assumption that "what is hidden is what one cannot see and what is visible is that which is not hidden".³⁶⁷ Taking the notion of 'ocular communion' as her example, Katz points out that in a crowded church where access to the altar was restricted by choir screens and curtains, the elevated host was 'seen' by one's presence and not necessarily by vision.³⁶⁸ Restricting access to the most sacred objects in the church could enhance their allure; thus, a medieval beholder could experience the wrapped relics as more sacred and precious because of the textile layers. Relics, and the layers of textiles and containers that enshrined them, could act as mediators of the sacred.³⁶⁹

How did people in Vadstena perceive textile relic wrappings, shrines and reliquaries at Katarina's translation? Textile encounters were of course dependent on individual viewpoints. People gathered at the front of the nave against the rails could most likely glimpse precious silks wrapped around the sacred bones and the embellished textile reliquaries in which they were placed during the translation ceremony. In this context, silks participated in a rhetoric of display where experience was enhanced by the interplay between concealment and revelation. Partial or fragmented looking was part of a bodily sensation where sounds, smell, performance and visual splendour merged. Ragnvaldsson wrote that "there were not many who didn't cry of great joy," describing how clerics and laypeople alike responded with tears. The importance of

³⁶⁵ Canon 62, see Henry Joseph Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Freiberg: Herder, 1937), 286 – 287.

³⁶⁶ K. L. H. Wells, "Display," in *Textile Terms: A Glossary*, eds. Anika Reineke et al. (Berlin: Edition Imorde, 2017), 79.

³⁶⁷ Melissa R. Katz, "Behind Closed Doors: Distributed Bodies, Hidden Interiors, and Corporeal Erasure in "Vierge Ouvrante" Sculpture," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55–56 (2009): 208

³⁶⁸ Katz, "Behind Closed Doors," 208.

³⁶⁹ Shalem argues that relic silks were mediators, 'dressing' the bones of the saint within. Shalem, *The Chasuble of Thomas Becket*, 12.

tears as an appropriate and genuine emotional response has been explored in recent scholarship focusing on the histories of emotion.³⁷⁰ Towards the end of the ceremony, Katarina's shrine was moved to an elevated structure described as a "tall table" in the chancel close to the iron railings. When the laity then caught sight of the magnificent shrine, Ragnvaldsson describes how both men and women had tears streaming down their faces, how they raised their hands, praised God and exclaimed prayers to St Katarina. Encountering the textile reliquaries instituted an emotional and embodied response. When the shrine and reliquaries were carried by attending bishops and dignitaries in a procession, even more people would have the chance to view the reliquaries up close. Likewise, during the days when the shrine was displayed on the elevated construction, people could approach and perceive the textile reliquary shrine. Thus, the act of viewing changed from partial and fragmentary views of textiles being wrapped and unwrapped and reliquaries being opened and closed to a close and prolonged encounter with the displayed reliquaries that allowed for devotional activities and contemplative gazing.³⁷¹

3.9 Beyond Practical Measures

Relic silks and other fabrics were used to enclose relics for a variety of practical measures. In particular, Bagnoli points to three reasons for the practice of wrapping relics in silks: protection, security and establishing holiness.³⁷² In other words, the wrapping of precious relics stems from the pragmatic solutions to protect and secure, as well as confer holiness on its contents. Following Bagnoli's line of argument, the first factor – that of protection – considers how relic silks and textile wrapping provided a physical and visual barrier. Hahn argues that a common principle of early medieval reliquaries was the protection against carnal sight.³⁷³ Even as late-medieval reliquaries thematised sight in various ways, visual access was strictly regulated. Similarly, holy bones had to be protected against human touch during their veneration. Visual depictions of ecclesiastical rituals often show members of the clergy covering their hands in textiles as they handled sacred matter such as relics, sometimes listed in inventories as "napkins

³⁷⁰ See for example Elina Gertsman (ed.), *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History* (New York: Routledge, 2012), Per Föregård, Erika Kihlman, and Mia Åkestam, *Tears, Sighs and Laughter: Expressions of Emotions in the Middle Ages*, vol. 92, (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 2017). Katherine Harvey, "Episcopal Emotions: Tears in the Life of the Medieval Bishop," *Historical Research* 87 (2014).

³⁷¹ Fragmentary or partial viewing and looking as a 'gaze' was discussed in Chapter One. For 'contemplative gaze' see Cynthia Hahn, "Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality," in *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 183 – 184.

³⁷² Bagnoli, "Dressing the Relics," 102 – 105.

³⁷³ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 57.

for carrying the relics".³⁷⁴ No visual depictions of the translation of Katarina are preserved, but it can be assumed that the clerics employed measures akin to those depicted in a fourteenth-century manuscript illumination showing the translation of St Hedwig. As the retinue proceeds towards the church, the bishop carries her skull with his hands covered in a draped fabric and the cleric with her arm uses a cloth as a barrier between his hands and the holy relic. In contrast, the bishop carrying Hedwig's ivory sculpture requires no further 'protection' than his gloved hands (fig. 3.24). Ragnvaldsson describes a similar procession with Katarina's relics after the translation, noting that the regent Sten Sture the Elder was given her head to carry but was reluctant to accept this honour of which he felt unworthy.³⁷⁵

Secondly, relic wrapping provided security against the theft and misuse of relics. Both of Katarina's shrines (the smaller casket and the large shrine) were locked by the archbishop. For smaller relic fragments, enclosure in relic bundles like the Vadstena Bursa ensured that these diminutive but valuable pieces were preserved within a larger reliquary. Relic bundles also enabled the transportation of relics, as they were frequently gifted and traded across Europe. Since relic wrapping and unwrapping was performed by high-ranking members of the clergy, these processes also bestowed moral superiority to relic custodians, as discussed by Hahn and Robyn Malo.³⁷⁶

Thirdly, the act of wrapping has been used to confer and establish holiness across cultures throughout history. Bagnoli argues that these rituals of enclosure "confirmed and enhanced their special status as objects of divine power".³⁷⁷ The textiles functioned as boundaries between the enclosed sacred matter and the secular world in which they were displayed at ceremonies of translation or saint's feast days. The twelve relics in the Vadstena Bursa were all individually wrapped in blue silk taffeta or linen and sealed and tied with linen thread attaching *authentics* describing their sacred content. Another ritual of wrapping once united these twelve relics in a larger bundle, also of blue silk taffeta, which tied the fragments together and marked them with a new and larger parchment strip describing the contents (fig.3.8). This bundle was deposited in a costly purse of velvet and gold, most likely made for the purpose by the Vadstena nuns.

While textile relic wrappings 'worked' to hold their sacred content, this study argues that relic silks had purposes beyond the practical measures of protection, security and sanctity.

³⁷⁴ Bagnoli, "Dressing the Relics," 103. Bagnoli references the Durham inventory of 1396.

³⁷⁵ «(...) them værdiga herranom Sten præsenderades S. Catharinæ hufvudt att bæra i processione huilket nepliga han taga ville særgandes sig vara ther til overdigan.» in Elfving and Friz, *Den stora kyrkofesten*, 48-50.

³⁷⁶ Malo, *Relics and Writing*, 58. Hahn, "Seeing and Believing," 1087.

³⁷⁷ Bagnoli, "Dressing the Relics," 105.

More specifically, the aesthetics of wrapped silken textiles also ‘worked’ to contribute to the effect and display of relics. In her discussion of silk skulls, Lahti distinguishes between “hidden silk skulls” where the skull relic clothed in silk was enclosed in another wooden or metal reliquary, and silk skulls that acted as independent reliquaries intended for public display:

Skulls wrapped in silk can also be found inside wooden or metallic reliquaries. Unlike those displayed on altarpieces and pillows, they are not adorned with pearls or ornaments. Although the shape is otherwise similar, they have a more practical function – to protect the relic, rather than display or represent it. Embroidery and a lack thereof could thus be one way of distinguishing between silk skulls for display and those for reliquaries. Though they have much in common, they belong to two different spheres – the visible and the hidden.³⁷⁸

In other words, Lahti argues that only through the presence of narrative embroidery or extant use of pearls and other embellishments could textile skull reliquaries engage an audience through visual display. Ornamental silks, although costly and highly sought-after, were according to Lahti not intended for visual display but rather for concealed, protective layers within another reliquary.³⁷⁹

The relic silks such as the Italian and Asian silks discussed above as part of the shrines of St Canute and St Erik and the *purpura* silk that covered St Katarina’s bones were for the large part invisible for a medieval audience. However, this does not necessarily mean that the patterns were without visual importance. Silks held – as shown in the translation of St Katarina – a prominent role in establishing and persuading medieval audiences of her saintly presence. While the opening of a saintly shrine was a rare occasion, the occasion often involved adding additional layers of silks, as Bagnoli notes:

The material evidence confirms what the sources tell us: bodies were wrapped at burial and then rewrapped every time the tomb was opened to translate the relics, to obtain a relic, to insert a new relic into a shrine or even to verify its contents.³⁸⁰

For example, the aforementioned peacock silk from St Erik’s Shrine was added in the late thirteenth century, a century after his translation.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Lahti, “Silver Arms and Silk Heads,” 286.

³⁷⁹ Lahti, 286.

³⁸⁰ Bagnoli, “Dressing the Relics,” 101.

³⁸¹ Although the date of Erik’s translation is uncertain, it probably happened sometime after his death in 1160. The Italian silk brocade described as a baldachin was probably given 1293 and used as a shroud over the shrine, before it was swathed over his body within the shrine at a later time. Geijer, “Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin,” 299 (cat.no. 1), and discussion of the 1293 event page 298. The brocade as a shrine cover is also discussed by

The aesthetic effects of a skilfully woven silk pattern, whether through the interplay between matte and shiny surfaces in works like the Turku Chinese silk or the contrast between shimmering gold and brightly coloured silk in a brocade, created *varietas*.³⁸² The assumption that the aesthetic effects of such varied silk surfaces were less impactful than narrative embroidery may reflect a modern viewpoint rather than medieval aesthetics. As Binski has pointed out, the devaluation of ornament or decoration in favour of narrative or signficatory motifs fails to acknowledge the “complex manoeuvres of surface” that were “central to all, not some, aesthetic experience” in the medieval period.³⁸³ As discussed in the Introduction, a large number of aesthetic words were taken from the world of textiles and could evoke woven and embroidered effects alike. Medieval written sources reveal an intimate and detailed knowledge of different silk fabrics, indicating that an educated elite and craftsmen possessed a ‘textile literacy’ that was much more nuanced than our textile knowledge today. In other words, a silk was not just a silk, but was precisely described using textile terms reflecting weave types, materials and provenance. I would argue that while relic silks and other fabrics were used to enclose relics for protection, security and as a visual barrier, they simultaneously ‘worked’ towards ends and means beyond these practical measures. In the following section, the purpose of textile relic wrappings and reliquaries will be discussed in more detail by employing the concepts of *display* and *enshrinement*.

3.10 Display

Textiles had the potential to engage an audience through performance, rhetorical display and aesthetic effects produced by shiny silk surfaces and lush velvets. Sacred bones (as well as other sanctified matter) had to persuade the audience of their holiness. Textile displays, such as the performative folding and unfolding during Katarina’s translation, can be understood as a rhetoric of persuasion.³⁸⁴ The Icelandic sagas describe instances where people were reluctant to accept the holiness of relics. For example, the Icelandic bishop Guðmundur Arason (d. 1237) had an argument with a local man, Þorsteinn, over the authenticity of relic bones kept in the church. It was the custom of Guðmundur to display the church’s relic bones for veneration on feast days so that the people could kiss them. Þorsteinn refused to do this, saying that “he did

Franzén, “Ytterligare ett medeltida Gravtäckte,” 206 and 208, and Lahti, “Silver Arms and Silk Heads,” 87 and 361.

³⁸² For medieval reliquaries and *varietas*, see Bagnoli, “The Stuff of Heaven,” 140.

³⁸³ Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, 293.

³⁸⁴ The rhetoric of wrapping with textiles will be discussed in the following section on Display.

not know whether these were the bones of holy men or horses.”³⁸⁵ As this and other anecdotes suggest, the inherent sanctity of saintly bones was questioned, especially when ‘introducing’ a new saint.

Thus, it was important to frame relics within a persuasive and appealing setting to convey the saint’s powerful presence at her shrine. The material framework of ornate shrines and reliquaries, the rituals of translation and presentation, and the written histories of a saint’s life and miracles all established saintly presence and contributed to what Hahn has described as the reliquary effect: “Through a framing action of physical context, legends and rituals, relics are identified and defined as *unique, authentic, powerful* and *effective*.”³⁸⁶ Textiles were a fundamental strategy of relic presentation, facilitating both display and enshrinement, and communicating and performing the sacred value of medieval relics.

If we see the translation rituals at Vadstena through the lens of rhetoric, we can identify how textiles were consistently used to conceal and reveal sacred matter. At first, Saint Katarina’s elevated tomb was concealed under a lavish textile tomb cover. Following her beatification, her cleaned and blessed bones were enveloped in precious silks and enclosed in a textile relic shrine. Reliquaries, such as the Linköping example, could also be made of textiles. In addition to the visual effect of such silk covers, textiles facilitated ritual revelation through unfolding the silks and exposing the bones. Wrapping can be understood as a strategy of occlusion, evoking the dichotomy between what is seen and unseen. Because relics could also be wrapped in silks within more transparent reliquaries such as rock crystal containers, the act of displaying relics in many cases in fact meant the display of textile wrappings.

3.11 Enshrinement

Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Gudmundr Arason, *The Life of Gudmund the Good, Bishop of Holar*, trans. Edward Oswald Gabriel Turville-Petre and Elizabeth Stefanya Olszewska (London: Viking society for northern research, 1942) 31. See also: Joanna Skórzewska, *Constructing a Cult: The Life and Veneration of Guðmundr Arason (1161-1237) in the Icelandic Written Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 107.

³⁸⁶ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 7. See for example literary scholar Robyn Malo’s discussion of John Lydgate’s *Extra Miracles of St. Edmund* (c.1444) and the discursive construction of saintly presence in context of the relic shrine: Malo, *Relics and Writing*, 58.

³⁸⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 211.

A medieval ceremony of translation like the one discussed throughout this chapter was essentially a process of enshrinement. The ritual culminated in the deposition of the blessed bones within nested containers in a larger reliquary shrine. In its most basic form, these nested boxes and textile wrappings were containers intended to protect the relics. They establish an *outside* communicating the sacred content to its audiences. However, as the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard points out, the relationship between inside and outside is complex and requires us to think beyond the “dialectic of division”.³⁸⁸ The merging of container and contained has long been at the core of research on relics. Hahn’s contributions to these discussions cannot be understated; in a series of publications she discussed the complexity of this relationship, describing reliquaries as “objects that are complexly metaphorical and relational”.³⁸⁹ Seeta Chaganti’s notion of enshrinement as “a principle of a complex enclosure, an integration of container and contained” also acknowledges the intertwined relationship between relics and reliquaries.³⁹⁰ According to Chaganti, the borders between container and contained are interchangeable and indeterminate.³⁹¹ The translation ritual can therefore be seen as a process of merging the relic and reliquary. Exploring the semantics of *translatio*, Malo emphasizes the metaphor of translation: “the intent being to substitute the reliquary for the relic”.³⁹² Malo refers to the writings of Thiofrid of Echternach and argues that he “seeks to collapse the distinction between relic and its container”.³⁹³ The rhetoric of translation then is the blurring of what is contained and the container itself. From these discussions, it becomes clear that the relationship between relic bones and their silk wrappings was intertwined and blurred, making it hard to determine where the relic ended and the reliquary started. The Turku Silk Skull Reliquary provides an intriguing example of how relic and textiles merge. Linen and silk not only wrapped its bones, but physically constructed the skull-shaped relic.

Textile relics present an interesting point of departure in discussing the container/contained paradigm. In the case of contact relics it is particularly difficult to determine where the relic ‘stops’ and the reliquary ‘begins’. As an inherently soft and absorbent material, textiles were frequently used as contact relics. People commonly brought pieces of cloth, *brandea*, in contact with relics so that they could gain ‘holiness’ from the direct encounter with sacred

³⁸⁸ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. 211.

³⁸⁹ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, Hahn, “What Do Reliquaries Do”, Hahn, “Metaphor and Meaning.”

³⁹⁰ Seeta Chaganti, *The Medieval Poetics of the Reliquary: Enshrinement, Inscription, Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2008) 19.

³⁹¹ Chaganti, *Medieval Poetics*, 15.

³⁹² Malo, *Relics and Writing*, 6.

³⁹³ Malo, 8.

matter.³⁹⁴ Taking these examples of textiles touching saint's bones and becoming relics into consideration, we might ask whether the textile inside of a relic shrine was similarly considered a contact relic. It is interesting to note that before Katarina's translation the exterior of the hundred-year-old shrine was not refurbished, but the interior was completely re-done with a new atlas silk lining and numerous embroideries with silk, pearls and gold. We can only speculate about the reasons for this interior textile refurbishing, but it indicates that the inside of Katarina's reliquary shrine was particularly important. The same can be said for relic wrappings or bundles, where the silk was sometimes arranged so that the patterned side faced towards the relics and was not seen by human eyes. In other words, it seems as if the rhetoric of enshrinement is not solely about the exterior – about what the shrine communicates to its beholders – but equally about the inner material splendour directed towards the saint.

3.12 Conclusion

Textiles were a fundamental strategy of relic presentation, facilitating both display and enshrinement and communicating and performing the sacred value of medieval relics. The close relationship between textiles and relics is underlined in Thiofrid's description of the reliquaries as precious garments. While there are examples of relics being displayed in rock crystal reliquaries without textile wrappings, this chapter has argued that the veiling of relics in layers upon layers of linen and silks was a deeply rooted tradition continued in fifteenth-century 'transparent' reliquaries as well as enclosed wooden, metal and textile shrines. Moreover, evidence from Denmark indicates that textile wrappings frequently encapsulated altar relics. Textiles were instrumental to the process of *relic-ing* and established layers of visual and symbolic barriers necessary to enshrine sacred matter. Textile wrappings provided protection and security – including shielding medieval viewers from the direct view of relic bones and holy matter. However, this chapter has argued that the 'work' relic silks were doing extended beyond such practical shielding to encompass a rhetoric of display. The latter function considers how the performative potential of fabrics and the surfaces of ornate silks and multi-media textile reliquaries influenced medieval encounters with and perception of relics. A close reading of Katarina's translation traced textile usage from her elevated tomb to her translated bones and ornate shrine. During and after these events, the textile tomb covers, shrines, wrappings and

³⁹⁴ Scott Montgomery, "Contact Relics," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Pilgrimage*, eds. Larissa Taylor et. al (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 129.

reliquaries discussed in this chapter contributed to the 'reliquary effect' by communicating their content as effective and powerful. Relic silks and textile reliquaries can therefore be understood as a means of persuasion, convincing the audience of the authenticity and presence of a medieval saint.

Relic wrappings and textile reliquaries challenge the container/contained divide, blurring the lines between sacred matter and the textiles surrounding it. This chapter has attempted to re-clothe medieval relics. In doing so, it has demonstrated the centrality of textiles to medieval relic making and display, as well as to how medieval viewers looked at and understood relics. If looking at an opened relic shrine or crystal container meant looking at silk wrappings and bundles, this suggests that we ought to reconsider how fabric displayed or 'showed forth' not only through processes of revealing, but also as textile membranes veiling saintly presence.

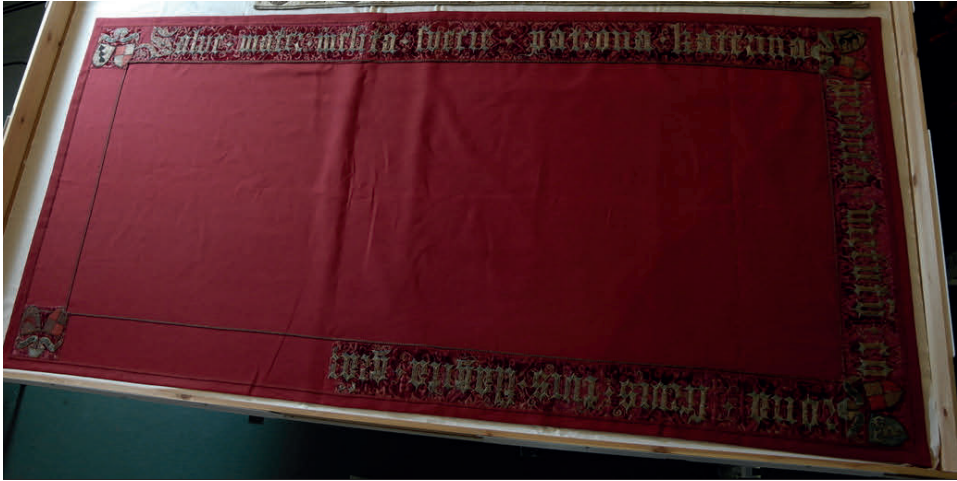


Figure 3-1: Reconstruction of *Katarina of Vadstena's Tomb Cover* with late fifteenth century, embroidered borders applied to a new red fabric, h 110,5 cm, w. 239 cm, cat.no. 1. Örebro: ÖLM. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

Figure 3-2: Details of late 15th c. bands embroidered with embroideries in gold, silver and silks on velvet. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth





Figure 3-3: *Holmger Knutsson's Tomb Cover*, late fifteenth century, h 250 cm, w 117 cm, cat.no. 2. Stockholm: SHM. Photo: Laura Tillery



Figure 3-4: Details of *Holmger Knutsson's clothing*, late fifteenth century, applique work and embroideries in gold, silver and silks, Stockholm: SHM. Photo: Laura Tillery



Figure 3-5: Details of Holmger Knutsson's face. Photo: Laura Tillery



Figure 3-6: Reliquary bursa from Vadstena, late fourteenth century, l. 19 cm, cat.no. 3. Stockholm: SHM. Photo: © SHM

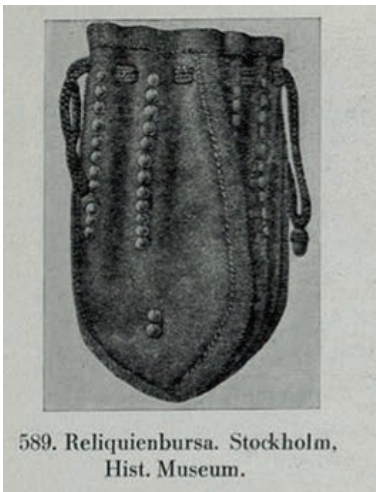


Figure 3-7: (above, left) The Vadstena Reliquary bursa depicted in Joseph Braun, *Die Reliquiare Des Christlichen Kultes und Ihre Entwicklung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1940). This old photograph shows the bursa with more spangles intact, indicating how these metal embellishments were once arranged.



Figure 3-8: (above, right) Relic wrappings from the Vadstena relic purse, blue silk taffeta (c. 24 x 24 cm) and linen, measurement, parchment strips, relic bundles, cat.no. 3. Stockholm: SHM. Photo © SHM



Figure 3-9: (above, left) *The Turku Relic Skull*, mid-fourteenth century manufacture, length 19,2 centimetres, cat.no. 4. Turku: Turku Cathedral Museum. This photo was taken before the silk skull relic underwent examination in 2011. The pattern of the Chinese silk 'top layer' can be gleaned on the red silk surface. Photo: © Aki Arponen/ The Turku Relic Research Project.

Figure 3-10: (above, right) Detail photo of the green silk braid. Photo: © Aki Arponen/ The Turku Relic Research Project.



Figure 3-11: Frontside of the Turku relic skull, with silk embroidered imagery of a knight beheading a robed figure. Photo: © Aki Arponen/ The Turku Relic Research Project.



Figure 3-12: *St Birgitta Shrine*, the reliquary shrine where St Katarina's bones were enshrined in 1489. H. 69,5 cm, w. 38 – 39 cm, l. 114 – 117 cm, cat.no. 5. Vadstena Abbey Church. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 3-13: Detail of velvet surface with metal spangle shaped like an oak leaf, from St , Vadstena Abbey Church. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 3-14: Detail of the metal embellishments adorning St Birgittas shrine, Vadstena. Photo: Laura Tillery



Figure 3-15: Detail of the metal embellishments adorning St Birgittas shrine, Vadstena. Photo: Laura Tillery



Figure 3-16: (above left) ‘The Linköping Reliquary’ originally made in Vadstena, late fifteenth century, Linköping: LCCM (Inv. no. 3920:1) Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

Figure 3-17: (above right) Reliquary box from Vadstena, fifteenth century, Stockholm: SHM (Inv.no 349:2). Photo: © SHM



Figure 3-18: (above left) Reliquary box from Vadstena, fifteenth century, Stockholm: SHM (Inv.no 349:3). Photo: © SHM

Figure 3-19: (above right) Reliquary box from Vadstena, fifteenth century, Stockholm: SHM (Inv.no 349:1). Photo: © SHM



Figure 3-20: *The Linköping Reliquary*, late fifteenth century, h. 18 cm; w. 23 cm, cat.no. 6. Linköping: LCCM.
Photo: Laura Tillery



Figure 3-21: Digital reconstruction of the Linköping Reliquary, indicating the object's visual appearance in the fifteenth century with radiant colored silks, semiprecious stones, gilded metal, pearl and enamels. The design of the lid resembles a Birgittine nun's crown, with red stones on a gilded crown. Photo: © LCCM



Figure 3-22: Reliquary of the rib of St Peter, c. 1238, silver, gold, precious stones, pearls, intaglios, cameos, bronze and rock crystal with silk wrappings, 50,5 x 35 cm, Namur: TreMa (Inv no TO 05) Photo: © TreMa



Figure 3-23: Reliquary Flask with silk wrappings, thirteenth century, rock crystal, silver and silk wrappings, Namur: TreMa (Inv no TO 36F). Photo: © TreMa



Figure 3-24: Two scenes from the Life of Blessed Hedwig: The Opening of St. Hedwig's Tomb and The Translation of St. Hedwig's Relics, Fol 137v., MS Ludwig XI 7, c. 1353, tempera colors, colored washes, and ink on parchment, 34,1 x 24,8 cm, Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum. Photo: © The J. Paul Getty Museum



4 Clothing the Altar

Arguably the most important site in the medieval church for liturgy was the altar—the consecrated *mensa* covered in textiles used in the celebration of Mass. In Durand of Mende’s commentary on the ornaments of the church he states that “the decoration of the altar consists of cases, coverings, phylacteries, candelabra, crosses, gold fringes, banners, books, veils, and curtains.”³⁹⁵ In other words, the coverings or altar cloths and altar textiles, gold fringes or fringed altar borders, banners, veils and curtains were considered by Durand to be fundamental parts of the visual appearance of medieval altars. Textiles transformed the altar and established occasion, framing and enhancing the most sacred parts of the church.

Only a few late-medieval altar vestments have survived, including fragments of medieval altar cloths and velvet altar frontals that have mostly been remodelled in the modern era. Nonetheless, the material includes Lenten textiles, embroidered and woven frontlets (narrow ornamental bands arranged on the altar front) and embroidered frontals. Due to the paucity of extant material, its appearance and significance will be reconstructed using written sources, liturgical texts and depictions from paintings in addition to surveying preserved textiles.

Returning to the Århus Mass of St. Gregory that opened this study, Notke dresses the altar in lavish textiles. A closer look at the details shows a white altar cloth with blue woven or embroidered stripes resembling the design of medieval linen towels preserved in European collections. An altar frontal made of a panel of red silk brocade with a flowing composition of flowers, vines and birds is draped over the altar front and extends down the steps. The fabric resembles designs known from Chinese or Mongol silks, but by the fifteenth century these patterns were also copied by Italian silk weavers (fig. 1.1). A frontlet is arranged on the upper register of the altar front. Preserved examples, visual representations and written sources indicate that the silk fringes with alternating colours depicted in the painting were a

← Detail of the Norrsunda Frontlet, as presented in fig. 4.15.

³⁹⁵ “Altaris uero ornatus, consistit in capsis, in pallis, in philateriis, in candelabris, in crucibus, in aufrisio, in uexillis, in codicibus, in uelaminibus, et cortinis” in William Durand, *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, ed. A. Davril and Timothy M. Thibodeau (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995) 42. English translation quoted from William Durand, *The Rationale divinorum officiorum: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 39.

standardised feature of altar frontlets. In the Århus panel, the frontlet is embellished with gilded coins or metal plates, much like a surviving Icelandic frontlet from Skálholt Cathedral (fig. 4.12). The altar is dressed in a white cloth adorned with what seems to be embroidery in a blue yarn. The edges of the cloth hang down the short side of the altar and are decorated with fringes that may refer to open thread work in linen. Depictions of the altar from late-medieval Europe often show altar cloths with embroidered patterns and fringes. In the Århus panel, Notke persuasively depicts the layers of textiles that this chapter focuses on: altar cloths, an altar frontal and the ornate frontlet. In addition to these three categories of altar vestments, Lenten textiles will be discussed at the end of this chapter. For the occasion of Lent, linen textiles transformed more than the visual appearance of the altar; they fundamentally altered the sensory experience of the church environment.

In contrast to the multitude of textiles described by Durand and shown in pictorial representations like Notke's panel, medieval altars are today undressed, or in other words, stripped bare. For example, the current presentation of the twelfth-century altar in Gildeskål Old Church in northern Norway differs dramatically from its medieval appearance. Although the masonry of the altar and surrounding architectural environment are original, the exposed ashlar and white linen cloth of the altar make the space appear far more sombre and austere than it would have during a medieval mass (fig. 4.1).³⁹⁶ However, a woven altar frontlet reconstructed based on its fifteenth-century original provides a reminiscence of its medieval past.³⁹⁷ This narrow band mounted horizontally on the top front of the altar allows a partial glimpse into the rich textile space that parishioners once viewed during Mass. As the contrast between Gildeskål and the Notke painting suggests, the substantial loss of original textile vestments creates a disconnection between modern and medieval encounters with and experiences of the altar.

Despite a large volume of literature discussing the images and architectural settings of medieval altars in Scandinavian scholarship, it can be argued that the altar also appears undressed or naked within this body of research. In the past decades, scholars have increasingly

³⁹⁶ The Old Gildeskål Church is a parish church in the municipality of Gildeskål in Nordland County, Norway. It was abandoned for a new parish church in the seventeenth century and is therefore relatively untouched by remodelling after the eighteenth century. For an introduction to its building history and context, see Margrethe C Stang, "På sporet av det tapte rom. Kirkeinventar i Gildeskål ca. 1500," in *Gildeskål gamle kirke: marmorkirka ved nordvegen*, eds. Morten Stige and Øystein Ekroll (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2014), 171–90. The nave represents remarkably well preserved seventeenth-century furnishings including benches and pulpits, see Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth, "Til Guds Ære Og Kirkens Prydelse: 1700-Tallsinventaret i Gamle Gildeskål Kirke," in *Gildeskål gamle kirke: marmorkirka ved nordvegen*, eds. Morten Stige and Øystein Ekroll (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2014), 171–213.

³⁹⁷ The original Gildeskål altar frontlet will be discussed later in this chapter.

explored the liturgical functions of altar imagery.³⁹⁸ More recently, research has emphasised multi-sensory and material strategies for mediating the sacred position of altars.³⁹⁹ Arguing for a restitution of altar imagery in spatial, architectural and experiential context, such projects have broadened the study of altar decorations such as altarpieces, crucifixes and painted or gilded frontals.⁴⁰⁰ Unfortunately, this body of scholarship barely mentions the textile furnishings central to the visual appearance of medieval altars. There are many possible reasons for this lacuna in research, including the general devaluation of textile art within medieval studies discussed in the Introduction. Yet, this lack of research does not reflect an absence of preserved altar textiles or sources describing their usage and importance in medieval times.

As this chapter demonstrates, a corpus of preserved Scandinavian altar textiles and medieval sources provides insight into the significance and aesthetic effects of a fully vested altar. This chapter focuses on the altar cloths, textile frontals and frontlets that directly clothed the altar structure, and includes little-known object types, such as altar frontlets and the Icelandic embroidered frontals. In surveying the surviving material and written sources, I suggest that the materials of layered altar vestments address both pragmatic and aesthetic concerns. Using material ranging from simple linen cloths to elaborately embroidered frontals, this chapter aims to establish a framework for understanding how altar vestments worked in the medieval church environment. As with the prior chapters, this understanding is grounded in the rhetorical values found in medieval aesthetics. Because written sources from medieval Scandinavia suggest that textile structures were used in both parish churches and cathedrals, I also attend to how altar vestments operated in different viewing contexts.

³⁹⁸ See Søren Kaspersen and Erik Thunø, *Decorating the Lord's Table: On the Dynamics Between Image and Altar in the Middle Ages* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006). Søren Kaspersen, "Højalter, liturgi og andagt: Betragtninger over Bernt Notkes Alterskab i Århus Domkirke," *Hikuin* 26 (1999): 203, Rognald Heiseldal Bergesen, «Sangere i det himmelske Jerusalem: funksjonsanalyser av middelalderinventaret i Trondenes kirke» (PhD diss., The University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway, 2011), Rognald Heiseldal Bergesen, "Functional Cues of Liturgical Artefacts: Affordances of a Reredos in the Church at Vålse, Denmark," *Konsthistorisk Tidsskrift/Journal of Art History* 86, no. 3 (2017): 204–18, and Birgitte Bøggild Johannsen, "Billeder i brug: Lidt om andagt, kult og sjælestiftelser i senmiddelalderens Odense," *Hikuin* 26 (1999): 83–100. For a critique of the liturgical analysis of altar images, see Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen *Changing interiors. Danish Village Churches c. 1450 to 1600* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2011), 306, fn 337.

³⁹⁹ This modern method of multisensory perceptions is presented in Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, Henning Laugerud, and Laura Katrine Skinnebach, *The Saturated Sensorium: Principles of Perception and Mediation in the Middle Ages* (Århus: Aarhus University Press, 2016).

⁴⁰⁰ For a contextual approach to the altar in its environment, see for example Hanna Källström, *Domkyrkan som andaktsmiljö under senmedeltiden, Linköping och Lund* (Skellefteå: Artos & Norma, 2011), Wangsgaard Jürgensen *Changing interiors*, Kaspersen and Thunø, *Decorating the Lord's Table*, Justin Kroesen and Victor M. Schmidt, eds., *The Altar and Its Environment, 1150-1400*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009) and Justin Kroesen, "The Altar and Its Decorations in Medieval Churches. A Functionalist Approach," *Medievalia* 17 (2015): 153–83.

4.1 Altar Cloths

Remarkably few altar cloths have survived.⁴⁰¹ This may be due to several reasons. Altar cloths were among the ecclesiastical textiles that continued to be used after the Reformation. According to the Danish Reformer and Superintendent Peder Palladius (1503 – 60), the high altar should be dressed in a clean and well-kept altar cloth.⁴⁰² Since church officials demanded that altars were not dressed in threadbare or unclean textiles, the medieval altar linens, which were used daily, were thus replaced after they became worn. This proscription was also applied in the medieval period, as Durand specified that when the altar textiles were “consumed by old age” they should be burned and their ashes deposited into the baptistery, along the walls or in “the cracks of the pavement where no one will pass.”⁴⁰³ Similar regulations are repeated in the statutes of Archbishop Eilif of Nidaros (d. 1332), which stated that the ashes were to be thrust down between the floor boards by the altar.⁴⁰⁴ These detailed instructions for disposing of old altar textiles reflect their status as objects that acquired sanctity through rituals of blessing and consecration, as well as by their close contact with sacred space and matter within the medieval church.

The practise of covering Christian altars in precious cloths goes back to the Early Christian period. Surviving texts and images suggest that most early altar cloths were of white linen decorated with simple embroidered patterns.⁴⁰⁵ Examples of cloths made of silks and colourfully dyed textiles are also known; Paul the Silentiary’s ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia (562) includes a poetic description of a magnificent altar cloth made in “multicoloured silk threads, including purple-dyed ones, and featuring additional golden and silver embroidery”.⁴⁰⁶ In the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries, altars were covered with several layers of cloth

⁴⁰¹ This is true for the Scandinavian area as well as in a broader European context as discussed by Joseph Braun, *Praktische Paramentenkunde, Winke für die Anfertigung und Verzierung der Paramente mit 113 neuen Vorlagen zu Paramentenstickereien* (Freiburg: Herder, 1924), 35 – 36.

⁴⁰² Peder Palladius, *Peder Palladius’ visitasbok* (Oslo: Tanum, 1945), 34. Superintendent was the official title for episcopal office from the Reformation until 1814. In Norway, reflecting the position’s post-medieval status as an official of the Crown. However, the title ‘bishop’ or ‘episcopus’ was soon introduced again and more commonly used for episcopal office from the seventeenth century and onwards.

⁴⁰³ Durandus and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 48.

⁴⁰⁴ «Alt som er i messeklærne eller gagnar det som er viet til gudstjeneste, men er utslitt, skal brennes i kirken når det ikke lenger kan gjøre nytte, og asken stappes ned under gulvtiljene ved alteret,» Trygve Lysaker and Harald Wårvik, *Erkebiskop Eilifs tredje statutt*, vol. 1 (Trondheim: Nidaros domkirkes restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 1991), 10. Archbishop Eilif is also known as Eiliv Arnesson and was archbishop in Trondheim 1309 – 1332.

⁴⁰⁵ Sean V. Leatherbury, ‘Textiles as Gifts to God in Late Antiquity: Christian Altar Cloths as Cultic Objects’, in *Textiles and Cult in the Ancient Mediterranean*, vol. 31 (2017): 247.

⁴⁰⁶ Leatherbury, “Textiles as Gifts,” 249.

required for the celebration of Mass. The abovementioned statutes of Eilif of Nidaros stated that priests were responsible for having clean vestments and altar textiles necessary for celebrating Mass or they would face financial penalties.⁴⁰⁷ Local regulations, such as those for the see of Nidaros, echo the more detailed directives of Durand of Mende stating that it was forbidden to celebrate Mass without the proper *ornatus*.⁴⁰⁸

If we turn to the extensive inventories from Icelandic churches, altar cloths are frequently mentioned. It was common practice to dress the altar in several layers, beginning with a coarser linen ‘stone cloth’ described as *síridúkr*.⁴⁰⁹ This first layer of ‘stone cloth’ was sometimes saturated with wax to protect the upper layers of finer linen from the moist stone surface of the altar slab.⁴¹⁰ A second layer of cloth made from finer linen without any embellishment was then laid over the initial ‘stone cloth’. Finally, the third or top layer was also made of linen, but often had embroidered or applied décor referred to using a variety of terms.⁴¹¹ *Sprangadur dukr* probably indicates embroidery on knotted net, darned net or drawn thread work.⁴¹² Several mentions of *glitadr altarisdúkr* refer to counted thread embroidery in straight darning (*glitsaumr*) or pattern darning (*skakkaglit* or simply *glit*).⁴¹³ In addition to embroideries in colourful or white linen or wool yarns, altar cloths could be adorned with gold and silver threads or applied embellishments like *hlad* or *gullhlad*. A particularly rich example is described in an inventory from Ás church as an embroidered altar cloth with golden coins and bands in woven or embroidered gold threads: “glitadann altarisduk med xvij penningumm smelltum oc gylddumm, gullborda breiddann aa altarisduk.”⁴¹⁴

A few medieval fragments of linen embroideries from Icelandic churches may have belonged to altar cloths similar to those described in the medieval inventories. During the conservation of a textile frontal from Kálfafell Church in south-eastern Iceland, thirty-eight repair patches were removed from the back of the cloth, among them embroidered linen

⁴⁰⁷ Lysaker and Wärvik, *Erkebiskop Eilifs tredje statutt*, 10.

⁴⁰⁸ Durand discuss the washing of altar linens in Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 48.

⁴⁰⁹ Hjalmar Falk, *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Terminologie*, (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1919), 64.

⁴¹⁰ This was a heavy linen cloth treated with wax, *tela cera* (Latin *cera* ‘wax’) was used to protect the altar top and was normally not decorated. This initial waxed cloth layer is also discussed by Braun: Joseph Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1912), 213.

⁴¹¹ Fredrik B. Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen* (Kristiania: Grøndahl, 1910), 66.

⁴¹² For “sprang” see Elsa E. Guðjónsson, *Traditional Icelandic embroidery* (Reykjavik: Iceland Review, 1985), 39. “sprangadur dukr glitadr” is mentioned for example in an inventory from Reykholt Church on Iceland (dated 1392), see Sigurðsson, Páll Eggert Ólason, and Björn Þorsteinsson, *Diplomatarium Islandicum = Íslenskt Fornbréfasafn* (1269 - 1415), vol. III (Kaupmannahöfn/ Reykjavík: Prentsmiðju S. L. Møllers, 1896), 482.

⁴¹³ Guðjónsson, *Traditional Icelandic embroidery*, 23 and 27.

⁴¹⁴ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr*, 66.

fragments.⁴¹⁵ Eleven fragments have pattern darning in blue and reddish linen on a linen tabby ground (figs 4.2 and 4.3; cat.no. 7). Elsa Gudjónsson suggests that these fragments are from Kálfafell's medieval altar cloths.⁴¹⁶ Another medieval fragment from Vallanes Church made in white linen on linen with darned knotted net known as 'sprang' or 'ridsprang' in the Middle Ages may have belonged to the decoration of an altar cloth.⁴¹⁷

A fifteenth-century altar cloth is still held by Veøy Church, located on a small island in the Romsdalsfjord, western Norway. This rectangular linen cloth measuring 93 x 222 centimetres is made of tabby weave linen embroidered with coloured woollen yarn in pattern darning similar to the Icelandic *skakkaglit*, known as *smøyg* in Norway. Although this cloth has been used as an altar cloth at Veøy and the materials and embroidered décor resemble altar cloths described in Icelandic inventories, there are reasons to believe that this textile originally had another function. Since the short edges are cut, the cloth was probably longer. Two similar fifteenth-century cloths made of linen tabby embroidered in *smøyg* from western Norway measure around four metres in length and were probably used for guild hall tables or as wall hangings (*refil*).⁴¹⁸ Further alterations have been made to the Veøy cloth by adding linen bands framing the long sides of the cloth so that the textile as it appears today fits the measurements of the medieval altar.⁴¹⁹ Even though the linen cloth from Veøy Church may have originally been made as a wall hanging or a tablecloth, it testifies to a tradition of embroidering fine linen cloths used in both ecclesiastical and secular spaces with colourful and intricate geometric motifs. Despite the variety of embellishments using pattern darning, white-on-white embroideries or applied décor in gold and silver, the common feature of these medieval altar cloths was their finely woven linen fabrics.

4.2 The Material Significance of Linen

The material significance of white linen was instrumental to how medieval altars were experienced and understood. Linen textiles were used widely in the Middle Ages, and the

⁴¹⁵ Inv. nos. 10885 b 14 and 25. Gudjónsson, *Traditional Icelandic embroidery*, 26.

⁴¹⁶ Gudjónsson, 26.

⁴¹⁷ Inv. no. 7122, NMI. See Gudjónsson, 38.

⁴¹⁸ A cloth from Voss measures 82 cm x 390 cm and is preserved at the Voss Folk Museum (VF inv. no. 18 127), probably made in the fifteenth century. Margareta Nockert and Göran Possnert, *Att datera textilier* (Stockholm: Gidlund, 2002), 96. Another embroidered linen cloth known as "Huldreduken" measures 88,5 x 410 cm, catalogue number 4 in Helen Engelstad, *Refil, bunad, tjeld: middelalderens billedtepper i Norge* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1952), 100.

⁴¹⁹ Marianne Vedeler, "Paramenter og gravtekstiler fra Veøy gamle kirke; møte mellom liturgi og folkelig sørgeskikk," *Årbok / Romsdalsmuseet* (2008): 187.

qualities of linen fabrics could vary greatly from rough and undyed cloths to finely woven textiles with brilliantly white surfaces. It is important to note that while we understand ‘linen’ solely as a flax product today, the medieval term primarily meant a fabric made of flax but could also refer to other fibres such as hemp, nettle or even cotton. Flax (*linum usitatissimum*) was grown in Scandinavia well before the medieval period, but domestic production was supplemented with imported linen fabrics.⁴²⁰ Linen production was a laborious process, requiring soaking of the flax, beating to separate the fibres, twisting loose fibres together, spinning them into thread, and finally, weaving the threads into cloth.⁴²¹ In order to acquire the desired white surface, linen was bleached by soaking the fabric in a lye solution and laying the cloths out in the sun—a time-consuming process that added considerably to the cost.⁴²² Finely woven linen cloths had a high monetary value; imported high quality linen from Holland or Westphalia could be priced up to six times higher than the unbleached and coarser linens used for everyday clothes and given as wages for servants.⁴²³

Linen was especially suitable, and indeed required, for many ecclesiastical textiles due to its spiritual associations. Religious symbolism was found not only in the Christological associations of linen, but also in the purported purity of flax plants. Augustine argued that wool symbolised the physical and outward, while linen symbolised purity and the inward and spiritual, since linen was worn closest to the body while wool was used for outer garments. Thus, linen represented the spiritual mind, while wool symbolised the carnal.⁴²⁴ Birgitta of Vadstena echoes this argument when she, in a revelation of the Virgin Mary, describes how

⁴²⁰ Old farm names, such as Linåker, Lintjörn, Linland, Lina, Line (Norway) and Linlappen, Linvallen, Lintäppan, Hörland, Höraland, Hörgärdet, Hörtäppan, Höråker (Sweden) as well as city-names such as Liinma, Hamppumaa and Pellavamaa (Finland) indicate extensive linen production. Iceland probably did not have significant linen production, but a couple of farm names suggest some production, like Línakradalur (Húnavatnssýsla, Iceland). See Johan Lange et al., “Lin,” in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder - Fra Vikingtid Til Reformasjonstid*, ed. Finn Hødnebo, vol. X (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1965), 579 and 582 – 583. On linen import through Hanseatic trade networks see pages 583 – 590. For a more recent study of Hanseatic trade with flax products, see Angela Ling Huang, “Hanseatic Textile Production in 15th Century Long Distance Trade,” in *Textiles and the Medieval Economy: Production, Trade, and Consumption of Textiles, 8th-16th Centuries*, eds. Angela Ling Huang and Carsten Jahnke (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), 206 – 209.

⁴²¹ For domestic linen production in the medieval period, see Toini-Inkeri Kaukonen and Martha Hoffmann, “Linberedning,” in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder*, ed. Finn Hødnebo, vol. X (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1965), 590 – 594.

⁴²² Jeffrey L. Forgeng and Jeffrey L. Singman, *Daily Life in Medieval Europe* (London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 46.

⁴²³ Lange et al., “Lin,” 586. This estimate is true for the period 1450 – 1520.

⁴²⁴ Augustine discuss this in Sermon 37, see Augustine of Hippo, *The works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century, Sermons II (20 – 50) on the Old Testament*, vol III, trans Edmund Hill (New York: New York Press, 1997), 188.

linen denotes the peace of God: “Like linen, this peace is born and grows from the earth.”⁴²⁵ Moreover, flax plants were believed to have both apotropaic and medicinal properties.⁴²⁶

Linen was intimately associated with the Life and Passion of Christ. Birgitta’s Vision of the Nativity describes how the Virgin Mary had brought with her two cloths of linen to swaddle her new-born child and two smaller cloths to bind his head.⁴²⁷ From the 1370s onwards, this Birgittine iconography appeared in artworks and gained popularity.⁴²⁸ At the end of Christ’s life, linen cloths again become a significant part of the narrative. The imprint of Christ’s face on a linen cloth offered to him by Veronica, known as the Veil of Veronica, became revered as the only true image of God.⁴²⁹ After the Deposition from the Cross, Christ was wrapped in a linen shroud (Mark 15:46, Matthew 27:57, Luke 23:53, John 19:40). According to Luke, a smaller linen cloth veiled Christ’s face, and both burial linens (the shroud and the face cloth) were found when they entered the empty grave (Luke 24:12). The religious associations of linen as the cloth wrapping Christ were important for the role of linen textiles within the medieval church and liturgy.

The time, effort and labour that went into linen production were well known in the medieval world, and Durand employs the laborious process of making linen as a metaphor for Christ’s sufferings:

Furthermore, the white linens that cover the altar designate the flesh or the humility of the Saviour; they are whitened with great effort just as the flesh of Christ, born of the earth, that is born of Mary, came to the resurrection and the purity and joy of immortality through many tribulations, about which the Son exults to the Father, saying: *You have taken off my sackcloth and surrounded me with joy* [Ps 29:12]. The vested altar is the soul joined to the immortal and incorruptible body. Again, the clean white cloths covering the altar represent the pure heart when it is adorned with good works, for which reason Apocalypse says: Be clothed in white vestments lest the shame of your nakedness

⁴²⁵ Birgitta discusses this in Book II, chapter 26:21, see Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume I: Liber Caelestis, Books I-III*, trans. Denis Searby, ed. Bridget Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 241.

⁴²⁶ Flax seeds sprinkled on the earth around your house could prevent the home from being haunted by dead people and stopped witches from entering. Flax seeds were effective against any spell, and they could also make both people and the earth more fertile. Both seeds and flax seed oil could be used as medicine. Lange et al., “Lin,” 582.

⁴²⁷ Birgitta’s Vision of the Nativity, which she received in 1372, emphasises the importance of these linens and woollen cloths used by the Virgin to swaddle the newborn Christ. See Birgitta, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 188. The reoccurring motif of the Virgin swaddling and shrouding Christ in linens found in Birgitta’s visions is discussed in Mary Dzon “Birgitta of Sweden and Christ’s Clothing” in *The Christ Child in Medieval Culture: Alpha es et Omega*, eds. Mary Dzon and Theresa M. Kenney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 120 – 129.

⁴²⁸ Maria Oen, “The Visions of St. Birgitta. A Study of the Making and Reception of Images in the Later Middle Ages,” (PhD diss, University of Oslo, 2014), 99 – 100.

⁴²⁹ On the iconography of the Veil of Veronica, see: Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2, trans. Janet Seligman (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1972), 78 – 79.

be evident [Rev 3:18]; and Solomon: *At all times let your vestments be white* [Eccl 9:8], that is, let your works be clean.⁴³⁰

Describing altar linens as “the flesh or humility of the Saviour,” Durand writes that linen was “beaten and cleansed with many blows;” like Christ who was whipped at the Flagellation, flax was pounded and threshed.⁴³¹ The process required much work, just as Christ had endured many tribulations.⁴³² Beyond the labour of production, another important feature of linen can be gleaned from Durand’s text above, namely its whiteness and ‘*cleness*’.

Durand employs the Latin noun *munditia*, deriving from the adjective *mundus*, to describe the cleanness of white vestments used in the church.⁴³³ While *munditia* described *cleness*, it also could mean elegance, purity and fineness in keeping with definitions of *mundus* as something decorated, adorned, pure, clean, elegant and fine.⁴³⁴ These diverse linguistic meanings were continued in the English medieval *clene* (with its derivatives *cleanness* and *clenly*), which according to Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron could mean “free from admixture, not dirty, healthy, wholesome, morally righteous, morally pure, innocent, decent, proper, ceremonially pure, clear, transparent, bright, shining, splendid, elegant, excellent, complete, perfect, discerning, skillful.”⁴³⁵ In other words, the description of white linens as *munditia* conjured up a range of metaphorical associations including not only physical *cleness* and moral purity, but also aesthetic effects of clarity, brightness and shine. In his discussion of the use of the colour white for ecclesiastical vestments, Durand employs words like integrity, innocence, brightness, brilliance, purity and *cleness* to explain their religious and symbolic significance.⁴³⁶ Thus, both social and sensory values of white linen influenced the understanding of ‘whiteness’ and ‘*cleness*’ as suitable and indeed required features of the fabrics clothing the altars.

Emphasis on whiteness and shine are also found in the Old Testament and the Gospels, where white and fine linens symbolised the clothes of God and the Angels, appearing “white as the light” (Matt 17:2), “shining, exceeding white as snow” and “white and glistening” (Luke

⁴³⁰ Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 30.

⁴³¹ Thomas M. Izbicki, “The Care of Altar Linens in the Medieval Church,” in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 12, eds. R. Netherton and G.R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 44.

⁴³² Izbicki, “The Care of Altar Linens,” 45.

⁴³³ Durand, *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, ed. A. Davril and Timothy M. Thibodeau, for ‘*mundis pannis*,’ p. 85 ‘*mundationem*,’ and ‘*munditiam*,’ p. 225.

⁴³⁴ See *munditia* and *mundus* in Jan Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 709 – 710.

⁴³⁵ For “Cleanness” see: Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, eds. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 21.

⁴³⁶ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 213 – 215.

9:29). These aesthetic properties of linen, which are similarly described in medieval sources as “brilliantly white,” are associated with a desired visual effect of the altar ‘shining’ within the church. Rituals for consecrating altars in the Lund and Roskilde Pontificals describe the dressing of altars in white vestments, *vestite vestimentis albis*, at the final stage of the ritual.⁴³⁷ The whiteness of these altar vestments is also emphasised by Durand in his discussions of colours in Book 3: “but for the dedication of a church, white vestments must always be used regardless of the day on which the dedication is celebrated.”⁴³⁸ After the ceremony was concluded and the lamps and lights were lit, the altar would ‘shine brightly’ within the newly consecrated church.⁴³⁹

Kaja Kollandsrud has shown that white cloths situated within sacred scenes were depicted with a blueish shine in medieval painted frontals and sculptures.⁴⁴⁰ Kollandsrud argues that the painters deliberately used blue shadings to make heavenly cloths – for example the tablecloth in depictions of the Last Supper – appear with “a divine brightness associated with certain biblical scenes.”⁴⁴¹ It is interesting to note that similar ‘brightening’ effects of blue pigments, which neutralise white’s yellow or greyish colour that comes with use, may have led to the use of blue yarn for the embroideries on the Icelandic fragments and depicted altar cloths like the Notke painting. These examples are too few to make any general assumptions, but they may suggest that blue details functioned as optical illusions emphasising the desired ‘whiteness’ of altar cloths. As discussed above, the maintenance of white altar linens was a challenge; although the washing and care of altar linens was strictly regulated, there are examples of churches where the altar linens were dirty or in need of repair.⁴⁴² Thus, bright white altar linens were an ideal that did not always echo the realities in parish churches. Even so, the aesthetic of bright white linens reflected the *cleneness* appropriate for sacred cloths. Multiple layers of white linen clothing the altar table also established an impactful visual and sensory contrast with the ornate vestments adorning the altar front.

⁴³⁷ Mh 43 Lund Univeristy Library, folio 51 r, see Bengt Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin i Lund och Roskilde under medeltiden* (Lund: Gleerup, 1955), 234. C441, Uppsala University Library, folio 57r. See Strömberg, 145.

⁴³⁸ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 215.

⁴³⁹ Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 88.

⁴⁴⁰ Kaja Kollandsrud, “Evoking the Divine: The Visual Vocabulary of Sacred Polychrome Wooden Sculpture in Norway between 1100 and 1350” (Phd diss., University of Oslo, 2018), 181 – 185.

⁴⁴¹ Kollandsrud, “Evoking the Divine,” 182.

⁴⁴² Izbicki, “The Care of Altar Linens,” 57.

4.3 Textile Altar Frontals

Textile altar frontals, as the name aptly describes, cover the front of the altar table. They were predominantly made of lush velvets, patterned silks and ornate embroideries, but included humbler linen Lenten frontals that will be discussed separately. Compared to the scarce material sources for altar cloths, more medieval textile altar frontals have been preserved. However, these medieval altar vestments also have a low modern survival rate: very few examples of panel-length altar frontals in silks and velvets are preserved in their original form. Most of these vestments wore out and were repurposed in post-medieval times.

The oldest literary reference to textile altar frontals in medieval Scandinavia is found in a ninth-century letter from an abbot in Fulda, who wrote to a Swedish missionary that he sent various liturgical equipment including three sets of clothing for altars.⁴⁴³ Little is known about medieval altar frontals from the first centuries after Scandinavia was Christianised, but an both Icelandic manuscript illumination from the thirteenth century and a painted altar frontal from Nedstryn Church (c. 1310) depict the altar table draped in soft fabrics.⁴⁴⁴ Surviving examples, illustrations, and inventories show that by the fifteenth century most textile altar frontals were made of heavier brocade or velvet hung flat across the front of the altar, as seen in Notke's Århus panel. This development coincides with a northern European preference for Italian silks with palmette designs from the second quarter of the fourteenth century onwards and the increasing popularity of velvets with pomegranate patterns.⁴⁴⁵ The increased use of frontals made in panels of complex silks meant that less embroidery was required for their decoration.⁴⁴⁶

In contrast to the emphasis on the white linen of altar cloths, textile altar frontals and frontlets were richly decorated and made of colourful wool, silks and velvets. In the Icelandic inventories, they are described using a similarly rich variety of terms. *Pell* is the most mentioned material for textile altar frontals, and probably denotes different types of precious fabrics.⁴⁴⁷ The sources also commonly use *Silki*, which can be understood as a more generic description

⁴⁴³ James Thayer Addison, *The Medieval Missionary: A Study of the Conversion of Northern Europe, A.D. 500-1300* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1976), 102.

⁴⁴⁴ See manuscript illuminations in *Helgastaðabók*: Nikulás Saga: perg. 4to nr. 16 (Book of Helgastadir). The original manuscript is now in Royal Library, Stockholm. A draped altar is also depicted in the Nedstryn Frontal from Nedstryn Church in western Norway now preserved in Bergen University Museum, inv. no. MA 1.

⁴⁴⁵ Maria Hayward, "Liturgical Textiles: Post-1100," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c. 450-1450*, eds. Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Maria Hayward, and Elizabeth Coatsworth (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 333 – 334.

⁴⁴⁶ Hayward, "Liturgical Textiles," 334.

⁴⁴⁷ Wallem, *De Isländske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 67. For more on 'pell,' see M. Vedeler, *Silk for the Vikings*, 112.

of embroidered or woven silk material.⁴⁴⁸ *Baldrskin* or *baldikin* is also mentioned.⁴⁴⁹ *Gudvef* means ‘god-weave,’ and Marianne Vedeler argues that the term is not used exclusively for samite silk (as previously thought) but as a name for different fabrics.⁴⁵⁰ All of these fabrics could be embellished further with brocade or gold décor; *glitadir*, *skinandi*. Fredrik Wallem argues that *hlad* is a form of applied décor, and there are also mentions of silver coins and *skildrir*.⁴⁵¹ To sum up, these written sources reveal that textile altar frontals were made of panel lengths of velvets with pomegranate motifs, silk brocades, and/or gold, silk and wool embroideries, and/or applied silver coins and other embellishments. While minimally adorned silks and velvets were a common form of late-medieval altar frontals, they could also be covered by pictorial embroideries.

Written sources in Norse and Latin discussing textile altar frontals present some terminological difficulties. Norse terms such as *altarisklæði* or *altaraklæði* generally denote textile altar frontals, but Wallem points out that in cases where the textile is listed without any further information about its context or materials the term may also include altar cloths.⁴⁵² By the fifteenth century, if not earlier, every church in Iceland owned textile altar frontals or *altarisklæði*. In many cases, they are named after their designated altar; *háaltarisklæði*, *krossalatarisklæði*, *útalatarisklæði*.⁴⁵³ Although the Icelandic inventories are written mainly in Norse, inventories from cathedrals and monasteries often employ Latin terminology including the term *antependium* to indicate frontals in various materials including painted and gilded examples.⁴⁵⁴ In the multi-volume publication *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway, 1250-1350*, the term is taken to mean painted altar frontals in Icelandic inventories.⁴⁵⁵ However, these frontals are more commonly described as *tabulum*, *tabula* or the Norse *altarisbrik* or simply *brik*.⁴⁵⁶ Thus, the term *antependium* may just as well describe textile altar frontals.

Almost no medieval velvet altar frontals have survived, but a photograph from an early twentieth century exhibition of church art at the museum in Västergötland, Sweden shows a

⁴⁴⁸ Textile altar frontals made of *silki* and *pell* is mentioned in the same documents, so they clearly describe different things, Vedeler, 112.

⁴⁴⁹ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 67.

⁴⁵⁰ Vedeler, *Silk for the Vikings*, 111 – 112. Wallem lists other fabrics mentioned are bukram (IV 191, 632), Tefling II 473. IV 631, Fustan IV 175. VI 28, Lerept VI II 74, striga V 346 and flandr V 308. Wallem, *De Islandske Kirkers Udstyr*, 67.

⁴⁵¹ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 67.

⁴⁵² Wallem, 60.

⁴⁵³ Wallem, 66.

⁴⁵⁴ Wallem, 65.

⁴⁵⁵ Erla B Hohler, Nigel J. Morgan and Anne Wichstrøm (eds.), *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway 1250 – 1350. Volume 1: Artists, Styles and Iconography* (London: Archetype, 2004), listed in the Appendix to Chapter One.

⁴⁵⁶ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 52.

velvet altar frontal from nearby Skara Cathedral with an embroidered frontlet attached to an altar with an altarpiece (fig. 4.4). The frontal is made of irregularly cut pieces of brownish-red silk velvet, implying that the frontal was re-made from older vestments (fig. 4.5; cat.no. 8). This manufacture of the frontal as it appears today was probably done in the eighteenth century.⁴⁵⁷ A fifteenth century embroidered frontlet was sewn onto the top part of the frontal (fig. 4.6; cat.no. 8). The red velvet is scattered with six-pointed stars embroidered in gold and silk threads.⁴⁵⁸ Another example is in the Linköping Cathedral treasury, where a late sixteenth-century velvet was made into a frontal given to the cathedral in 1620.⁴⁵⁹ In Uppsala, a frontal was made in the seventeenth century out of red velvet brocade from a late-medieval dalmatic and tunic.⁴⁶⁰ These three examples emblemize the post-medieval nature of most ‘surviving’ frontals from the late medieval period: fragments of fifteenth and early sixteenth-century velvets or silks were altered and reused in post-medieval altar frontals. Although complete medieval velvet frontals have not been preserved, written sources testify to their popularity from the fifteenth century well into the eighteenth.

A total of fourteen are textile altar frontals preserved from Iceland. The Icelandic examples stand out both because of the relatively large extant corpus and because they are all made in wool embroidery techniques. This is not to say that velvet altar frontals were uncommon in late-medieval Iceland; both preserved fragments and the Icelandic inventories attest to their existence.⁴⁶¹ It is difficult to say whether the embroidered Icelandic altar frontals reflect a common Scandinavian tradition that is now lost in other collections or if they are a distinctively Icelandic phenomenon. Of these fourteen frontals, ten are executed in the Icelandic embroidery technique *refilsaumr*, mainly laid and couched work.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁷ Inger Estham, *Birgittinska Textilier, Bridgettine Textiles* (Stockholm: The Museum of National Antiques, 1991), 42. The frontlet was made in Vadstena in the fifteenth century and used in Skara Cathedral. Estham, 50.

⁴⁵⁸ These embroidered stars are very similar to the design of a red velvet chasuble, also from Skara. Estham argues that they are indicative of Vadstena works, and that these vestments originally were made there. See Estham, *Birgittinska Textilier*, 42.

⁴⁵⁹ Inger Estham and Åke Nisbeth, *Linköpings Domkyrka III. Inredning och Inventarier* (Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien, 2001), 114.

⁴⁶⁰ Inger Estham, “Textilsamlingen från 1300-Talet till 1860-talet,” in *Uppsala Domkyrka, V. Inredning och inventarier*, ed. Herman Bengtsson (Växjö: Upplandsmuseet, 2010), 290 - 291.

⁴⁶¹ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 67.

⁴⁶² Main threads (often coarse and loosely spun) are laid loose together. Across these, finer and more tightly twisted threads are laid and fastened down at intervals with small, sometimes irregularly spaced stitches. The term is first encountered in documents around 1550, but the technique is found in many embroidered textiles from around 1400 and onwards. Elsa E. Gudjónsson, “Traditional Icelandic Embroidery,” *The Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club*, 47 (1963): 7.

The largest textile altar frontal made in *refilsaumr* is the Hólar Frontal measuring almost two metres in length (fig. 4.7; cat.no. 9).⁴⁶³ The inscription at the top is a *titulus* naming three depicted Icelandic bishops; the beatified Guðmundur Arason (1160 – 1237), the sainted Jón Ögmundsson (1052 – 1121) and Þorlákur Þórhallsson (1160 – 1237). These full-size figures are all dressed in their episcopal vestments with mitres, crosiers, gloves and finger rings and are flanked by two censuring angels.⁴⁶⁴ Although the entire surface appears to be covered by embroidery, Elsa Gudjonsson pointed out small voided details—the rings on the bishop on either side and the decoration of the mitre on the middle figure—which may originally have been filled with precious stones.⁴⁶⁵ The Hólar Frontal is an extraordinary example of the potential of wool to produce visually striking art objects with strong colours and minute details. It should be noted that due to fading and aging the strong yellow hue of the main background surface now appears to be tan. Similarly, the yellow-green of the vestments was originally a clear blue colour.⁴⁶⁶ Gilded leather threads used to emphasise the outlines of the clothing and details executed in white and blue linen threads would have further accentuated the wool yarns. Thus, the interplay between brightly coloured wool, gilded contours, precious stones and the craftsmanship of embroidery all contributed to the aesthetic effects of the Hólar Frontal.

In contrast to the Hólar Frontal, the majority of Icelandic frontals are designed with roundels or quatrefoils depicting narrative scenes. A remarkable example of an altar frontal in applied work is preserved from the church of Reykír in northern Iceland (fig. 4.8; cat.no. 10). Probably dating to the first half of the sixteenth century, it is made predominantly in applied work of wool, linen, silk and gilt leather on a woollen tabby ground (main panel) and linen (framing bands). The central motif is the Apocalyptic Virgin surrounded by rays of sunlight, standing on a crescent moon and holding a naked Christ Child (fig. 4.9). Seven letter ‘A’s’ are shown floating around the Virgin. Images of the Virgin Mary as ‘the woman clothed in the sun’ were popular in the late Middle Ages. The motif was influenced by the Revelation of John: “And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Apoc 12.1). Numerous examples of the Apocalyptic Virgin are known from late-medieval illuminated manuscripts, sculptures,

⁴⁶³ The frontal is measuring 99 x 182,5 centimetres.

⁴⁶⁴ Gudjónsson, *Traditional Icelandic embroidery*, 17.

⁴⁶⁵ Gudjónsson, “Traditional Icelandic Embroidery,” 8.

⁴⁶⁶ According to colour analysis, Gudjónsson, 8.

paintings and embroidered textiles.⁴⁶⁷ The figure's contours are laid in gilded leather, which would have shone brightly against the blue background in a dimly lit church. The colour blue was often associated with the Virgin, and the contrast between dark blue wool and golden rays would have emphasised the Virgin's appearance as a woman in the sun.

The Marian theme in the Reykír Frontal is not only evident in the striking Virgin, but also in the seven floating 'As'. As Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir has convincingly argued, the seven 'As' could act as visual reminders for prayers to the Seven Joys of the Virgin.⁴⁶⁸ The smaller size of the Reykír Frontal made it well suited for a side altar. Kristjánsdóttir argued that the frontal was used for a side altar dedicated to the Virgin due to the vestment's explicit Marian iconography.⁴⁶⁹ In contrast to the main altar, which was more visually and structurally restricted from the laity, people could light candles and pray before smaller side altars in the nave. Thus, this embroidered frontal could have been intended for those who recited prayers to the Seven Joys of the Virgin before the Marian altar at Reykír. Through its golden rays, the blue material property and the Marian iconography, the Reykír altar frontal could have strengthened devotion to the Virgin Mary.

Questions of how the altar vestments were perceived are important for understanding the intended effects communicated through the visual appearance of altar textiles. Since virtually no first-hand descriptions of aesthetic experience associated with medieval altar vestments survive, questions of textile perception and experience can mainly be approached from a contextual perspective. As discussed in the Introduction, aesthetic experience was framed by the viewing context established by the social and visual environment. As the case studies of Endre Church and Trondheim Cathedral in Chapter Two demonstrated, viewing context varied greatly between smaller parish churches and great cathedrals. For altars, the issue is further complicated by the distinction between the main and side altars. In contrast to the grand visual and spatial setting of a main altar in a cathedral, the smaller woollen and applique Reykír Frontal was probably located on a side altar in the old Reykír Church in Tungusveit, northern Iceland.

⁴⁶⁷ This motif was important in developing the concept of Immaculate Conception, a much-debated topic in the late fifteenth century. For the motif of the Apocalyptic Virgin in the context of Scandinavian late-medieval art and devotion, see Bergesen, "Sangere i det himmelske Jerusalem," 215 – 220.

⁴⁶⁸ Guðbjörg Kristjánsdóttir, "Sjö A fyrir Ave-vers á altarisklæði frá Reykjum í Tungusveit," *Árbók Hins íslenska fornleifafélags* (1992): 98. These prayers are not preserved in Icelandic manuscripts, but the first words of a prayer in a 1403 letter indicate that they were indeed known there. The theme of the Joys of the Virgin occurs in several Icelandic texts and legends. Other devotions and prayers with seven divisions are known, such as manuscript AM 764 4to written at the Reynrstadur nunnery.

⁴⁶⁹ Kristjánsdóttir, "Sjö A fyrir Ave-vers," 94.

The church is now lost, but it was likely a stave structure with walls supported by turf, as was usual for medieval Icelandic churches.⁴⁷⁰ The *Auðunarmáldaga* from 1318 describes the church as *alkirkja* which translates to a main or official church with weekly services and a cemetery.⁴⁷¹ Its size and layout are not known, but as Wallem notes, Icelandic churches were often rather small structures.⁴⁷² An inventory from Reykír dated 1461 lists a range of vestments including chasubles, an altar frontal and altar cloths as well as *tiold* or textile wall hangings.⁴⁷³ Icelandic churches commonly had layers of textiles clothing interior walls; the Icelandic inventories describe churches as *tjöld umhverfis* or *kirkjutjöld öll*, translating to all-covered in textiles.⁴⁷⁴ Since glass windows were rare, the walls would have been unadorned (if not for such coverings), and the interior would have been quite dark.⁴⁷⁵ However, a lamp and four iron chandeliers or *kertastikur* listed in the 1461 inventory of Reykír Church would have illuminated the altars and choir.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, the Reykír inventory lists two images: a sculpture of St Michael, *michaelis liknisu*, to whom the church was dedicated, and a Marian image described as *mariuscript*. The latter could denote both a sculpted and a painted image of the Virgin.⁴⁷⁷ A later addition was a sculpture of a holy bishop preserved in the National Museum in Reykjavík.⁴⁷⁸ The inventory also lists a pax board, a censer, two crosses with cloths, a chalice with paten and a collection of liturgical books including a beautiful gospel, *gudspiollum sæmuligur*, a gradual, breviary (with psalterium), and a ‘song book,’ possibly an antiphonal.⁴⁷⁹

Two altar textiles are preserved from the Reykír Church: the Reykír textile altar frontal discussed above and a fragment of a late-medieval woven frontlet with multicolored fringes

⁴⁷⁰ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 23, and Ola Storsletten, «Arkitektur på Island,» in Store Norske Leksikon Online, <https://snl.no>, accessed June 10 2020).

⁴⁷¹ Sigríður Sigurðardóttir describes *alkirkja* as *höfuðkirkjum* (*beneficum*) or a main church, with a cemetery and weekly services. See Sigríður Sigurðardóttir, “Kirkjur og bænhús í Skagafirði,” 3rd ed, *Smárit Byggðasafns Skagfirðinga III* (Skagfirðinga: Byggðasafn Skagfirðinga, 2011), 6. It should be noted, that the Icelandic church organization did not conform to the parish system common at the time; thus terms such as ‘*alkirkja*’ does not directly translate to parish church as we know them from medieval Europe.

⁴⁷² Wallem refers to measurements of the medieval Hofsstaðakirkja (in Hofsstaðabyggð) which is also described as an *alkirkja* in a 1461 inventory. This church was a little less than ten meters in length and around four meters in breadth. See Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 23.

⁴⁷³ Jón Sigurðsson and Jón Þorkelsson, *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Bd. 1330-1476, Íslenska bókmenntafélag, Diplomatarium Islandicum* (Kaupmannahöfn/ Reykjavík: Í prentsmiðju S.L. Möllers, 1902), 329, Máldagi no. LXI. The following discussion of the inventory is from this same maldagi, referred to as DI V: 329 (no LXI).

⁴⁷⁴ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 25.

⁴⁷⁵ Icelandic inventories mention *glergluggar* in some fifteenth and sixteenth century churches, this term denotes very small glass windows, often protected by wooden shutters. See Wallem, 33 – 34.

⁴⁷⁶ For the use of lamps or kola in Icelandic churches, see Wallem, 108 – 110.

⁴⁷⁷ Wallem points out that the terms are used interchangeably to describe both painted frontals and sculptures: Wallem, 40.

⁴⁷⁸ The preserved bishop sculpture was probably made in Germany in the early sixteenth century, inventory number NMI.10954, National Museum Reykjavík, Iceland.

⁴⁷⁹ DI V: 329 (no LXI)

(fig. 4.10; cat.no. 11).⁴⁸⁰ This Reykír woven frontlet also had Marian iconography, with an inscription reading ASSUMTA EST MARIA IN CELUM JASP M, translated to ‘Mary is risen to heaven.’ Abbreviations of the names of two of the Wise Men, Caspar and Melchior, follow. Since the frontlet is now torn, it is likely that the inscription continued with an abbreviation for Balthasar. With its references to the Assumption of the Virgin, the frontlet would enhance the iconography of the Reykír Frontal. As discussed above, the woman in the sun, the main motif of the frontal, was in late-medieval art identified with Mary and understood as a prefiguration of the Assumption of the Virgin. It is possible that both the frontal and the frontlet clothed a Marian altar in Reykír Church.

In Reykír, the Marian altar would be approached in a small and dimly lit church. Kneeling before the altar, where a candle might have been placed to illuminate the space, the parishioner could recite devotions to the Virgin. As Kristjánsdóttir has shown, indulgences were promised for reading prayers to the Seven Joys of the Virgin.⁴⁸¹ The seven ‘As’ in the Reykír Frontal may refer to such Marian prayers, known from Swedish and Danish prayer books.⁴⁸² This viewing context facilitated what Hahn described as the contemplative gaze, a meditative sensation of the artwork.⁴⁸³ Encountering the Reykír Frontal, the beholder could not only engage with the iconographic meaning of the motif, but perceive the aesthetic effects of the textile surface. Deep blue wool and gilded leather contours rendered the Apocalyptic Virgin as emerging in a ray of light.

The design of such embroidered frontals echoes slightly earlier dated Scandinavian painted altar frontals. In Unn Plahter’s comprehensive study of the Norwegian examples, Nigel Morgan points out stylistic similarities between an Icelandic textile altar frontal from Svalbard Church and a painted altar frontal from Eid. Both have circular medallions in three rows. Morgan argues that the Icelandic embroidered frontals continue stylistic and iconographic traditions from earlier panel paintings.⁴⁸⁴ The relationship between painted and gilded frontals and their textile counterparts is not clear, however, and further research on the topic is needed. Margrethe Stang points to a “development towards an increased variation in the decoration of the church interior in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,” the period where we find an

⁴⁸⁰ The altar frontal has inventory number NMI 51, National Museum Reykjavik, Iceland.

⁴⁸¹ Kristjánsdóttir, “Sjö A fyrir Ave-vers,” Page 89 and 92.

⁴⁸² Kristjánsdóttir, 98.

⁴⁸³ Cynthia Hahn, ‘Visio Dei: Changes in Medieval Visuality’, in *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, ed. Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 169–96.

⁴⁸⁴ Nigel J. Morgan “Norwegian altar frontals in a European context: form and function” in *Painted Altar Frontals of Norway 1250 – 1350. Volume 1: Artists, Styles and Iconography*, eds. Erla B Hohler, Nigel J. Morgan and Anne Wichstrøm (London: Archetype, 2004), 8.

increased use of draperies and textile altar frontals in Scandinavian churches.⁴⁸⁵ Strikingly, all of the preserved painted altar frontals from Norway and Iceland were made before 1350. Stang suggests that by the fifteenth century the extensive use of textile frontals, which were easier to change during the liturgical year, may have contributed to the decline in painted altar frontals.⁴⁸⁶

There is, however, a considerable group of twenty-six late-medieval painted frontals preserved in Denmark.⁴⁸⁷ Many of these frontals mimic textiles with panels of painted Italian silk brocades and textile bands across the top with inscriptions and multicoloured fringes. A 1523 frontal from Egå Church in Århus diocese has side panels of painted brocades and a painted band with inscriptions and fringes resembling the Norwegian superfrontals or frontlets discussed below (fig. 4.11).⁴⁸⁸ Five of the painted Danish frontals are reversible with painted imagery on each side, allowing for a more versatile liturgical use. This is the case with an early sixteenth-century frontal from St Olafs Church in Kalundborg, Roskilde diocese, where one side has a large image of a monstrance framed by painted brocades and fringes, while the other side has a large red painted textile possibly suitable for Lent.⁴⁸⁹

Furthermore, texts show that textiles were used to cover and uncover the altar according to changes in the liturgical year before the late Middle Ages. The *Ordo Nidrosiense Ecclesia* describes the liturgy used in Nidaros Cathedral in the first half of the thirteenth century. Major feasts were distinguished by the uncovering (*denudatur*) of the altar frontal (*tabula altaris*) of the high altar to expose its visual glory, accompanied by incense.⁴⁹⁰ At certain Octaves and Saint's Feasts, the frontal was covered with a precious textile (*preciosissimo velamina operitur*).⁴⁹¹ It is difficult to determine the extent to which the liturgical praxis of Nidaros influenced the use of altar textiles in the diocese's parish churches. One of the few medieval inventories preserved from Norway, the inventory of the small Ylmheim Stave Church by the

⁴⁸⁵ Margrethe C. Stang, "Paintings, Patronage and Popular Piety: Norwegian Altar Frontals and Society c. 1250-1350" (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2009), 148.

⁴⁸⁶ Stang, "Paintings, Patronage and Popular Piety," 148.

⁴⁸⁷ Sissel F Plathe, *Danmarks middelalderlige altertavler - og anden billedbærende kirkeudsmykning af betydning for liturgien og den private andagt: A-N: vol.1* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2010), 17. A total of 26 frontals are preserved from late 15th century and up to the Reformation.

⁴⁸⁸ Plathe, *Middelalderlige altertavler*, 211.

⁴⁸⁹ Plathe, *Middelalderlige altertavler*, 500 – 501.

⁴⁹⁰ Kolsrud suggests that this frontal was a golden frontal such as the Danish Romanesque frontals, but there is no evidence to conclude on the frontal's visual appearance. Oluf Kolsrud, "Korsongen i Nidarosdomen," in *Festskrift til O. M. Sandvik* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1945), 86.

⁴⁹¹ Kolsrud, "Korsongen i Nidarosdomen," 86. See also Lilli Gjerløw, ed., *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae (ordubók)*, vol. 2 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968).

Sognefjord, is dated somewhat earlier than the period discussed in this dissertation.⁴⁹² Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that this relatively small church owned seven textile altar frontals in the 1320s.⁴⁹³ This may suggest that the Ylmheim altars, at least one of which was equipped with a painted altar frontal, were covered with different textile frontals for feast days, lesser feasts and during Lent. Icelandic inventories list textile frontals for virtually every church by the fifteenth century, with more than one textile per altar for the larger churches and cathedrals.⁴⁹⁴ The plurality of late-medieval textile altar frontals suggest that these textiles were used for covering and uncovering the altar during the various ecclesiastical occasions of the liturgical year.

4.4 Altar Frontlets

Altar frontlets were important for the late-medieval altar's visual appearance, and a considerable corpus of such ornamental textile bands are preserved in Scandinavian collections. Despite the numerous extant examples, they have rarely been mentioned in previous research on altar textiles. Both Helen Engelstad and Agnes Branting/Andreas Lindblom include altar frontlets in their catalogues, but the significance of these textiles is not commented upon.⁴⁹⁵ Joseph Braun defined the frontlets as woven or embroidered bands (*Randborten*) measuring about twenty to twenty-five centimetres in height, and furnished with fringes in gold or silk, often in alternating colours creating a striped pattern.⁴⁹⁶ These textile bands are sometimes called superfrontals in English literature, corresponding to the Norse *altarbrün* (Swedish and Danish *altarlist*). With a few exceptions, most of the frontlets are dated to the late fourteenth century through the beginning of the sixteenth century. Preserved examples include frontlets woven in radiant colours and embroidered frontlets with extensive use of silks, pearls and gold. A multi-coloured fringe was a standard feature in medieval Scandinavian frontlets. Durand discusses golden trims for the altar using the Latin term *aurifrisium*, a word occasionally used

⁴⁹² Ylmheim church (also Yhlheim, Ølheim or Yhlmheim) was a stave church on the church site Norum close to Nornes by the Sogndalsfjord in western Norway. The stave church was built in the thirteenth century but burned in the year 1700 or 1701.

⁴⁹³ DN XV no. 8

⁴⁹⁴ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 66 – 67.

⁴⁹⁵ See Helen Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud: middelalderske paramenter i Norge* (Oslo: Cammermeyers boghandel, 1941), 17 – 18, and the discussion of Swedish frontlets in Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom, *Medeltida vävnader och broderier i Sverige* (Faksimileupplag) (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1997).

⁴⁹⁶ Joseph Braun, *Der Christliche Altar in Seiner Geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, vol. II (München: Alte Meister Guenther Koch & Co., 1924), 46 – 47.

by Scandinavian sources to describe frontlets.⁴⁹⁷ In Durand's discussion of golden trims, he states that they signified good works with which "our brow should be adorned that we may shine for others". Curiously, the Norse term *brún* meant an edge or an eyebrow.⁴⁹⁸ Durand quotes Exodus 25 and 27 describing the adornment of the ark in the tabernacle: "And thou shalt make unto it a border of a hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about."⁴⁹⁹ The frontlet with its golden or silk fringes crowned the top of the altar, so that the altar was decorated with a "gold trim of charity".⁵⁰⁰ This textile "crown" became an important part of the altar dressings of late-medieval Scandinavia.

As discussed in the section on altar frontals, the late medieval period saw an increased use of panel-length velvets without embroidered decor. Thus, the richly decorated frontlets provided an opportunity for images, text and visual splendour to supplement the velvet frontals. It is worth noting, however, that frontlets of the same material as the frontal (velvet or silk) embellished only with a fringe at the lower edge are known from European collections.⁵⁰¹ As with the textile altar frontals, the relationship between painted or gilded frontals and textile frontlets is unclear. If they were used together, the textile frontlets would have obscured the top part of the *tabula*. Because the frontlets are not mentioned in liturgical texts, it is difficult to say whether they were used together with altar frontals that concealed and revealed other painted or textile frontlets. In some cases, frontlets were sewn onto the altar cloths and are mentioned in inventories as belonging to the cloths. This would suggest that they were a more or less permanent feature on the altar. At the same time, there are many examples of frontlets listed with textile frontals, indicating that they were perceived as 'sets' of altar dressings.⁵⁰² In these cases, it is possible that the frontal and frontlet both were used to veil and unveil the altar following the liturgical year.

⁴⁹⁷ Latin *aurifrisium* or *auriphrygium* denoted gold embroideries, from Latin *aurum phrygium* or 'Phrygian gold' and the English term 'orphrey' used to describe an ornamental band on a vestment or rich embroidery (obsolete) derived from this word. See The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Etymology Online, s.v. "orphrey," accessed online June 10, 2020, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192830982.001.0001/acref-9780192830982>

⁴⁹⁸ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 28.

⁴⁹⁹ Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 41. It should be noted that although Durand presents this as a direct quote, this text is substantially altered version of the Latin Vulgate text, as pointed out by Thibodeau in fn. 29.

⁵⁰⁰ Durand and Thibodeau, 41.

⁵⁰¹ The Hilleshög letter, discussed in the following section, specifically requested a frontlet in the same manner of the frontal, and no further decoration is mentioned. Thus, plainer frontlets may have existed although no such examples are preserved.

⁵⁰² This is the case with a textile altar frontal with frontlet commissioned in a letter to master Hermann Lynden, to be discussed in the following section.

The survival of altar frontlets varies. Four frontlets are known from medieval Norway.⁵⁰³ A larger corpus of embroidered frontlets was preserved in Swedish collections, as well as frontlets embellished with pearls, silver and precious stones. Finnish examples, especially an embroidered frontlet associated with the Birgittine monastery at Naantali (Nådendal), resemble known Swedish examples.⁵⁰⁴ Wallem notes that richly decorated *brún* also came into use in Iceland around 1350 and became very common by the fifteenth century.⁵⁰⁵ A frontlet from Skálholt Cathedral has silk embroidery and attached gilded coins, similar to the frontlets mentioned in contemporary inventories (fig. 4.12; cat.no. 12). There are no preserved altar frontlets in Danish museum collections or cathedral treasuries, but written sources testify to their existence. In 1447, the Danish knight Anders Nilssøn bequeathed his black damask tunic to Æbelholt Abbey, to be made into a set of altar vestments, and his pearl rosary for the adornment of an altar frontlet.⁵⁰⁶

Some altar frontlets, especially woven ones like the Gildeskål Frontlet mentioned in the opening of this chapter, bore inscriptions.⁵⁰⁷ Unlike inscriptions on other altar furnishings, the epigrams in this group of woven altar frontlets were highly visible, both through their prominent

⁵⁰³ All four frontlets, Hof, Trondenes, Gildeskål and Andenes, are published in Engelstad's 1941 catalogue: Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*, 144 – 145 (cat no. 40 – 43).

⁵⁰⁴ The frontlet is in the collections of the National Museum of Finland, Helsinki, inv. no 2372:3. The frontlet is known as the Naantali or Vallis gratiae embroidery/altar frontlet. In Finnish it is generally known as the 'altar cloth of Huittinen' or Huittisten alttariliina. This textile is discussed most recently in Elina Räsänen, "The Vallis Gratiae Altar Frontlet: Object, Imagery and the Deconstruction of the 'Artist'," in *The Birgittine Experience: Papers from the Birgitta Conference in Stockholm 2011*, eds. Mia Åkestam and R. Anderson (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 2013), 109–35.

⁵⁰⁵ There is some ambiguity to the term, as it in general seems to have described a textile band. Thus, both bands from wall textiles and in priestly clothes can be described as *brún*. However, in most instances the textiles described as *brún* is listed among another altar textiles, and in these cases, they were likely altar frontlets. Examples include "altarisdukr med brun oc fordukum" (VII 456) and "3 bruner gulllagdar med tveimur vigsludukum" (V, 345). Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 29.

⁵⁰⁶ "Item giffuer jæk til Æbelholtz kloster xl lubiske mark til kirkene bygning oc min sworte damaskis kiortel met foderith till messe rethe oc min pærlekrantz til een alterliste." Anders Nilssøn's stated that these items were to be given to Æbeltoft Abbey, an Augustinian monastery in North Zealand, Denmark. K. Erslev, *Testamenter fra Danmarks Middelalder Indtil 1450* (Copenhagen: Hegel & Søn, 1901), 211.

⁵⁰⁷ A group of woven frontlets preserved in Norway is unique in that three of the frontlets were woven in gobelin technique patterned with large inscriptions, flowers and small figures, as discussed in Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*, 65 -66 (cat.nos. 40, 41, 42, 43). Frontlets woven in coloured wool and linen are known from fifteenth-century Germany, and Engelstad proposes a workshop in the Rhineland for Trondenes and Hof. Unfortunately, two frontlets were lost in the Second World War; the Andenes and Gildeskål Frontlets were sent to Oslo (in the late 1930s or early 1940s) for Engelstad's study of medieval vestments, and they never returned to their museums in northern Norway. It is likely that these textiles were lost in the chaos of the evacuation of Norway during the German occupation during the Second World War. This information is given in a letter from Anne Kjellberg at The Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (Kunstindustrimuseet), Oslo, to Åse Elstad at Tromsø University Museum, number 5/2 – 98. I am grateful to Anita Maurstad at the Artic University Museum in Tromsø for providing these letters concerning the lost vestments to me. Thus, for the Andenes and Hof frontlets, we have to rely on the extensive documentation presented in Engelstad's 1941 catalogue. The lost Andenes frontlet was made in applied gilded leather and silk on a woollen ground. Engelstad attributed this textile to a Netherlandish or northern-German workshop. Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*, 66 (cat no 43).

position on the altar and in their large and contrasting lettering. Although inscriptions are commonly found on a wide range of medieval liturgical objects including painted and gilded altar frontals, the letters were often small and difficult to read in a dimly lit church.⁵⁰⁸ In many cases, the text was not addressed to the parishioners or even the clergy but meant for God.⁵⁰⁹

The Gildeskål Frontlet bore the inscription “Ora pro nobis † beate Thoma” woven in yellow-white against a dark brown background (fig. 4.13; cat.no. 13). Unfortunately, this textile was lost in the Second World War.⁵¹⁰ Thus, we have to rely on the documentation presented in Engelstad’s 1941 catalogue, which described it as a coarser domestic work and suggested it was made in a Norwegian workshop.⁵¹¹ In her discussion of medieval altar frontals in Norway, Stang argues that the Gildeskål inscription stands out as a highly visible text intended to be read by the clergy and perhaps also the parishioners.⁵¹² Furthermore, the direct appeal to St Thomas to pray “for us” may have been an invocation to the saint on behalf of the laity.⁵¹³ Similar inscriptions are found on a frontlet from Hof with short tituli of saints, the Virgin Mary and Christ: “S fransiscus Nicodemuss S ioannes Maria O dulcis Ihesu S maria magdalena Joseps Cecilia”.⁵¹⁴ These woven words also recall the symbolic understanding of altar vestments as martyrs clothing the altar in virtues, found in Durand and echoed in the Icelandic exposition of the Mass.

A frontlet from frontChurch differs from Gildeskål and Hof with its more complex inscription reading “Angeli cives visitant hic suos * et corpus sumitur ihesu” – the Angels visit their fellow citizens * and Christ’s body is received” (fig 4.14; cat.no. 14). In his discussion of the Eucharistic functions of medieval art objects from Trondenes Church, Rognald Bergesen pointed out that the text is a material articulation of the *Supplices* prayers central to the Eucharistic liturgy.⁵¹⁵ As the celebrant kneeled before the altar, reciting the *Supplice*, the

⁵⁰⁸ Margrethe Stang discusses inscriptions on the painted altar frontals from Norway, in “Paintings, Patronage and Popular Piety,” 164 - 181. For a discussion of inscriptions on the Danish gilded frontals, see Kristin Bliksrud Aavitsland, “Incarnation. Paradoxes of Perception and Mediation in Medieval Liturgical Art,” in *The Saturated Sensorium: Principles of Perception and Mediation in the Middle Ages*, eds. Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, Henning Laugerud, and Laura Katrine Skinnebach (Århus: Aarhus University Press, 2016), 84 - 87.

⁵⁰⁹ Stang, “På sporet av det tapte rom,” 184. One such example from this study is discussed in Chapter Seven, the pendant ball suspended on bishop’s cope.

⁵¹⁰ See footnote above on the lost frontlets.

⁵¹¹ Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*, 65 and 145 (cat.no. 42).

⁵¹² Stang, “Paintings, Patronage and Popular Piety,” 161 – 162.

⁵¹³ Stang identifies the targeted viewing community as the congregation, the local guild, and the donors.

Although local tradition maintains that the saint in question is Saint Thomas of Canterbury, there is no evidence to support the claim, and the saint referred in this textile inscription might also have been Thomas the apostle. See Stang, “På sporet av det tapte rom,” 184 – 185.

⁵¹⁴ Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*, 40.

⁵¹⁵ Bergesen, «Sangere i det himmelske Jerusalem» 168.

frontlet would be right before his eyes. The inscription is punctuated with a full-size figure of Christ or John the apostle, symbolizing the part of the supplice prayer where the celebrant would kiss the corporal textile on the altar.⁵¹⁶ The Trondenes Frontlet is a unique example of a depiction of canonical prayers on a liturgical object, and is an unusual choice as canonical prayers were considered esoteric knowledge reserved for the clergy. Bergesen points to legends of lay people who had learned these secret texts being punished by lightning strike, underlining the exceptional nature of the co .⁵¹⁷ Much like the Gildeskål text, the Trondenes lettering is highly visible and readable within the choir space.

The woven words on the Trondenes Frontlet ‘crown’ the altar table with letters that are not just prominent, but also ornate. The latter emphasis on visual opulence mediated Christ’s presence through both materiality and visibility.⁵¹⁸ In her discussion of inscriptions on Romanesque golden altars, Kristin Bliksrud Aavitsland argued that ornate writing in medieval art indirectly alluded to the Incarnation of Christ as a visual manifestation of the Word of God.⁵¹⁹ Following this line of argument, the woven inscriptions mediated God made flesh, emphasising the frontals’ liturgical relation to the altar table and Eucharistic celebration.

In addition to woven inscriptions, altar frontlets could also be elaborately embroidered. In particular, a Birgittine frontlet from Norrsunda Church, likely originally made for Vadstena Abbey Church, features rich embroidery covering the silk ground with vegetative scrolls inhabited by small fantastical creatures and a Madonna in a mandorla (figs. 3.15 – 3.20; cat.no. 15).⁵²⁰ One of the most arresting features of this piece is the breadth of materials employed: the embroideries are in raised work with gold and silver file and silks, and freshwater pearls, corals (of which only a few are still preserved) and metal sequins are scattered on a fabric of red atlas silk (figs 4.16 – 4.18).⁵²¹ The main motif consists of curving scrolls with heavy flowers resembling lilies, leaves and clusters of fruit. The stems were originally gold. The flowers are made in a combination of gold, silver, metal sequins and probably fresh-water pearls. At the

⁵¹⁶ Bergesen, 168.

⁵¹⁷ Bergesen, 168.

⁵¹⁸ Aavitsland argues that “no matter what its content, the ornate script represents the logos incarnate.” Aavitsland, “Incarnation. Paradoxes of Perception,” 85.

⁵¹⁹ Aavitsland, 84.

⁵²⁰ This piece of medieval embroidery is reused in a 17th century textile altar frontal of red velvet with the applied embroidered letters and symbols “INRI”, “1635”, “ISEO” and the heraldic weapons of the families Oxenstierna and Sparre The Initials: ISEO 1635: Johan Sparre and Ebba Oxenstierna, married 1624.

⁵²¹ An eighteenth-century inventory states that the refashioned textile altar frontal was given to Norrsunda Church in 1635. Inger Estham, «Birgittinska broderier,» in *Den ljusa medeltiden. Studier tillägnade Aron Andersson* (Stockholm: Museum of National Antiquities, 1984), 31. Inger Estham has convincingly argued that the frontlet originally belonged to the Vadstena main altar, which corresponds almost exactly with its measurement in length.

centre is a standing figure of the Apocalyptic Virgin embroidered in blue silk and gold (fig. 4.20). This popular late-medieval motif was widely employed in late fifteenth-century Vadstena art.⁵²² Fantastical and mythical creatures inhabit the scrolls, including a pelican piercing his breast to feed his squabs, unicorns, a deer, a griffin, lions and various birds, all of which originally were covered in pearl embroidery (fig. 4.19).

The three-dimensional and tactile surfaces of the Norrsunda Frontlet are characterised by a mixture of materials and embroidery techniques. The embroideries can be described as florid and highly ornate, in contrast to the flat and painterly ‘needle painting’ embroideries known from contemporary chasubles and copes. Late nineteenth and twentieth-century textile research valued this ‘needle-painting’ above relief embroidery with padded figures and extensive applied embellishments in pearls, corals, and metalwork, devaluing the latter as an example of the ‘downfall’ of medieval embroidery associated with lack of artistic skill and imagination.⁵²³ The Norrsunda Frontlet challenges these anachronistic judgements of medieval embroidery. Borrowing the term from Michael Baxandall’s discussion of southern German woodcarvings, Evelyn Wetter describes embroideries with a fundamental ornamental character as ‘florid’ and observes that “In Middle High German sources, *florieren* (“to flourish”) is used in the sense of “*ornare*, to cause to flower, to decorate.”⁵²⁴ Challenging previous negative valuations, Wetter argues that such florid relief embroideries were sought after for their capacity to display wealth through extensive beading and ornamentation.⁵²⁵ In the Norrsunda Frontlet, the visual splendour and playful use of materials in small-scale figures and floral motifs created a magnificent ‘crown’ for the altar table.

In the Norrsunda Frontlet, florid embroidery creates a three-dimensional surface with padded applique and relief embroideries. Relief embroidery and embellishment with pearls, metal sequins and corals give the textile surface an assemblage structure where the different parts are more prominent than the totality of the work. Such complex surfaces insist on a polyfocal way of looking, forcing the eye to shift to look at the stones, the pearls and the gleaming beams surrounding the Virgin before taking in the whole. Mary Carruthers describes this polyfocal perspective as central to medieval aesthetics, creating a harmony from “strong contrasts of diverse colours and materials and sudden shifts of view”.⁵²⁶ Moreover, this

⁵²² Estham, «Birgittinska broderier,» 31.

⁵²³ Evelyn Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien III: Stickerei bis um 1500 und figürlich gewebte Borten* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2012), 307.

⁵²⁴ Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien*, 307.

⁵²⁵ Wetter, 307.

⁵²⁶ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 151.

embroidery thematizes the playfulness of medieval aesthetics through its juxtaposition of religious images and fantastical creatures and flowers. Carruthers places medieval aesthetics in a “ludic playspace” where monstrosities, mixtures and oppositions are central to the medieval experience of beauty:

Medieval *ludus* can creatively entertain the sort of oppositions, contradictions, monstrosities, and marvels that serious life does not, and yet its activities remain ‘in the world’.⁵²⁷

Rather than understanding fantastical and monstrous creatures as a moral pedagogy, Carruthers argues that they are aesthetic, creating a sensory experience through *varietas*. Discussing the feelings such fantastical images could provoke in their beholders, Carruthers points towards “laughter (ridiculousness) or fearfulness (devil’s torments) or *admiratio* (wonder at what is strange) for the bizarre and unexpected.”⁵²⁸ Through *varietas*, medieval arts could surprise and engage their audiences, relieve tedium and “refresh a wearied mind.”⁵²⁹ In the case of the Norrsunda Frontlet, *varietas* was created both through its mixed and complex textile surface and the fantastical creatures hiding in flower scrolls and framing the apocalyptic Virgin.⁵³⁰ To sum up, the polyfocal, mixed and ludic qualities of the Norrsunda Frontlet can be understood as rhetorical, a means of textile persuasion through sensory and aesthetic experience.

The modern appellation of the Norrsunda Frontlet denotes the textile’s post-medieval provenance. Vadstena textiles were sold or given to local parish churches and families with connections to the Birgittine order after the decline of the Vadstena Monastery in the late sixteenth century.⁵³¹ It is likely that the frontlet was sold to Norrsunda Church, located around three hundred kilometres north-west of Vadstena, in the early seventeenth century. Inger Estham has convincingly argued that the frontlet may have originally be located on the Vadstena main altar, which corresponds almost exactly with its length of almost three meters.⁵³² The embroidery’s excellent craftsmanship and material splendour also indicates that this frontlet was made for a main altar rather than smaller private altars in the nave of the Abbey Church.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main altar at Vadstena Abbey was situated on an elevated platform in the chancel, which was separated from the nave with iron railings.

⁵²⁷ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 27. For Carruthers’ definition of medieval aesthetics and ‘ludic playspace’, see p. 17.

⁵²⁸ See also Mary Carruthers “Varietas: A word of many colours” *Poetica*, vol. 41 (2009): 39.

⁵²⁹ Carruthers, “Varietas: A word of many colours,” 39.

⁵³⁰ As discussed in the Introduction, *varietas* describes “many separate colours, textures, savours, all experienced distinctly though at the same time within a single artefact.” Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 135.

⁵³¹ The Vadstena monastery was dissolved in 1595.

⁵³² Estham, «Birgittinska broderier,» 31.

Although complete inventories from the church are missing, the eyewitness account from Katarina's translation in 1489 (NRB) describes the main altar as clothed in silks, framed by silk curtains and surmounted by a large altarpiece. In this restricted altar space, the brethren would preach daily sermons, and there would be daily masses as well as festive celebrations of feast days according to the liturgical calendar. We can assume that a large and wealthy institution like Vadstena Abbey also had the means to equip the church with Lenten textiles, and perhaps also several sets of altar vestments to facilitate changes in appearance according to liturgical rubrics. Still, I would argue that it is likely that the Norrsunda Frontlet was present more or less consistently on the altar from its facture in the mid-fifteenth century to the decline of the monastery in the late sixteenth century. If so, this textile would have been experienced as a habitual encounter by laypeople, a recognisable and well-known but nonetheless splendid vestment for the church's main altar.

Even though the low iron railings and the altar's elevated position increased visibility, there was still a considerable distance between the altar and the laypeople in the nave. Moreover, the frequent and diverse liturgical activities at and around the main altar would have partly obscured the view. Clerical vested bodies could conceal and reveal the altar frontal during the celebration of Mass. Thus, the visual encounter with the embroidered frontlet was one of partiality and performance. From a distance, the shimmering effects of pearls, silks and metal embellishments would have been even more prominent than the embroidered Virgin, lilies and fantastical creatures inhabiting the scrolls. The spatial and visual environment of the Norrsunda Frontlet, if originally used in Vadstena Abbey Church, was therefore fundamentally different from that of the Reykír Frontal and Frontlet. Not only are the churches of Vadstena and Reykír distinct in terms of size and liturgical use, the textiles were also situated in different places, the main altar and a smaller side altar, that impacted the conditions in which they were seen. Altar textiles were not experienced in a 'vacuum', and the layered fabrics must be considered in concert with the visual milieu surrounding the altar. Compared to the grandeur and spatial distance of the Vadstena main altar, encountering the Reykír Frontal was likely an intimate, direct and devotional experience. As will be discussed below, the shimmering effect and the altar vestment's ability to embody the altar as 'shining brilliantly' within the space seems to matter. The lamp and candles in Reykír church and the numerous light fixtures in Vadstena Abbey Church as described in NRB would have enhanced this shimmering effect.

4.5 Ornate Altar Vestments and Aesthetic Effects

The rich materiality of ornate altar frontals made in velvets, silks and many-coloured wools established a visual and sensory opposition to white linen altar cloths. As Carruthers points out, such visual contrasts and combinations were rhetorical values central to medieval aesthetics.⁵³³ While linen was valued for its *cleneness*, which incorporated both social and aesthetic values, frontals and frontlets engaged their audience through polyfocal and ornate surfaces. The aesthetic effects produced by ornate frontals could be achieved in a range of textile techniques, from woven surfaces to pictorial silk and gold embroidery as well as mixed-media assemblage including pearls and metal embellishments.

On a basic level, altar vestments provided a clean and suitable surface on the sacrificial table for the eucharistic celebration. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the *cleneness* and security of administering eucharistic bread and wine was a great concern. Ecclesiastical regulations emphasise that altar vestments – especially clean altar cloths – were a prerequisite for celebrating Mass. Therefore, they played a significant role in the consecration ceremony. Clothing a newly consecrated altar in white vestments concluded the consecration ritual. However, as the above survey of preserved altar textiles and written sources has shown, the visual appearance of cloths, frontals and frontlets exceeded ecclesiastical commands for white and suitable vestments: both altar cloths and ornate vestments could be richly ornamented and made of the finest materials available.

The desire to clothe medieval altars in luxurious textiles was justified through liturgical texts. Durand states that liturgical vessels and ornaments should be made of diverse precious materials, *diversis praetiosis*, as it was decreed in the Old Law (describing the Tabernacle) and because “men freely offer to God what they love the most.”⁵³⁴ In other words, equipping the church with precious vessels and coverings was a moral duty; liturgical objects demanded material excellence in part to communicate their grace and worth.⁵³⁵ Aden Kumler describes liturgical objects as requiring “the best, most precious, and most costly materials that human ingenuity and effort could obtain.”⁵³⁶ This mandate to adorn liturgical objects with the richest

⁵³³ On how medieval arts cultivated “strongly opposing formal values within a work,” see Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 48. On the aesthetic value of *varietas* as a “balance between two extremes,” see Carruthers “*Varietas: A word of many colours*,” 11.

⁵³⁴ Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 47.

⁵³⁵ Mary Carruthers points out that ‘ornateness’ in ancient rhetoric was associated with dignitas and the idea that something is “gracefully and fittingly adorned”. Carruthers “*Varietas: A word of many colours*,” 36.

⁵³⁶ Aden Kumler, “Materials, Materia, ‘Materiality’,” in *A Companion to Medieval Art: Romanesque and Gothic in Northern Europe*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 102.

materials is echoed by a part of the Birgittine Rule instructing the nuns to make embroideries with silk, gold and pearls “in honour of God and for the decoration of the churches.”⁵³⁷ On a metaphorical level, the costliness of these materials also reflects the pricelessness of the sacramental matter they represented.⁵³⁸

Allegorical interpretations of altar vestments were provided in expositions of the Mass, which describe the altar cloths as Christ’s flesh, the frontals as saints adorning Christ with their virtues, and the fringed frontlet as a ‘crown of charity’. However, figurative textile iconography did not necessarily conform to such specific allegorical interpretations. While there are examples of altar frontals depicting saints, such as the embroidered Hólar Frontal, Marian and Christological iconography was also common. Frontlets with inscriptions could likewise reference saints, the Virgin and/or Christ. Moreover, velvet or woven silk frontals clothed the altar in ornamental splendour rather than pictorial motifs. Therefore, I argue that the visual appearance of medieval altar textiles should be understood beyond theological interpretations. A concept that often occurs in medieval writings on the altar is the textiles’ ability to make the altar shine brilliantly within the church environment. Thus, the aesthetic effects of altar vestments, particularly their ability to reflect light, is important for understanding the visual appearance of medieval altar vestments.

In addition to this emphasis on the textile surfaces’ ability to shine, material strategies were governed by pragmatism. The increased use of lengths of patterned or brocaded velvets and silk damasks for altar frontals at the beginning of the fifteenth century coincided with more frequent mentions of altar frontlets in written sources. Since velvet frontals were less suitable for embroideries, frontlets provided a surface that could be embellished with woven, embroidered or applied ornaments. When the European production of velvet expanded during the fourteenth century, the fabric became more available. From around 1300, weavers in Spain and Italy produced patterned velvets employing precious materials and the famous pomegranate motif, composed of bold stylized floral and vegetal forms that resemble pomegranate fruits, artichokes or thistle blooms.⁵³⁹ Different velvet weaves required large amounts of silk; a plain

⁵³⁷ *Lucidarium Sororum*, the customary of the Birgittine sisters: “Oc the kläde som mz silke, gull oc perlom äru redhande, allir sänkiande til Guds hedher, oc kirionna prydilse, magho the oc haffua oc göra mz thera handom” in G. E. Klemming (ed.), *Heliga Birgittas Uppenbarelser, Efter gamle handskrifter*, volume 5 (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & söner, 1884), 98 -99.

⁵³⁸ The metaphorical pricelessness of costly materials used for adorning medieval altars is discussed in for example Kristin B. Aavitsland, “Materialitet og teofani. Om bruken av kostbare materialer i romansk alterutsmykning” *Kunst og Kultur*, no. 2 (2007): 81.

⁵³⁹ Western European production of velvet is first documented at Lucca, Italy, in 1311, but velvets were imported from the Mongol empire in the late 13th century. Also known from documentary evidence from 1268. Lisa Monnas, *Merchants, Princes and Painters: Silk Fabrics in Italian and Northern Paintings, 1300-1550*

cut-pile velvet required six times as much silk for the warp thread compared to the main warp.⁵⁴⁰ The most expensive velvets could have two or three layers of pile and were also brocaded with gold or silver metal threads. Since velvets had a tactile surface with different piles and gilded threads, they would shine without being draped. However, the tactile velvet or silk surfaces of late-medieval frontals were less suitable for embroidery. This established a need for another surface where embroidered imagery or inscriptions could be focused. The frontlet so prominently placed on the top front of the altar table presented an ideal surface for ornate embroideries or woven inscriptions.

A late fifteenth-century letter regarding a commission for altar vestments for the high altar in Linköping Cathedral provides valuable information on the concern for both aesthetic effects and pragmatic costs for altar textiles. The letter was found during conservation work on a chasuble from Hilleshög Church outside Stockholm.⁵⁴¹ The parchment was used as a support for the embroideries. It was not uncommon to support embroidered orphreys with paper or parchment available in the workshop, and several such fragments have been found. At Hilleshög, the chasuble incorporated parts of a letter addressed to a Master Hermann van der Lynden of Lübeck believed to have been written by the Swedish cleric Peter Johannes, *oeconomus* in the Linköping Cathedral, in 1490.⁵⁴² In the letter, the priest asks for a textile altar frontal and an altar frontlet made of blue velvet or damask for the cathedral's high altar:

Would you send me via my servant a band and an antependium for my high altar, made of blue velvet or damask *of the simplest kind that you can procure*, but still so that it *shines before the eyes, for the peasants understand them both the same*. I will pay you handsomely with the first ship leaving here. And I will also let you know of any needs [of similar textiles] from the other churches in my parish. Someone here is travelling around offering many kinds of velvet vestments, but they were not to my taste. I will, with the help of God, be your friend to the best of my ability. I cannot send you anything now, but if I am still alive in Springtime, I shall, with the help of God, think of you. I would like two dalmatics in that kind of striped or many-colored oriental pieces (*hedensch stykker*) for our cathedral.⁵⁴³ [bold italics by author for emphasis]

(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 15. In Håkon V's will we find the first mentioning of velvet in the written sources preserved in Norway: the will lists several vestments made in 'Panno serico velato' (c. 1319). DN IV: 128 (1312 – 1319).

⁵⁴⁰ Monnas, *Merchants, Princes and Painters*, 24.

⁵⁴¹ Hilleshög Church is also described as Hillersjö Church in older literature. The two names Hilleshög and Hillersjö were used interchangeably since medieval times, but the official name of the church is now Hilleshög Church. It is a twelfth century church located just outside Stockholm, Sweden.

⁵⁴² Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida broderier och vävnader*, 120 – 125.

⁵⁴³ English translation of the Hilleshög letter from Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien*, 309.

The altar vestments are described in terms of sight, light and colour.⁵⁴⁴ This document reveals a pragmatic approach to the materiality of altar vestments; they should not be too expensive, but they have to be of a good enough quality that they “shine before the eyes”. Likewise, it does not matter whether they are made of velvet or damask, as long as the surface can produce this ‘shining effect’ in the church. Notably, requests for specific iconography or motifs are absent.

Considering the popularity of frontals made of panels of silk and velvet, the textile discussed in the letter may be of this kind. Rather than considering the specific nature of the material, however, the Swedish priest is concerned with the aesthetic experience of the frontal on the high altar. Paul Binski has argued that material strategies in medieval art were governed by such pragmatic and aesthetic concerns as much as theological or signficatory ones.⁵⁴⁵ The Hillesthög letter supports this argument: the priest asks for blue velvet or damask *of the simplest kind*. In other words, there is a concern for financial resources, but the fabric has to *shine before the eyes* and create a visually pleasing experience within the church space. Because the priest claims that the parishioners do not really know the difference between velvet and damask, however, the exact material chosen is of lesser importance.⁵⁴⁶ Still, the priest is not indifferent to the appearance of the altar vestments. In addition to the desired shining effect, he specifically requests blue vestments. Moreover, he refers to a tradesman travelling in his area offering vestments that are not to his taste. The Hillesthög letter shows how precious textiles were sought after for altar decoration as strategies of display evoking a shining, aesthetic effect fitted for worship and honouring God.

The priest’s specific request for blue vestments may have been a matter of religious symbolism rather than liturgical dictates. According to Hope and Atchley, hues of violet and blue belonged to the liturgical colour black and could be used for advent and Christmas. As discussed in Chapter One, there is little evidence that church conventions regarding the use of liturgical colors established in the late twelfth century were followed.⁵⁴⁷ Rather, the written sources suggest a more pragmatic approach where the costliest frontals were reserved for feast

⁵⁴⁴ Mary Carruthers describes the aesthetic description of a poem “in terms of sight, light, colour, and emotion” in her discussion of *The Dream of the Rood*: Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 37.

⁵⁴⁵ Paul Binski, “The Rhetorical Occasions of Gothic Sculpture. Sophus Bugge Annual Lecture 2017,” *Collegium Medievale* 30 (2017): 24.

⁵⁴⁶ By the fourteenth century, damasks were being in one colour with a glossy warp-faced satin pattern against a duller ground. Two-colour damasks had contrasting colour, and polychrome damasks added gold and other metallic threads or additional colours. Medieval damasks were usually woven in silk.

⁵⁴⁷ Stang, “Paintings, Patronage and Popular Piety,” 148, Margrethe C. Stang, “Farger i middelalderen,” *Fortidsminneforeningens Årbok*, vol. 160 (Oslo: Fortidsminneforeningen, 2006), 41. The systematic use of liturgical colour was outlined by Pope Innocent III in his treatise *De sacro altaris mysterio* written before he was elected pope in 1198.

days, as indicated by the Icelandic inventories' distinctions between altar vestments for everyday use, feast days or Lent ⁵⁴⁸ This coincides with the English inventories surveyed by Hope and Atchley, where ecclesiastical textiles are listed according to their liturgical use "without any rule as to colour".⁵⁴⁹ Rather than the time of the year, the colour blue, which was widely associated with the Virgin, could relate to the building of the Marian chapel in Linköping Cathedral in the late fifteenth century and the subsequent promotion of devotion for the Virgin.

Having pointed to different aspects of the materiality of ornate altar textiles, it is evident that decisions regarding these luxurious vestments were governed less by symbolism than by pragmatic and experiential aesthetic concerns. With ornate and lavish materials and a prominent position at the front of the altar table, altar frontals and frontlets were arresting sites of textile display. Although the Hilleshög letter suggests that velvets and damasks were used interchangeably for altar textiles in the late-medieval period, written sources more frequently mention velvet textiles for this purpose. The Linköping priest Peter Johannes's commission to Master Lynden for blue altar textiles indicates that the way the fabric caught the light and produced a shine was important to both the commissioner and the viewers of altar textiles in late-medieval churches. While liturgical texts justify the use of luxurious materials as a way of praising and honouring God, the Hilleshög letter also reveals a concern for how the altar was perceived by the laity.

4.6 The Altar at Lent: Undressing the Altar

Encountering medieval vestments was an embodied experience, where textiles played into the larger visual and performative environment of the church. Lenten textile practices offer a striking example of how fabrics could establish an occasion and dramatically transform how the space was felt and experienced. For six or seven weeks of the year, undyed and humble linen veils restricted visual and sensory access to sculptures, frontals, altarpieces, crucifixes and the chancel space.⁵⁵⁰ The Lenten fast, which symbolized the forty days and nights of fasting by

⁵⁴⁸ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 65.

⁵⁴⁹ W.H. St. John Hope and E. G. Cuthbert F. Atchley, *English Liturgical Colours* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1918), 23. More recently, Hayward argues that "the key rule was that the best vestments should be used for the most important religious festivals." See Hayward, "Liturgical Textiles," 334.

⁵⁵⁰ Easter Lent is known as "sjau vikna fasta" meaning seven-week fast, but some sources describe six weeks for laypeople. Another common term was "langfasta", the long Fast. In addition to these seven weeks, priests could impose an additional two weeks before the long fast for parishioners who had committed graver sins. Others voluntarily fasted for nine weeks to improve their devotion and spiritual *cleneness*. For most laypeople however, Easter fast was initiated on Ash Wednesday. For detailed discussion about the duration of fast, ecclesiastical

Moses, Elijah, and Christ, started on Ash Wednesday, when the parishioners received a mark of ash on their forehead as a physical sign of their sins. The fast intensified as the Easter Triduum (*Triduum Paschale*) began at the Evening Mass on Maundy Thursday. This was a time for penance and self-scrutiny—as the Icelandic Exposition of the Mass, stated, “It is suitable to be humbler now than at any other time”.⁵⁵¹ While fish or ‘Lenten porridge’ were allowed for the long fast, Good Friday required fasting on water and bread.⁵⁵² People would not greet or kiss each other at church and should not dress in their best ‘church-clothes’.⁵⁵³ In other words, the Lenten fast was an embodied experience affecting how people were expected to behave, including what they wore and how they acted in church.

During this time, the visual appearance of the church interior was dramatically transformed: images and sculptures were removed or wrapped in linen cloths. Durand wrote that “It is fitting that everything that pertains to the decoration of the church ought to be removed or covered during the season of Lent.”⁵⁵⁴ Lenten textiles are specifically mentioned in liturgies including a late fourteenth-century Swedish manual, the Linköping Ordinary from around 1400 and two Icelandic manuscript fragments from around 1470.⁵⁵⁵ The Lenten liturgy conformed to liturgical praxis from liturgical texts such as Durand. Chalices, candlesticks, curtains, baldachins, pyxides and other small liturgical objects were removed from altars. Linen cloths were used for shrouding sculptures and crucifixes. Such Lenten textiles are known from

regulations (with local variations) and punishments for breaking fast in the late medieval Scandinavia, see Åke André, Bøe Arne, and Már Lárusson Magnus, “Fasta,” in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder*, ed. Finn Hødnebo, vol. IV (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1959), 182–91.

⁵⁵¹ «(...) fordi det sømer seg at vi held Herrens pinsletid med ennå meir audmjukskap enn alle andre tider» in Kristin Norseth, ed., *Messuskýringar: Norrøne Messeforklaringer i norsk oversettelse: Festskrift til Førstemanuensis Jan H. Schumacher*, trans. Elise Kleivane, (Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2014), 130. Liturgies and expositions of Lent is part of the Fifth Exposition, from manuscript AM 435 12 Mo, dated around 1500 from Icenad. (see also p. 174 for more information about this manuscript).

⁵⁵² Fasting regulations about food varies, fish could be allowed (*fasta við fisk*), while other types of fasting excluded all animal products. Dairy products could be allowed (*fasta við hvítan mat*). The strictest fast included only water and bread (*fasta við salt ok brauð*). Exceptions were made for sick people or children under the age of twelve. See André, Arne, and Magnus, “Fasta,” 183 – 184 and 190. Fasting also regulated sexual activities within marriage, as well as the celebration of saint’s feasts, ceremonies and legal transactions.

⁵⁵³ People would not greet each other or kiss (as a greeting) in church, as a reminder of how Judas Iskariot greeted Christ and kissed him before his betrayal. Norseth, *Messuskýringar*, 131.

⁵⁵⁴ Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 42.

⁵⁵⁵ For the late fourteenth century Hemsjö manual, see Hilding Johansson, *Hemsjömanualet. En liturgihistorisk studie* (Svenska Kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1950). For the Linköping Ordinale, see Sven Helander, *Ordinarius Lincopensis ca 1400 och dess liturgiska förebilder* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1957). The Icelandic fragments are dated around 1470, from the Icelandic parish church Gufudal, preserved as AM 266 1 4to, folios 1v-2r, and AM 266 3 4to, folios 1r-8v, in the Arnamagnæanske Institute Collections, Copenhagen.

Icelandic and Norwegian inventories.⁵⁵⁶ Notably, altarpieces could also be covered by veils.⁵⁵⁷ During the period, most of the reflective and shimmering surfaces in the church were covered by linen cloths that did not reflect light in the same way. In addition, fewer candles were lit, leaving the church to appear much darker. The symbolism of the dark church was enhanced in the Liturgy of the Hours on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Known as *Tenebrae* (Latin for darkness) this service was characterised by the gradual extinguishing of candles, leaving the church in darkness near the end of the service.⁵⁵⁸ The Icelandic exposition of the Mass states that the dark church should remind parishioners of the total darkness appearing during Christ's Passion.⁵⁵⁹

In addition to the shrouding of imagery and the reduction of light, the chancel could be closed off with a large Lenten veil suspended in the intersection between choir and nave. Lenten veils (*veulum temple*, *velum quadragismale*, *föstudjaldar*, *fastu clæde*) are known from written sources, but it is uncertain how widely they were used and whether they were more commonly employed in larger abbeys and cathedrals. With the suspension of a Lenten veil, most of the daily celebration of Mass became completely hidden to laypeople in the nave, as liturgical texts indicate that the veil was only drawn aside for the Eucharistic elevation, certain feast days and Sunday Mass.⁵⁶⁰ By covering images and altars and closing off the most sacred zones with textiles, the clergy could visually and sensorily restrict access to the most precious objects, spaces and rituals in the church. Thus, through this textile performance and enclosure, Lent was extended to a fast for the eyes. Lenten textiles were strong visual reminders of penance, and part of a broader extension of the concept of fasting to include all of the senses through restrictions in music and ringing of bells, use of incense and restricted visual access.⁵⁶¹

The use of Lenten textiles to veil, cover and conceal can be understood as a rhetoric of display. As discussed in the Introduction, rhetorical display also entails exclusion and is built on the dichotomy between revelation and concealment.⁵⁶² Weeks of fasting – including sensory

⁵⁵⁶ Icelandic inventories mention *dúkar* and *hulduklædi* used for wrapping sculptures, see Magnús Már Lárusson, "Fastedug," in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder*, ed. Finn Hødnebo, vol. IV (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1959), 197. The Ylmheim inventory mentions a cloth ornamented with gold to cover the crucifix: "*Item æinn kross klædr med ok pæll*", DN XV no. 8.

⁵⁵⁷ On the use of Lenten veils versus grisaille at Lent as a sensory restriction related to altar pieces, see Søren Kaspersen discussion of the liturgical usage of the Århus Altar piece: Kaspersen, "Højalter, Liturgi Og Andagt," 119–121.

⁵⁵⁸ The numbers of candles extinguished varied, see Norseth, *Messuskýringar*, 130, fn. 271.

⁵⁵⁹ Norseth, 130.

⁵⁶⁰ Lárusson, "Fastedug," 197.

⁵⁶¹ Jacqueline E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture, and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, Ca.1200-1400* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁵⁶² Lawrence J. Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display, Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 2.

deprivation through the experience of a veiled church and pared back liturgical celebrations – built anticipation for the great revelation and glorious celebration on Easter morning. Thus, this textile performativity of veiling and unveiling created *occasion*.⁵⁶³ In her study of Gothic screens, Jacqueline Jung discusses the idea of “mystification through concealment.” She uses the Gothic choir screen, religious language and medieval Lenten veiling practices as examples of how concealing the sacred mystifies it and makes it more attractive.⁵⁶⁴ But as these structures conceal, they also reveal, and make certain objects or actions more visible. On Easter Sunday, the Lenten veils and cloths covering crucifixes were removed, signifying the resurrection of Christ.⁵⁶⁵ At the same time, all of the elaborate and precious liturgical textiles and the church’s ornaments in gold and silver were reintroduced, creating a saturated sensorium of music, light, incense and tactile surfaces. Thus, Lenten textiles were important in framing and regulating the sensory experience during the weeks leading up to this joyful celebration. In other words, they were instrumental in constructing and framing sacred space and sacred matter.

In addition to having their candlesticks, chalices, crucifixes and altarpieces removed or veiled, altars were further transformed through the use of Lenten frontals. Although Lenten altar textiles are mentioned in some Scandinavian sources, they remain silent about their appearance. Wallem’s survey of the Icelandic inventories reveals that Icelandic churches by large did not have altar vestments designated for Lent. Wallem suggest that altars were either undressed and left ‘bare’ or covered in simple linen textiles not specifically mentioned in the inventories.⁵⁶⁶ At the beginning of the sixteenth century, large and prosperous churches like Hólar Cathedral owned Lenten altar frontals described as “*vij háalltarisklaede med huersdaglegum oc fostu skruda*,” or altar frontal with coverings for ‘everyday use,’ as well as a Lenten frontal and “*fostuskrudar v*,” meaning Lenten frontals.⁵⁶⁷ Even though we have little documentary evidence for the practice of dressing and undressing the altar for Lent in medieval Scandinavia, a few preserved textiles may have been used as Lenten frontals. These include a textile altar frontal from Nes Church in Hallingdal, Norway, a textile frontal from Västra Skrukeby Church in Sweden and another Swedish example of unknown provenance, and are

⁵⁶³ As discussed in Chapter One.

⁵⁶⁴ Jung, *The Gothic Screen*, 72 – 73.

⁵⁶⁵ Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 41. Sometimes the veil was drawn away on Maundy Thursday, the praxis varied. See Lárússon, “Fastedug,” 197.

⁵⁶⁶ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 119

⁵⁶⁷ IX 296 – 297. The cathedral also owned “*pálm dagsdukar*” already in 1396, but the function of these textiles is unclear. Wallem, 119.

all made of printed and painted linen cloths with Passion imagery.⁵⁶⁸ These frontals resemble the Lenten textiles listed in contemporary English inventories both in their motifs and technique.

The Nes antependium is dated to the early 1400s, and is the only preserved medieval textile altar frontal in Norway (figs. 4.21 and 4.22; cat.no. 16).⁵⁶⁹ Measuring around one hundred and forty centimetres in length, the frontal is made of two pieces of tabby weave linen and is printed with floral imagery and a central scene of the Crucifixion flanked by the Virgin and John (fig. 4.21).⁵⁷⁰ The visual composition of Christ on the cross, with his hands raised to form a Y-shape, tilted head, protruding ribs, round knees and slightly crossed feet, is found in many fifteenth-century embroidered Crucifixions.⁵⁷¹ However, in the Nes frontal the figure is monochrome and stylised with thick black lines. This is also true for the Virgin and John the Apostle, although discolorations and holes on the fabric may indicate that a colour was applied to some of their garments.⁵⁷² Traces of green in the cross-tree (*arbor vitae*), red in the garments, yellow in the haloes and red in the frame indicate that the frontal was originally more colourful than how it appears today (fig. 4.23).⁵⁷³ The pattern and motifs are printed in a (now) brownish-black colour. Fighting lions and birds, palmettes and rays of light surround the printed image. Five-leaved rosettes on twisting vines demarcate the edges of the frontal. The linen fabric is

⁵⁶⁸ The Nes altar frontal is preserved in KHM, inv. no. C2964. The printed altar frontal from Västra Skrukeby Church in Sweden is preserved in SHM, inventory number 20646:2. Dating from around 1500, the Västra Skrukeby frontal has printed motifs of Christ as The Man of Sorrows framed by the Arma Christi, flanked by standing figures Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine of Alexandria, and surrounded by pomegranate patterns. Dating from around 1500, the Västra Skrukeby frontal has printed motifs of Christ as The Man of Sorrows framed by the Arma Christi, flanked by standing figures Saint Barbara and Saint Catherine of Alexandria, and surrounded by pomegranate patterns. The Swedish printed frontal with unknown provenance is preserved in SHM, inv.no. 20646:1.

⁵⁶⁹ The antependium is from the Nes Stave Church in Hallingdal, Norway which was torn down in 1864. Georg Bull's drawings of the medieval church is published in Leif Anker, *De Norske Stavkirke, Kirker i Norge 4* (Oslo: ARFO, 2005), 22 – 23. Norwegian textile expert Helen Engelstad argued that the textile was made in Cologne in the early 1400s: Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*, 52.

⁵⁷⁰ The frontal measures 139,5 x 91 – 92 centimetres. The central Calvary group measures fifty centimetres in height and forty-one centimetres in breadth.

⁵⁷¹ See for example the Bremnes crucifix discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵⁷² Written sources describe printing of textiles at Vadstena in preparation for the translation of Saint Katharina in 1489, and the technique of printing textiles was known in Scandinavia by the latter half of the fifteenth century. In contrast to embroidered altar frontals, these printed textiles did not require specialised skills; as long as one had the blocks for printing and the appropriate paint to print with, the process could be carried out outside of any professional workshops. For discussions of printed textiles in medieval Scandinavia see Thor B. Kielland, "Nogen trykte tøier fra middelalderen," *Fortidsminneforeningens årbok*, no 73 (1917): 26. – 34, Ingegerd Henschen, *Tygtryck i Sverige 1, före 1700* (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1942) and Agnes Geijer "[Review of] Ingegerd Henschen, *Tygtryck i Sverige 1, före 1700*," Stockholm, 1942, *Fornvännen*, no 39, 362 – 368.

⁵⁷³ The Nes colour traces have not undergone technical analysis and the colour's original appearance might have been quite different than what these traces indicate. The textile is currently mounted on a new linen fabric behind glass and frame and has not been opened for examination.

coarse and unbleached, and the two pieces are sewn together along the selvedge, creating a very visible and rough join in the middle of the textile.

A printed frontal from an unknown Swedish church display a Calvary group as its main motif, but the printed image is not centred on the textile (fig. 4.24).⁵⁷⁴ On the left side of the Calvary group are printed ornaments of scrolls with eagles fighting dogs. Similar motifs are found in brocades from northern Italy. On the right side are ornaments of leaves and scrolls, also similar to early fifteenth-century brocades from northern Italy. The motifs are framed by a frieze of palmettes. To the right is another printed image, this one of the Apocalyptic Virgin standing on the moon and framed by flames in the shape of a mandorla.⁵⁷⁵ In each corner are the Evangelist symbols. Inconsistencies in the iconography suggest that the Crucifixion scene was printed using three different blocks (fig. 4.25). The latter is printed from a block where the motif has not been reversed during the carving, resulting in the “INRI” inscription being printed the wrong way around. Also, the sun and moon have switched places due to the reversed print block. The Virgin and John are in their correct places, suggesting that these figures were printed separately. The print is somewhat misplaced, leaving a small blank space above the figures and not enough space for the border below, so the printer used a narrower block for the frame. As with the Nes antependium, a professional workshop in Cologne has been proposed. However, the imprecise printing and carving techniques may also suggest a less professionalised production.⁵⁷⁶

The printed frontals display well-known imagery in a more restrained and subdued manner, resonating with the focus on abstinence and penance during Lent as well as the visual restrictions within the Lenten church. Traces of colour, most likely added with a brush on the finished print, indicate that these textiles were more colourful than they appear today. Written sources also describe block printed textiles (*sætherverk*) with water colouring, suggesting that the combination of monochrome print and coloured details was common.⁵⁷⁷ In her discussion

⁵⁷⁴ SHM: inv. no: 20646:1. Its provenance is unknown, and there is no information about when and from who the museum was given this textile.

⁵⁷⁵ The altar frontal measures 204 centimetres x 59 centimetres. It has been suggested that the antependium is shortened since the Calvary group is not at the centre of the textile. If the textile originally had an image on the left side, corresponding to the Virgin in Mandorla at the right side, the composition would be symmetrical, and the antependium would have measured around 270 centimetres in total. However, the edge on the left side does not seem to have been cut, and a length of 204 centimetres is more fitting to a front of an altar. See Geijer, “[Review of] Ingegerd Henschen,” 366.

⁵⁷⁶ Agnes Geijer describe this printed frontal as a ‘clumsy’ work printed with disparate blocks and states that it could be made ‘anywhere’ due to the low level of professionalism. See Agnes Geijer, “[Review of] Ingegerd Henschen,” 366.

⁵⁷⁷ Wall hangings among the belongings of Bishop Aslak Bolt were wall hangings made of “*sæt verk ok med bilæt ok water farghen*”: DN V:2.

of late fifteenth-century painted cloths with Passion iconography used in Lenten rituals at Reims, Laura Weigert argues that these relatively inexpensive hangings could have been perceived as an act of humility, and that painted cloths stood as a symbol of the penance required during Lent.⁵⁷⁸ This might be true for printed linen frontals as well. Both the grisaille technique in the Reims hangings and the block printed altar frontals discussed here can be seen as a visual representation of the demand for abstinence and sensory restrictions during Lent. In a church appearing dramatically different than the rest of the year, without music, the ringing of bells, or incense, and with veiled images and sculptures, these simpler printed and painted images may have been particularly striking. Unbleached linen would not ‘shine’ in the church such as precious silks or glistening white altar cloths, especially in a darker Lenten church. These textiles provided a strong visual reminder of the Passion narrative through their iconography, the simplicity of their design and execution, and their humble materiality.

The small group of printed linen textiles discussed in this chapter were probably used for Lenten altars. Their linen materiality and Passion iconography resemble Lenten textiles described in English late-medieval inventories. The unbleached tabby weave with visible selvedge and coarse stitching may have been perceived as an act of humility. As discussed above (subsection. 4.2), the use of linen symbolised the tribulations of Christ during his Passion as well as his burial shrouds and was thus a fitting material for the season of penance. Even though expositions of the Mass repeatedly described the Lenten altar as ‘naked’ and ‘undressed,’ written sources and material evidence suggest that the altars were dressed in textile altar frontals for this purpose, many of which were decorated with printed and painted imagery. The presence of Lenten imagery on textile altar frontals seems to counter Durand’s caution against images during Lent. Nevertheless, the printed and muted images of Lenten altars in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may have functioned as cautious reminders of Christ’s sufferings, providing the parishioners with a visual focal point for their devotions.

4.6.1 Maundy Thursday: the Naked Altar

The stripping and washing of the altars after evening Mass on Maundy Thursday is essentially a ritual of unwrapping the altars and re-confirming their sanctity. The consecration ritual, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, established the altar as a sacred space. However, this

⁵⁷⁸ Laura Weigert, “‘Velum Templi’: Painted Cloths of the Passion and the Making of Lenten Rituals in Reims” *Studies in Iconography* 24 (2003): 212.

sanctity was in constant need of renewal.⁵⁷⁹ In other words, cleansing rituals were important in re-establishing sacred space in opposition to the profane. After the Maundy Thursday Mass, the altars were undressed, and the main altar was washed with water and wine. Eamon Duffy alludes to this ritual in the title of his book *The Stripping of the Altars*, and underlines the symbolic importance of this ceremony:

Every detail of this vivid ceremony was allegorized in popular preaching – the stripping of the altars was the stripping of Jesus for death, the water and wine were the water and blood from his side, the broom of twigs the scourges or the crown of the thorns.⁵⁸⁰

The washing of altars was a highly symbolic ritual, coinciding with the ‘cleansing’ of parishioners as they confessed and made penance for their sins.

The first step of the ceremony was the stripping of the altars. As mentioned above, the textile frontals were symbols of the holy men who followed Christ. Following this symbolic understanding of the textiles, Honorius of Autun explains that the removal of altar vestments represented the Apostles’ desertion and flight from Christ.⁵⁸¹ The Icelandic Exposition of the Mass does not specifically mention the ritual of stripping the altars, but describes the symbolism of the naked altars:

And when all altars are undressed in the evening of Maundy Thursday, and all of their ornaments are removed, this is a sign of how the Lord’s apostles fled from him when he was tortured, those who before adorned him in their following [of Him], like the altar in a similar way is adorned with its ornaments.⁵⁸²

Thus, the naked altar was a symbol of Christ’s vulnerability and loneliness as he faced the sufferings on the cross.

After the altars were unwrapped and undressed, a ritual of washing and cleansing proceeded. We see again how the sacred was crafted, since material substances like holy water, wine, chrism and branches were instrumental to the ritual. Textiles were also part of this material culture used for enhancing and re-establishing the sacred: the uncovering of the altar,

⁵⁷⁹ Laura Varnam, *The Church as Sacred Space in Middle English Literature and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 52.

⁵⁸⁰ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 28.

⁵⁸¹ Honorius describes the altar as naked, “de nudationem altaris” and furthermore, that the altar is Christ, the vestments signify the apostles, and that since the apostles fled Christ, the altar vestments are removed, leaving the altar naked. Honorius of Autun, *Gemma Animae*, in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 172, col. 665. Paris, 1895.

⁵⁸² «Og når alle altera er avkledde skjærtorsdagsaftan og all skrud er tatt av dei, er det et teikn på at alle apostlane og alle læresveinane til Herren rømte frå han i pinsla hans, dei som før prydde og skrydde han i etterfølginga si, slik som alteret på sitt vis er skrydd med skruden sin.» Norseth, *Messuskýringar*, 131.

symbolising the flight of the apostles and the undressing of Christ before his tribulations, facilitated the cleansing ritual. Maundy Thursday is still known as *Skjærtorsdag* (Norway), *Skærtorsdag* (Denmark), *Skärtorsdag* (Sweden) and *Skirdagur* (Iceland) from the Norse *skira*, meaning cleansing. The undressing and washing of the altars at Maundy Thursday had a strong symbolic significance, recalling the stripping of Christ and the blood shed on the Cross. Through rituals of dressing and undressing – wrapping and unwrapping – the altar was central to the Easter liturgy.

4.7 Conclusion

Medieval altars were vested in layers upon layers of textiles. The skilled craftsmanship and financial resources invested in clothing medieval altars highlight the centrality of their visual appearance. Liturgical texts emphasise altar cloths and textile adornments as essential to the celebration of Mass. As blessed objects or *ars sacra*, these textiles were handled with reverence and great care. The only time the altar appeared without textiles was at the consecration ceremony and during the stripping of the altars on Maundy Thursday. Thus, altars as they appear in many medieval churches across Scandinavia today would have been perceived as naked or ‘half-dressed’ by medieval standards.

A survey of preserved textiles and written sources reveals that medieval altar vestments displayed an astonishing breadth of material splendour. Even altar cloths desired for their white and pure *cleness* were commonly adorned with silks, gold, pearls and metal embellishments. Textile altar frontals and frontlets created ornate surfaces across the front of the altar, establishing the church’s focal point. Although allegorical interpretations associated such textiles with saintly virtues, iconographies varied and often included Marian or Christological motifs. Rather than theological interpretations, I have argued that material strategies can be understood from the perspective of pragmatic and aesthetic concerns. The way the altar was perceived by the laity—its ability to appear radiant and shining—was important for the visual appearance of altar textiles. Both white altar cloths and ornate frontals and frontlets were favoured for their shining effect in the church environment.

The interplay between white linen and ornate embroidered and woven surfaces established an impactful visual contrast that resonated with rhetorical values found in medieval aesthetics. On a metaphorical level, these textile surfaces addressed the dual nature of Christ, as linen referenced his humanity understood as “the flesh of our Saviour” and luxurious textiles shimmering with gold and precious stones symbolised his Heavenly Glory. The aesthetic

effects of altar textiles must be understood in the broader context of the church's visual environment. Textiles worked together with other altar ornaments such as crucifixes, altarpieces, painted or gilded frontals and chalices to enhance the altar's sacred position. Textile encounters at the altar were thus situated within the larger social, spatial and visual environment of the church.

What is more, the performative qualities of textiles made them particularly suitable for rhetorical displays of covering and revealing. In exploring how altar textiles 'worked' within the late-medieval church, I have argued that their significance must be understood beyond the purely functional. Veiling the altar frontal with textiles according to liturgical celebrations established occasion. Lenten textiles offer a particularly striking example of how fabrics can transform the sensory experience of space. A group of undyed, printed linen textiles unveil the potential of cloth to facilitate embodied viewing and experience.

Altar vestments, especially in comparison to the textile counterparts of relics and liturgical clothing, are massively understudied in modern scholarship. This chapter has used this rich body of altar vestments to demonstrate how textiles operated—materially and aesthetically—in shaping the sacred structure of the altar and the Scandinavian late-medieval church environment.



Figure 4-1: The medieval altar in Gildeskål Old Church, northern Norway. The altar frontlet is a reconstruction of the now lost, fifteenth-century woven altar frontlet from the church. Photo: Kjartan Hauglid



Figure 4-2: Fragment from a medieval altar cloth, h. 26,5 cm, reused for a frontal in Kalfafell Church, Iceland. Photo © NMI



Figure 4-3: Fragment from a medieval altar cloth, h. 14,5 cm, reused for a frontal in Kalfafell Church, Iceland, cat.no. 7. Photo © NMI



Figure 4-4: Photograph of an altar frontal with frontlet made in the seventeenth century from older vestments, arranged on an altar structure for an exhibition of Church art at the Västergötlands Museum. Photo: © VGM



Figure 4-5: *The Skara Frontal*, altar frontal made from pieces of fifteenth century brownish-red silk velvet, probably re-used vestments and a fifteenth century embroidered altar frontlet. The making of this frontal from older vestments was probably done in the seventeenth century, h. 80 cm, w. 125,8 cm, cat.no. 8. Photo: © VGM.



Figure 4-6: Detail of the altar frontal with medieval altar frontlet from Skara Cathedral, Sweden. The frontlet is a fifteenth century Vadstena work, h. 17 cm, w. 125,6 cm. Made in silks, linen, blue pearls, gold and silver thread, freshwater pearls and woven bands. The frontlet was attached to the red silk velvet frontal in the seventeenth century. Photo: © VGM



Figure 4-7: *The Hólar Frontal*, altar frontal from Hólar Cathedral, Iceland, early sixteenth century, h. 99 cm, w. 183 cm, cat.no. 9. Photo: © NMI



Figure 4-8: *The Reykir Frontal*, altar frontal from Reykír Church, Iceland, early sixteenth century, size of main panel is h. 95 cm, w. 80 cm, cat.no. 10. Photo: © NMI



Figure 4-9: Detail from the *Reykír Frontal* showing the Apocalyptic Virgin standing on a crescent moon, holding Christ, in rays of light. Photo: © NMI



Figure 4-10: *The Reykír Frontlet*, woven altar frontlet from Reykír Church, Iceland, late fifteenth century. The inscription reads *Assumpta est maria in celum* (Mary is risen to Heaven). Inscription framed by vines with leaves and flowers, and the bottom has remains of multicolored fringes. The frontlet now measures 111,5 cm but was originally longer. Cat.no. 10. Photo: Photo © NMI



Figure 4-11: *The Egå Frontal*, painted frontal from Egå Church, Århus Sift, Denmark, dated 1523, h. 10 cm, w. 193 cm. Depicted textiles such as a painted frontlet with inscription, heraldic shields and fringes, and panels of Italian brocade on the sides. Photo: Jens Bruun (<http://asp.altertavler.dk>)



Figure 4-12: Detail of the *Skálholt Frontlet*, from Skálholt Cathedral, Iceland, fourteenth century, h. 10 cm, w. 140 cm, cat.no. 11. Embroidery in silks and gold with applied gilded coins and red fringes. The central plaque, depicting a pelican, is a later addition, probably eighteenth century, and is a reused lid from a wafer box (which held communion wafers). Photo: © NMI



Fig. 1. Alterbrunn fra Gildeskål gamle kirke. Katalogbeskrivelse nr. 42. Norge ca. 1500.

Figure 4-13: *The Gildeskål Frontlet*, h. 12 cm, w. 141,5 cm, as depicted in Helen Engelstad: *Messeklær og alterskrud* (1941). Since the frontlet was lost during the second world war, these photos are the only surviving evidence for the textile, cat.no. 13.



Figure 4-14: *The Trondenes Frontlet*, Norway, fifteenth century, 237 x 14 cm (measured without the fringes), cat.no. 14, displayed in Trondenes Church. Photo: © Stiftelsen Sør-Troms Museum



Figure 4-15: *The Norrsunda Frontlet*, Sweden, ca. 1500, 283 x 25 cm, silks, pearls, corals, gilded threads, metal embellishments, cat.no. 15. The frontlet was sold or given to Norrsunda Church in the late sixteenth century from Vadstena Abbey Church. This photo show the left half of the frontlet. Photo: © SHM



Figure 4-16: Details from the *Norrsunda Frontlet*, showing a flower center with relief embroidery in silks and metal threads. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 4-17: Details from the *Norrsunda Fronlet*, showing the variety of the embroidered surface, with metal spangles, silks and gilded threads. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 4-18: Details from the *Norrsunda Fronlet*, an embroidered leaf embellished with coral bead embroidery and metal spangles with a midrib of gold embroidery, possibly originally covered in pearls. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth.



Figure 4-19: Detail from the *Norrsunda Frontlet*, a unicorn flanking the Apocalyptic Virgin. Originally covered with freshwater pearls (now lost) and metal spangles. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 4-20: Central image of the *Norrsunda Frontlet* with the Apocalyptic Virgin in rays of light, flanked by fantastical creatures; unicorns and pelicans piercing their breasts to feed their offspring. Vegetative motifs such as clusters of grape, vines and large lilies surround the motif. Photo: © SHM.



Figure 4-21: The main panel of the *Nes Frontal*, depicting the Crucifixion with Virgin Mary and St John. Crucifix panel h. 50 cm, w. 41 cm. Printed on linen, with traces of applied color, cat.no. 16. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth.



Figure 4-22: *The Nes Frontal* is now mounted behind glass, h. 92 cm, w. 139, 5 cm, cat.no. 16. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 4-23: Detail images from the *Nes Frontal*, showing the printed pattern evoking the patterns of Italian silks or brocades (above, left) and traces of colour suggesting the frame was painted in a reddish color (above, right). Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth.

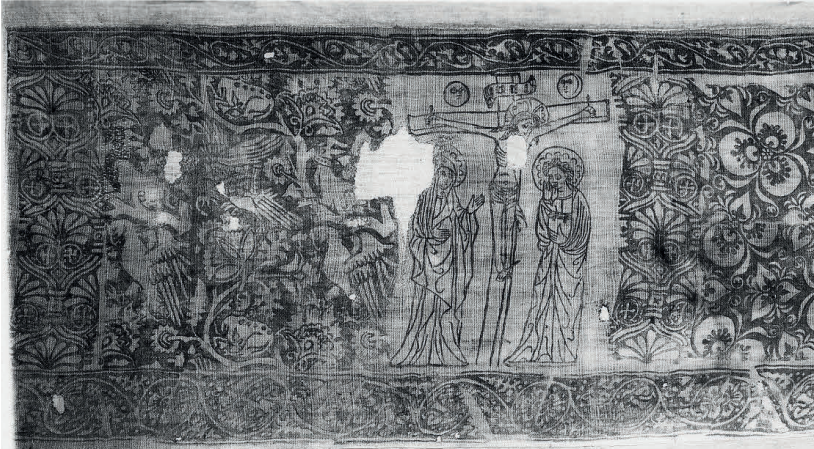


Figure 4-24: Archival photo showing parts of the printed frontal of unknown provenance, printed linen, 204 x 59 cm, Stockholm: SHM (inv.no. 20646:1). Photo: © SHM.



Figure 4-25: Details of the Crucifixion groups from the *Nes Frontal* (above, left) and the Swedish frontal of unknown provenance (above, right). The Swedish printed frontal has the «INRI» inscription printed in reverse, but there are stylistic similarities between the two prints.



5 Veiling the Host: Corporal Linens and the *Bursa*

A running strand of this dissertation centres on pictorial depictions of late-medieval textiles in action. As discussed in prior chapters, late-medieval images depicting the Mass of St Gregory are a valuable source for seeing liturgical textiles in the context of Mass.⁵⁸³ These paintings portray an idealized service with luxurious textiles that are not necessarily representative of the vestments used in a local parish church. Even so, the positioning of the celebrant and other clerics, the dressing of the altar and the placement of liturgical objects follow the stipulations described in contemporary expositions of the Mass.⁵⁸⁴ One of the most detailed paintings showing the range of textiles in action is the Mass of St Gregory from the Cranach workshop, made for Cardinal Albrecht, Archbishop of Mainz in the 1520s (fig. 5.1). The pope and the deacons are dressed in brocade vestments extensively embroidered with pearls, gold and silks.⁵⁸⁵ The altar is clothed in white altar cloths, a brocade frontal and a pearl-embroidered frontlet with silk fringes. Looking beyond this material splendor, the focus of this chapter is the smaller textiles present at the altar table; the white linen cloth (corporal) under the chalice and the embroidered bursa leaning against the sarcophagus from which Christ miraculously appears (fig. 5.2). These textiles were used to wrap, enclose and display the consecrated wine and bread during the celebration of Mass. In this chapter, I examine how the linen corporal cloth and the bursa in which it was kept were used in the Eucharistic liturgy to establish and demonstrate that the consecrated wine and Host were Christ's body and blood. Liturgical texts describe these cloths as *veiling* the sacred, an action that framed the visual and aesthetic experience of the Eucharistic ritual. As blessed and consecrated textiles, the handling of corporal linens was

← Detail of the Skálholt Bursa, as presented in fig. 5.6.

⁵⁸³ 514 depictions of the Mass of St. Gregory are compiled in an online image database <<http://gregormesse.uni-muenster.de>> by the University of Münster. This is a great resource for examining illuminated vestments across genres such as illuminated manuscripts, woodcuts, ivory carvings, frescos, panel paintings, carved altarpieces and textiles.

⁵⁸⁴ Barbara M. Eggert, "Edification with Thread and Needle: On the Uses and Functions of Architectonic Elements on Medieval Liturgical Vestments and Their Representation in Contemporary Paintings of the Mass of St Gregory (13th–16th C.)," in *Clothing the Sacred: Medieval Textiles as Fabric, Form, and Metaphor*, eds. Kapustka, Mateusz, and Warren T Woodfin (Berlin: Imorde, 2015), 53.

⁵⁸⁵ Inv. no. 6270, Aschaffenburg, Staatsgalerie.

highly regulated. Despite restrictions on lay interaction and access, donations and written sources suggest that the religious and symbolic significance of corporal linens – a textile that is foreign to most protestant Scandinavians today - was known and cherished among the laity.

5.1 The Corporal

The corporal (*corporale*), referring to the *corpus* of Christ, was a square linen cloth laid atop the altar table on which the Eucharist was celebrated.⁵⁸⁶ Before the eucharistic ritual, the corporal linen was unfolded over the paten and the Host was laid on top of it. The chalice was also covered either with the same corporal or a separate cloth. The corporal linens were instrumental to the liturgy; it was forbidden to celebrate Mass without them.⁵⁸⁷ These simple white linen cloths, of which virtually none are preserved, were among the most significant textiles used in medieval liturgy. According to Joseph Braun, the corporal is the oldest of the liturgical paraments.⁵⁸⁸ In the early Middle Ages, the shape and size of these textiles varied greatly, and they are described as both *corporale* and *palla* in inventories. By the late Middle Ages they had become more standardized, and were usually squares measuring around forty-five to fifty centimetres in diameter.⁵⁸⁹ Since these linen cloths are largely lost today, there are two sources for research: representations of the textiles in medieval depictions of the Mass and texts such as inventories, testaments, church regulations and liturgical treatises. Late medieval depictions of the celebration of Mass often show the unfolded corporal as a white square cloth with light blue lines indicating the creases where the linen was folded into a small square (fig 5.3).

Corporal linens were consecrated by the bishop before they were used in liturgical services. The illuminations in a copy of Durand's pontifical, likely made in Avignon ca 1359 – 1390 CE, include images of the bishop consecrating liturgical textiles and objects including the corporal cloth.⁵⁹⁰ In the initial 'B' that opens a benediction for the corporal, the bishop raises his gloved hand in a gesture of blessing while holding the corporal cloth in his left hand (fig. 5.4). The white and unadorned cloth is painted without creases and appears stiff and flat, like a

⁵⁸⁶ Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1912), 233 – 234

⁵⁸⁷ The term *palla*, having been used for both altar cloths and corporals came to mean a square linen cloth placed over the chalice to prevent anything from contaminating the consecrated wine. Thomas M. Izbicki, "The Care of Altar Linens in the Medieval Church," in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 12, eds. R. Netherton and G.R. Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 42

⁵⁸⁸ Braun, *Handbuch Der Paramentik*, 234.

⁵⁸⁹ Braun, 234

⁵⁹⁰ Paris, Bibl. Sainte-Geneviève, ms. 0143, f. 159v, Pontifical of Guillaume Durand (Avignon, before 1390).

piece of paper. In contrast, corporals shown in use at the altar, as in the image of the Gregory Mass presented in the opening of this chapter, are painted with thin blue lines indicating where the cloth was folded into a small square when enveloping the Host. This subtle difference in visual depictions reflects the importance of episcopal benedictions; only after the bishop had blessed the corporal, endowing it with a sacred status, could it be used to wrap and veil the Host and Wine. Specific prayers for blessing and consecrating the corporal are preserved in the Lund pontifical:

Almighty and ever living God, bless this linen cloth for the veiling and wrapping of the body and blood of Your Son Our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering the cross, who lives with you.⁵⁹¹

Corporal linens wrapped and enclosed the most sacred matter within the church, as emphasized in the Lund prayer by the Latin term *Inuoluendumque* from *involvere*, meaning to wrap, envelop, cover or veil.⁵⁹² Thus, the consecration ritual described how this sacred cloth was designated to wrap or veil Christ's body, underlining the performative potential of liturgical textiles.

Because the corporal was blessed and considered sacred, it had to be handled with the utmost care and reverence. In the statutes of Archbishop Eilif of Nidaros, it is stated that any priest who fails to keep his corporals clean must pay a fine of ½ mark.⁵⁹³ This was double the fine for not keeping the *sacrarium* (the place where the Host and Wine was kept) clean, and eight times the penalty for not keeping the liturgical towels clean.⁵⁹⁴ Furthermore, the statutes specify that only the priest should wash the corporal linens, and that this should be done by the altar in a clean bowl designated for the purpose. After this initial rinsing, he could give them to a deacon or subdeacon if they needed more thorough cleaning. In comparison, the liturgical towels and altar cloths should also be rinsed in the church but could be given to a woman for more thorough washing.⁵⁹⁵ As with the altar cloths, worn out corporals were to be burned.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹¹ “Omnipotens sempiterna Deus, benedic lintheamen istud ad tegendum inuoluendumque in eo corpus et sanguinem Filii tui Domini nostri Ihesu Christi patientis crucem. Qui tecum uiuit.” In Bengt Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin i Lund och Roskilde under medeltiden* (Lund: Gleerup, 1955), 177.

⁵⁹² D. P. Simpson (ed.), *Casell's Latin Dictionary: Latin – English, English – Latin* (London: Casell, 1977) 326.

⁵⁹³ Trygve Lysaker and Harald Wårvik, *Erkebiskop Eilifs tredje statutt* (Trondheim: Nidaros domkirkes restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 1991), 10

⁵⁹⁴ One ‘mark’ equaled 8 ‘øre’ or 240 ‘penninger’ in medieval Norway. See Audun Dybdahl, *Nidaros Domkirkes og geistlighets kostbarheter: Belyst ved 17 skriftlige kilder 1307-1577 med oversettelser og kommentarer* (Trondheim: Tapir, 2002), 178.

⁵⁹⁵ The statutes of Archbishop Eilif of Nidaros states that “kona” meaning a women, wife or mistress, could clean and care for certain altar textiles. See Lysaker and Wårvik, *Erkebiskop Eilifs tredje statutt*, 10.

⁵⁹⁶ Lysaker and Wårvik, *Erkebiskop Eilifs tredje statutt*, 10. See also William Durand, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It. Rationale Book Four*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 369, and Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik*, 237.

Archbishop Eilif takes great care in outlining the rules for handling and cleaning the corporal linens, reflecting their high religious and symbolic importance. These textiles were to be kept in a clean and secure place when not celebrating Mass.⁵⁹⁷ The same prohibitions are found in the statutes of the Uppsala Archbishop Nils Ragvaldsson (1441) and in the Strängnes Statutes.⁵⁹⁸

Medieval writers also assigned symbolic and moral meanings to the corporal. According to Durand, it was a symbol of the living presence, the miracle of Transubstantiation that “must be believed but it cannot be comprehended”.⁵⁹⁹ Corporal linens symbolised the burial shroud in which Christ’s body was wrapped after the Deposition. Similarly, the linens covering the chalice symbolised the cloth that covered Christ’s head in the tomb (John 20: 6-7).⁶⁰⁰ This symbolic understanding goes back to an Isidorean text attributed to ‘Pope Sylvester’ or to ‘Popes Eusebius and Sylvester,’ which stated that the corporals should be made of clean and pure linen since they symbolised the cloths wrapping Christ for his entombment.⁶⁰¹ The Christological associations of linen were central to the symbolic meaning of corporals. Durand references a canonical decree describing how linen is “born and woven from the earth” just like Christ took on a human body “from the earthly body of the Virgin”.⁶⁰² Papal decretals and their commentaries repeat that the corporals were not to be decorated with any other materials, including more precious materials such as silk and gold.⁶⁰³ The majority of late-medieval depictions from Northern Europe represent corporals in white and unadorned linen. However, there is documentary evidence to suggest that corporal linens were sometimes decorated with gold or silk embroidery despite these regulations. Late-medieval examples of corporals embellished in white silk with gold inscriptions and white gold brocade are known from the inventories of St Peter’s in Rome (1475).⁶⁰⁴ Late-medieval English testaments also mention linen cloths embroidered with gold that were donated to parish churches to be used as corporals. According to Braun, decorations of this sort were located along the edges of the

⁵⁹⁷ Lysaker and Wärvik, Erkebiskop Eilifs tredje statutt, 7-8.

⁵⁹⁸ Dagny Arbman, "Kalkkläden," *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon Fro Nordisk Middelalder*, ed. Finn Hødnebo, vol. VIII (Oslo: Gyldendal Forlag, 1963), 162. Archbishop Nils Ragvaldsson, also known by his Latinized name form Nicolaus Ragvaldi, was Archbishop of Uppsala, Sweden from 1438-1448. Ragvaldsson compiled the *Compendium statutorum provincialium Upsaliensis provinciae* (Summary of provincial statutes for the Church province of Uppsala) in 1441. Ragvaldsson’s statutes are published in Sigurd Kroon (ed.) *Statuter från svenska medeltida provinsialkonsiler* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2010).

⁵⁹⁹ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 243.

⁶⁰⁰ Durand and Thibodeau, 242.

⁶⁰¹ Izbicki, “The Care of Altar Linens,” 43. See also Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 211.

⁶⁰² Durand and Thibodeau, 241.

⁶⁰³ Durand and Thibodeau, 241. See also Izbicki, “The Care of Altar Linens,” 50.

⁶⁰⁴ Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik*, 235.

textile, never in the middle where the Host was laid.⁶⁰⁵ Corporal linens were also linked to the white and pure materiality of linen, the *cleneness* or *munditia* discussed in the previous chapter.⁶⁰⁶ Corporal linens could instruct people to be “cleansed from all carnal desires, just as linen has been cleansed of all natural coloration and moisture; the purity of the corporal signifies the purity of the people.”⁶⁰⁷ The whiteness of the corporal also served to remind the celebrant of the “purity of spirit” that was necessary when receiving the Host.⁶⁰⁸ To summarize, the sacred status of corporal linens, endowed through episcopal benedictions and reflected in their regulated handling and care, was associated with the white and Christ-like materiality of linen, signifying the purity or *cleneness* necessary for both administering and receiving the Eucharist.

5.2 The Bursa and Capsis

By the fifteenth century, corporal linens were commonly kept in either a small box covered with fabric, *capsis*, or a small textile envelope, *bursa*.⁶⁰⁹ The bursa was square with a flap covering the opening, like an envelope, and was sometimes strengthened with parchment inside the lining. The *capsis* was a small wooden box clothed in silk or velvet and embellished with embroideries. In contrast to the corporals they were designated to hold, these containers were made of the most expensive fabrics and decorated with pearls, precious stones and embroideries in silk and gold. Medieval depictions of the Mass show that when the folded corporal was taken out of its container, the bursa or *capsis* could be displayed by leaning it against the praedella of the altar shrine (fig. 5.2). This practice may explain the embroidered images found on the front of many such corporal containers, as they became visual displays on the altar during the Eucharistic celebration.

Durand does not specifically discuss corporal bursae, but their symbolic understanding as containers for the Host may be relevant. He acknowledges the diversity of materials used for such cases, including wood, silver, ivory, gold and crystal, and notes that each substance expresses one of the different “graces of the Body of Christ itself”. Moreover, these cases signify the body of the Virgin.⁶¹⁰ In the revelations of Birgitta of Vadstena, the womb of Mary

⁶⁰⁵ Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik*, 233.

⁶⁰⁶ Durand employs the Latin term “*munditia*” to describe the purity of faithful people of which the corporal cloth signified. William Durand, *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, ed. A. Davril and Timothy M. Thibodeau (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 378.

⁶⁰⁷ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 241.

⁶⁰⁸ Durand and Thibodeau, 243.

⁶⁰⁹ Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik*, 247.

⁶¹⁰ William Durand, *The Rationale divinorum officiorum: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 39.

is compared to a vessel filled with wine symbolising Christ.⁶¹¹ Thus, Marian iconography was especially appropriate for textiles enveloping the body of Christ.

Fredrik Wallem's survey of the Icelandic inventories concluded that almost every Icelandic church had one or more of these bursae known as *corporalishus* or *húsum* in the fifteenth century.⁶¹² References to textile embellishments such as silk and gold embroideries and textile linings led Wallem to argue that most of these inventory entries referred to textile bursae. However, *húsum*, which can be directly translated as 'house,' could also denote the *capsis*, which in medieval Latin was described as a *domus* (house). As will be shown below, the *capsis* could also be clothed in fabric and embellished with embroidery. Thus, it is difficult to differentiate between the bursa and *capsis* based on these inventories. In 1588, Skálholt Cathedral owned eleven corporal containers, most of which were probably bursae.⁶¹³ Preserved examples from other Scandinavian and European collections, together with documentary sources, show that they were not an Icelandic peculiarity, but a liturgical textile commonly found in Northern Europe at the time.⁶¹⁴ Among the possessions Archbishop Aslak Bolt brought to Trondheim in 1429 were two corporal bursae made of Islamic silks, gold brocades and embroidered linen.⁶¹⁵ The early fourteenth-century will of Duchess Ingeborg Håkonson lists a "*coopertorium corporis domini*" among the donations to Uppsala Cathedral. This *capsis* was scattered with pearls in various colours and images in gilded silver.⁶¹⁶

A *capsis* clothed in red velvet with an embroidered crucifixion is preserved in Turku Cathedral in Finland (fig. 5.5; cat.no. 17).⁶¹⁷ This square box measuring 23 x 22,5 x 6 centimetres is made of wood and covered in an Italian pomegranate velvet on the sides and a full field of embroideries on the box's lid (fig. 5.5; cat.no. 17). An ornamental silver gilt clasp serves as a closure, and the interior is lined with a red fabric that is now very faded. The lid embroideries display a Crucifixion scene with Mary Magdalen embracing the foot of the cross, flanked by the Virgin and St Andrew on the left side and John the Apostle and a Dominican

⁶¹¹ Rev 5 int 10- 14. See also Claire L. Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2001), 100.

⁶¹² Fredrik B. Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen* (Kristiania: Grøndahl, 1910), 125.

⁶¹³ Kristján Eldjárn and Hörður Ágústsson, *Skálholt, Skríði og áhöld* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1992), 117.

⁶¹⁴ Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik*, 247.

⁶¹⁵ "Item ij corporalia hws annat af hedhen stycke oc annat af gyllene stycke oc þar vare corporalia med af lærrept." DN V: 586 (22. februar 1429).

⁶¹⁶ «[I]tem coopertorium corporis domini totum stratum perlis diversi coloris et argento deaurato cum ymaginibus, ponderant tres marcas cum dimidio." DS. 3845. The bursa is mentioned in the will of Ingeborg Håkonsson as a donation to Uppsala Cathedral.

⁶¹⁷ Inv. no. HK6429:298, Turku Cathedral Museum.

monk on the right. The scene is embroidered with coloured silks in finely executed satin stitches for faces and clothes, set against underside couching with gilded threads for the golden background. John's mantle, Mary Magdalen's dress and the lining of the Virgin's mantle now appear in a faded brownish-red colour, but would have originally been bright red. The Virgin's dress is radiantly blue, while Mary Magdalen, John the Apostle and St Andrew are clothed in green garments. Different hues were used to emphasise the garments' folds, and contours are further enhanced by small stitches in black silk.

The embroiderer employed varied stitches that created a lively and animated surface, such as split stitches for rendering hair and blood. Raised work was also used to frame the embroidery and the four corner roundels depicting Evangelist symbols. Traces on the surface reveal that the halos and roundels were covered in pearl embroidery, but all pearls are now lost. The high artistic craftsmanship of this embroidery prompted Agnes Geijer to describe it as a "textile painting" and compare it to painted altarpieces.⁶¹⁸ This description echoes the modernist valuation of needlepainting, or flat, figurative stitching giving the illusion of paint, as the most valued form of medieval embroidery. As discussed in the previous chapter, florid and composite textile surfaces with relief embroidery and added embellishment were traditionally associated with a 'downfall' of the craft of embroidery. While the Turku Capsis displays painterly effects in its minutely and clearly rendered crucifixion scene, I would argue that the aesthetic effects of this embroidered image should not be directly compared to a painting. The raised work of the frame, the pearl embroidery, the varied surface created with different stitches and the goldwork background created *varietas* and a three-dimensional surface. Surface and ornaments produced an aesthetic experience that is central to understanding the 'work' altar textiles were doing in the medieval church.

The male figure to the right of the Crucifixion scene is noticeably smaller than the others and lacks a halo, indicating that he is a donor similar to those depicted in late-medieval altar pieces. The presence of a specific individual, rendered as a young and tonsured man clothed in a white tunic and a black hooded cowl has prompted scholars to explore questions of the textile's patronage.⁶¹⁹ Regardless of the donor's identity, his presence on the Turku Capsis

⁶¹⁸ Agnes Geijer, «En textil målning» *Sigtuna Fornhems Minnesskrift* (Halmstad 1947), 96 and 99.

⁶¹⁹ Both Branting/ Lindblom and Geijer claims with certainty that the monk is the Finnish cleric and later Turku Bishop Martin Skytte (d. 1550). See Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier i Sverige* (Faksimileupplag) (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1997), 117 – 118, and Agnes Geijer, «En textil målning.» 101. While this may hold true, I find it problematic to attribute patronage on the basis of one single known person from that time. Certainly, a number of clerics associated with the Dominican order would have been active in Turku in the late fifteenth century, even though only one name is known through written sources. In the case of Skytte, he would have been very young – around 17 or 20 the latest – at the time the Turku capsis

testifies to the religious importance of these small textile objects. Through the embroidered portrait, the donor could position himself in proximity to the most sacred matter in the church during the Eucharistic celebration. Moreover, when the *capsis* was posed against the altarpiece *praedella*, his presence was not only established through the embroidery but also displayed to the cathedral's clerics as well as the witnessing audience of laypeople.

The Turku Capsis is unique in that it is the only extant example of such box-shaped containers for corporal linens in Scandinavia, and because of its remarkable state of preservation and level of craftsmanship. However, for smaller and less wealthy churches a simpler and more affordable design was often chosen. The simplest bursae were made in plain silks or velvet without embroidered ornamentation. However, most preserved examples are silks and velvet bursae decorated with metal embellishments, pearls, or embroidery. Although documentary evidence shows that such corporal bursae were used in churches across Scandinavia in the fifteenth century, all but one of the preserved examples are from Iceland.⁶²⁰ Corporal bursae went out of use with the Reformation, but the Icelandic examples continued to be used as chalice cloths (*palla*) in the following centuries, which may explain their survival. The five preserved Icelandic corporal bursae are all dated to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, a time when Icelandic churches acquired many new furnishings.⁶²¹ An early example is now kept in the National Museum in Copenhagen, and features silk embroidery with the Coronation of the Virgin on the front side and the Ascension on the back (fig. 5.9).⁶²² Four bursae are now in the National Museum in Reykjavik. A bursa from Kálfafell is worked in stem stitch with woollen yarns on linen (fig. 5.8). The back shows Christ in Majesty with Evangelist symbols, while the front shows a male saint, possibly St Bartholomew. His image is partly covered by the lid, where Christ's head is embroidered in a medallion that evokes the circular shape of the Host.⁶²³ An example from Skálholt Cathedral is made of red velvet with

was made, a rather young age for such a prestigious commission. For a critique of patronage and authorial agency in medieval art, see Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290-1350*, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (Yale University Press, 2014), 54 – 57.

⁶²⁰ One late-medieval bursa is preserved from Sweden, see Agnes Geijer and Marita Lindgren-Fridell, "En medeltida bursa" in *Dalarna Hambygdebok* (1942), 37 – 50.

⁶²¹ Helgi Þorláksson, "Historisk Innledning," in *Kirkja Ok Kirkjuskrud, Kirker Og Kirkekunst På Island Og Norge i Middelalderen* (Reykjavik: Þjóðminjasafn Íslands, 1997), 18 – 20. In the fifteenth century, the Icelandic church gained more and more land, until they owned half of all land in Iceland. Especially the bishoprics grew their wealth. Englishmen already traded fish directly with Iceland, and from 1475, Hanseatic ships also sailed directly to Iceland instead of trading Icelandic goods via Bergen. By the late 15th century then, the Icelandic church was powerful, wealthy and in a good position to trade ecclesiastical art from England and Netherlands/northern Germany.

⁶²² Inv. no. D89/ 1989, DNM. Probably from the mid-fourteenth century, English work.

⁶²³ See Elsa E. Guðjónsson, *Traditional Icelandic embroidery* (Reykjavik: Iceland Review, 1985), 50. Inv. no. 11008.

the embroidered lettering “ihs” and metal embellishments in each of the four corners (fig. 5.10).⁶²⁴ Another velvet bursa from Grund Church has metal embellishments including an image of the Apocalyptic Virgin (fig. 5.7). An intricately embroidered bursa from Skálholt Cathedral shows the Annunciation, and will be discussed in detail below.⁶²⁵ One of the most striking features of the Skálholt Bursa is the extensive use of freshwater pearls.

5.3 The Material Significance of Pearls

Pearls used to outline embroidered figures or to fully cover surfaces were common in late-medieval embroideries. Unlike the silk and linen discussed in the previous chapters, pearls are not in and of themselves a textile material. Nevertheless, they were central to late-medieval textile aesthetics, demonstrating the complexity and multi-mediality of ecclesiastical vestments. Freshwater pearl mussels (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) were present in rivers and streams along the coast and in the lowlands of the Scandinavian peninsula as well as parts of modern-day Finland. Pearl fishing was described in the comprehensive ‘*Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*’ or *History of the Nordic Peoples*, written by Olaus Magnus in 1555.⁶²⁶ Magnus also drew a detailed map of Northern Europe, *Carta Marina* (1539), showing the rivers of Indalsälven and Ångermanälven in Central Sweden with freshwater mussels containing pearls. Freshwater pearls were particularly suitable for luxury embroidery, and were in high demand for late-medieval ecclesiastical vestments as well as clothes for the nobility.⁶²⁷ Vadstena embroideries in particular are characterized by extensive use of pearls. After the Reformation, the Birgittine nuns sold off most of their treasures, among them twenty-four ‘alnar’ of freshwater pearls.⁶²⁸ This suggests that up until the mid-sixteenth century the monastery held a substantial collection of freshwater pearls available for ecclesiastical

⁶²⁴ Inv. no. 11924, dated to 1500 – 1550.

⁶²⁵ Inv. no. 421/ 1867-63

⁶²⁶ Olaus Magnus (1490 – 1557) was the last Catholic archbishop in Sweden and spent his final years in exile at the papal court in Rome. His comprehensive ‘*Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*’ (History of the Nordic Peoples) from 1555 describes pearl fishery and the use of pearls. Magnus also drew a detailed map of northern Europe, *Carta Marina* (1539), showing the rivers of Indalsälven and Ångermanälven in Central Sweden with freshwater mussels containing pearls.

⁶²⁷ As Lisa Monnas has pointed out, the fact that smaller pearls sold well North of the Alps is likely because they were in demand for pearl embroidery. Lisa Monnas, “The Making of Medieval Embroidery” in *English Medieval Embroidery. Opus Anglicanum*, ed. Clare Browne, Glyn Davies and M. A. Michael (New Haven and London, 2016), 12. See also: Monica Rydbeck, «Pärlor.» in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder (Bind Xiii)*, ed. Finn Hødnebo (Oslo: Gyldendal Forlag, 1968), 640.

⁶²⁸ Eva Lindqvist Sandgren, «Uthålliga Birgittasystrar i Vadstena under 1500-Talet.» *Signum* 3 (2018): 26. While “alen” was used as a linear measurement it could also denote dimensions of materials measured in square meters. The exact size of the Vadstena pearl collection sold in the late sixteenth century, however, is hard to determine since the standard for these measurements varied in the medieval period.

embroideries.⁶²⁹ In 1544 the Swedish King Gustav Vasa ordered a search for freshwater pearls in all rivers and streams in Norrland (Northern Sweden) as he wanted pearls for a new set of regalia.⁶³⁰ Due to the high demand for freshwater pearls in the centuries following the Reformation, especially for royal clothing, pearls were stripped off many medieval vestments. Still, a considerable corpus of medieval pearl embroidery exists from late medieval Scandinavia and many of the textiles presented in this study display pearl embroidery.

In addition to their high monetary value, pearls were sought after because of their medicinal, symbolic and aesthetic value as described in medieval lapidaries. The material histories of pearls were influenced by the writings of the natural philosopher Pliny the Elder (23 – 79 CE). Presenting a myth of origin for pearls, Pliny described how they were produced by the mixing of wind and water. The oyster, according to Pliny, symbolised a vulva gaping open to the sky that closed when it was “filled with dewy pregnancy,” and consequently delivered its offspring, the pearl.⁶³¹ Early Christians extended this origin myth to symbolise a transformation from a lowly state to a holy one; the pearl becoming a theological “metaphor for the Virgin birth of Christ, or the divine soul housed within the earthly body”.⁶³² The material signification of pearls was often connected to their white lustre and perfect natural shape, which could symbolise the body of Christ or the purity of the Virgin martyrs and saints. A series of prayers written in Vadstena in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries employs the Old Swedish phrase *skinande fine pärla*, which translates to “shining distinguished pearl” in their opening tributes to female saints such as St Katarina and St Dorothea.⁶³³ Pearl metaphors are used in these prayers together with other ‘text-images’ such as paradise flowers, lilies and roses, to signify martyrdom and holiness.

These textual images emphasise the aesthetic qualities of pearls. In the influential medieval lapidary *Book of Minerals*, ‘*De Mineralibus*’, Albertus Magnus (c. 1200 – 1280)

⁶²⁹ We do not know whether these pearls were sources locally of acquired by trade. Pearl fishing is known from a nearby stream in the eighteenth century, but there are to my knowledge no medieval documents confirming pearl fishing in the area.

⁶³⁰ John Granlund, «Pärlfiske,» in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder. vol xviii*, ed. Finn Hødnebo, vol. (Oslo: Gyldendal Forlag, 1968), 636

⁶³¹ Pliny (the Elder), *Natural History. Vol. 3: Books 8-11*, trans. H. Rackham, W.H.S. Jones, and D.E. Eichholz, 2nd ed, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 235 (Book IX, section 107).

⁶³² Rebecca Stott, *Oyster* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 178.

⁶³³ The phrase “skinande fine pärla” is found in prayers 189, 208, 209, 244 and 256 in Robert Geete, *Svenska Böner Från Medeltiden: Efter Gamla Handskrifter*, vol. 1, (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & söner, 1907). All of these prayers are from prayer books written in Vadstena between c. 1470 and 1530, see Geete’s introduction pages VII – XXXII.

likewise emphasises the white lustre of pearls: “Their colour is very white, but as if a little light were shining through it, and so they gleam although they are white.”⁶³⁴ As discussed most recently by Kaja Kollandsrud, a material’s ability to reflect light was instrumental to medieval aesthetics and is important to our understanding of medieval artworks for the church.⁶³⁵ Several manuscripts include fragments of medieval lapidaries, suggesting that their contents were well known in medieval Scandinavia, at least among a secular and clerical elite.⁶³⁶ For example, Bishop Peder Månsson of Västerås, Sweden (1524 - 1534), wrote in his treatise on metallurgy (*Bergkonst*) that pearls are revered for their beauty as well as healing properties: ‘Pärlor ärw til prydlse oc til läkedom’.⁶³⁷

The religious symbolism attributed to pearls, as well as their desired ‘shining’ aesthetic effect, made them especially suitable for ecclesiastical embroideries. In medieval Scandinavia the craftsmanship of working with pearls was so intertwined with the craft of embroidery that by the fifteenth century leading embroiderers were known as ‘pearl embroiderers’ (*pärlstickare*).⁶³⁸ This suggests that embroiderers skilled in pearl work were respected and valued for their ability to incorporate pearls in the making of textile surfaces, producing tactile and shining effects that were central to medieval aesthetics. Paul Binski argues that materiality is a process of making and experiencing medieval art:

Crafting is profoundly material in that it requires strength, dexterity and knowledge of the way materials behave when worked and used. In both the verbal and non-verbal arts, the craft involved entails a preliminary understanding, practical in nature, of the character of the materials that form the basis of invention; this understanding in turn entails judgement and experience.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁴ Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals*, trans. D. Wyckoff (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 105.

⁶³⁵ Kaja Kollandsrud, “Evoking the Divine: The Visual Vocabulary of Sacred Polychrome Wooden Sculpture in Norway between 1100 and 1350” (Phd diss., University of Oslo, 2018), see esp. the summary of argument on the importance of light for the visual appearance of ‘the sacred’ in Conclusion, p. 255; see also Chapter Eight, pp. 135 - 252 on the importance of light in the ‘visual vocabulary’ of painted and gilded effects.

⁶³⁶ The Danish canon Henrik Harpestreng (d. 1244) wrote several treatises on medicinal plants, and two manuscripts concerning the properties and usage of minerals have been attributed to him. These manuscripts may, however, come from another unknown Nordic writer: C 321, Uppsala University Library. One example is a fragment from the Icelandic Hauksbók is titled ‘Seven Precious Stones and Their Nature’; AM 544 4to 34r.

⁶³⁷ For example, Peder Månsson writes that pearls are revered for their beauty as well as medicinal properties: ‘Pärlor ärw til prydlse oc til läkedom’ in Peder Månsson, *Peder Månssons Skrifter på svenska efter Handskrifter i Stockholm. Med en inledning utgifna af Robert Geete.*, vol. 43 (Stockholm: Svenska Fornskrift-sällskapet, 1913-1915), 480. Many of Albertus’s ideas are present in Peder Månsson’s lapidary.

⁶³⁸ Almquist and Hildebrand, Johan Axel Almquist and Hans Hildebrand, *Stockholms Stadsböcker Från Äldre Tid: Stockholms Stads Skottebok 1460-1468 Samt Strödda Räkenskaper Från 1430-Talet Och Från Åren 1460-1473* (Stockholm: Kungl. Samfundet för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 1926). Gilbert van der Elst ‘Pärlstickare’ (first entry: Stockholm stads skottebok: 25/11 – 1458) and Albert ‘Pärlstickare’ (first entry: Stockholm stads skottebok 21/8 – 1473).

⁶³⁹ Paul Binski, *Gothic Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 172.

In other words, the craft involved in pearl embroidery was central to the medieval materiality of pearls. The technique required pearls to be threaded on core thread of white or yellow silk. This thread was then laid on the ground fabric and fastened with small stitches in a technique called surface couching. As Lisa Monnas has shown, this was labour intensive work that in fourteenth-century England paid the embroiderer a much higher rate than when working on other parts of the embroidery.⁶⁴⁰ Unlike other gems and beads used for ecclesiastical embroideries, pearls could not be enhanced by humans and were thus considered perfect. The craftsmanship of pearl embroidery was therefore not so much in the refinement of the material as in the technique of making intricate surfaces scattered with small and lustrous pearls. The textiles in this study present a range of different effects and surfaces produced with pearl embroidery: pearls could cover a figure's garment, enhance pictorial outlines, accentuate relief embroidery and raised work, and create three-dimensional, almost sculptural, structures strengthened with wire. Pearls do not fade and wear in the same way as other luxury materials employed in such embroideries, like velvets, silks and gilded threads. Often, these small and radiant objects are the only materials that still shine and give an impression of the textile's original material splendour, as in the Skálholt Bursa discussed below.

5.4 The Skálholt Bursa

A corporal bursa from Skálholt Cathedral displays an embroidered Annunciation on red velvet ground (fig. 5.6; cat.no. 18). The bursa has a flap of about four centimetres on the reverse side, revealing an opening lined with white leather and enforced by parchment. It was probably sewn closed and used as a *palla*, a cloth to cover the chalice, after the Reformation.⁶⁴¹ Embroidered figures and metal embellishments have been applied to the velvet ground. The archangel Gabriel is clothed in ecclesiastical vestments, a choir cope and a white alb, and has multi-coloured wings. The Virgin is kneeling by a book stand, turning her head towards the angel. Her halo is made of a thin silver gilt plate. The ground is scattered with embroidered flowers and a large lily is placed between the figures. Imprints in the velvet indicate pieces of the scene that are now lost, including the vase that would have held the lily and a dove floating above.⁶⁴²

⁶⁴⁰ Monnas discusses the example of a pearl embroidery commissioned by Edward III where the pearl embroiderer is paid 3d in comparison to the normal payment of 2d per day for other parts of the embroidery. Lisa Monnas, "The Making of Medieval Embroidery," 12.

⁶⁴¹ Kristján Eldjárn, *Hundrað Ár í Þjóðminjasafni* (Reykjavik: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1969). Ch. 5 «Korpóralshús frá Skálholti». This post-medieval usage may help explain the preserved bursae from medieval Iceland.

⁶⁴² Eldjárn and Ágústsson, *Skálholt. Skrifði og Áhöld*, 143.

Two scrolls are unfurled above the figures' heads with illegible letters. In an article published in 1909, Matthías Þórðarson was able to read the words "AVE MARIA GRATIA PL(ena)" on the scroll above Gabriel, noting that the letters were very faded and difficult to decipher. There were traces of letters on Mary's scroll, but the wording could not be read.⁶⁴³ Similar scrolls can be found on the front of the Linköping Mitre, discussed in Chapter Seven, where the text above the Virgin read "ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI," "I am the servant of the Lord."

Today, the embroidery is threadbare and the silk and metal threads appear faded and grey. The yellow hair of the Virgin, the shine of silver and gold in her mantle and the angel's cope, the white silk of their skin, and the alternating red and blue silk in their clothes, the wings and the small flowers scattered over the grass are almost entirely faded. The whole scene is framed by raised work in metal sheets twisted over bands of metal thread. In each corner are clusters of metal buttons, of which one is lost. The only materials that still shine and tell us something about this textile's original material splendour are the seed pearls lining the coat of the Virgin Mary, the wings and cope of the archangel Gabriel, and the lily between them. They still appear with a white and shimmering sheen against the red velvet background.

Given the religious association between pearls and Virginité, the extensive use of pearls on the Skálholt Bursa references the prefiguration of the Virgin birth. Beate Fricke has argued that the shimmering surfaces of a mother-of-pearl crucifix allude to Christ's heavenly body as well as his physical presence in the Host.⁶⁴⁴ This material significance was enhanced by the white lustre and flesh-like qualities of pearls. In the Skálholt Bursa, there is a striking contrast between the shimmering white pearls and the red velvet. This material interplay evokes the Host and the Wine, Christ's body and blood. In doing so, the materials emphasise the textile as a container enclosing sacred linens wrapping the Host and Wine.

The eucharistic allusions are not only found in the materials, but also in the iconography. In late medieval art, scenes from Marian and Christological cycles were isolated and used as a focal point for altar pieces.⁶⁴⁵ The Annunciation is a prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice.⁶⁴⁶ Considering Durand's idea of Eucharistic vessels as a symbol of Mary's womb, a corporal bursa

⁶⁴³ Þórðarson, "Corporal-Taskan Frá Skálholti." 50.

⁶⁴⁴ Beate Fricke, "Matter and Meaning of Mother-of-Pearl: The Origins of Allegory in the Spheres of Things," *Gesta* 51, no. 1 (2012): 46.

⁶⁴⁵ Kristen Van Ausdall, "Art and Eucharist in the Late Middle Ages," in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 560.

⁶⁴⁶ Georges Didi-Huberman has argued that "the value of the Annunciation lies only in what it directly prefigures, namely, divine motherhood, it being understood that the value of divine motherhood lies only in its redemptive goal, the sacrifice of the son of God." Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, trans. J.M. Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 76.

embroidered with the Annunciation could be understood as a Marian vessel encapsulating Christ's body. Furthermore, the prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice emphasised the Eucharistic function of this textile object.

Another element underscoring the Eucharistic theme is the clothes of the Archangel. Gabriel is dressed in a choir cope, with embroidered orphreys along the linings. The cope is decorated with a pearl embroidered *clipeus* (ornamental hood) partly seen on the angel's shoulders.⁶⁴⁷ A voluminous white garment can be seen beneath the open cope, a reference to the liturgical alb used by clerics. Maurice B. McNamee has argued that the presence of vested angels in Flemish art in the thirteenth century can be understood as Eucharistic symbols.⁶⁴⁸ McNamee pointed out that in Annunciation scenes the Archangel is vested in the garb of subministrators of a Solemn High Mass, including the amice, alb, dalmatic or cope and sometimes a stole, but never a chasuble as the latter was reserved for the celebrant. Thus, these vested angels reference the deacons or subdeacons that during a High Mass sang the narrative part of the Gospel telling the Annunciation story.⁶⁴⁹ McNamee argues that these vested angels are indirect symbols that allude to the sacrificial theme of the iconography.⁶⁵⁰ The vested angel in the Skálholt Bursa reinforces the Eucharistic context with textile allusions to the Mass.

5.5 The Corporal and Bursa in the Eucharistic Liturgy

In order to understand how these textiles were used and perceived in the late medieval period, the liturgical actions taking place during Mass must be examined, particularly the consecration, elevation and communion of bread and wine. Tracing the particular actions of this liturgy is a challenge, as the context depended on both location (cathedral, parish church, private chapel, monastery), the time of the year, and the nature of the Mass. Instead of trying to render an "ideal" Mass, a task that seems anachronistic, I will follow the example discussed in Chapter Two: Sunday Mass in Endre Church around 1450.

The following description of the use of corporal linens during Mass is taken from the *Missale Lincopense*.⁶⁵¹ The corporal cloth was folded and carried to the altar inside the bursa.

⁶⁴⁷ The *clipeus* as an ornamental hood will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

⁶⁴⁸ Maurice B. McNamee, "The Origin of the Vested Angel as a Eucharistic Symbol in Flemish Painting," *The Art Bulletin* 54, no. 3 (1972): 263.

⁶⁴⁹ Maurice B. McNamee, *Vested Angels: Eucharistic Allusions in Early Netherlandish Paintings* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 132 – 133.

⁶⁵⁰ McNamee, *Vested Angels*, 124 – 125. See also: McNamee, "The Origin of the Vested," 263.

⁶⁵¹ The main source was a parish missal, *Missale Lincopense* (c. 1436 – 48), Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, A 97. The missal is dated 1436 – 48. See Sven Helander et al., *Mässa i Medeltida Socken*, 2nd ed. (Skellefteå: Artos bokförlag, 2006), 94 – 95.

During Introitus, the priest approached the altar with the chalice and paten, unfolded the corporal linen and placed the paten under it. The back part of the corporal was folded over the top of the chalice. The number of corporal linens probably varied. Durand states that there should be two cloths: one for covering the paten (on which the Host was laid out) and one for covering the chalice.⁶⁵² In the earlier medieval period, a larger corporal cloth which was also folded over the chalice was customary. This custom is reflected in the fifteenth-century *Missale Lincopense*, on which the reconstructed Mass at Endre was based. The priest prepared the bread and wine during the *Offertorium*. The wafer was laid on the corporal cloth and water and wine were poured into the chalice with assistance from the acolyte. At this point, both bread and wine were left uncovered at the altar table. After the first elevation (the minor Eucharistic prayer) the chalice was covered with the corporal linen. During the second elevation (the major Eucharistic prayer) the chalice was uncovered before the elevation and adoration, immediately after the elevation of the Host. It was customary to cover the chalice afterwards. At the end of the prayer, the cloth covering the chalice was removed as the priest made the sign of the cross over the wine. As the priest sang *per omnia secula seculorum* (World without End), the corporal was again folded over the chalice. Before the communion, the chalice was uncovered so that the priest could break the wafer over it. First, the bread was broken in two parts. Then one of the parts was further broken in two, and one of these was dipped in the wine. After the communion, the remaining part of the Host was wrapped and put in a container (bursa, ciborium box), which was put in the altar's sacramental niche. The acolyte poured a small amount of wine into the chalice for the priest to drink as a cleansing of the chalice. After the last blessings, the priest retrieved the vessels and the corporal (with bursa) and brought them to the sacristy.⁶⁵³

As this brief survey of how the corporal may have been used in a Scandinavian parish church around 1450 shows, the chalice was repeatedly covered and uncovered during the Introitus, the Offertory, the Eucharistic prayers, the Communion and for the washing of the vessels. In contrast, the Host was mostly left uncovered on top of the corporal linen. In Durand's exposition of the canon (Book Four) he rhetorically asks "why the chalice but not the Host is covered".⁶⁵⁴ According to Durand, there were four main reasons: Firstly, there was an issue of security since there was a greater risk of spoiling the wine than the bread. Secondly, the chalice signified the dead Christ and "just as a dead body is covered up with cloths and stones, so too, the chalice is covered with a cloth." Thirdly, the blood in the covered chalice signified the

⁶⁵² Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 242.

⁶⁵³ Helander et al., *Mässa i Medeltida Socken*, 27 – 48.

⁶⁵⁴ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 404.

entombed Christ “closed off and sealed” compared to His body outside the sepulchre, the Host. Fourthly, while both the Host and the blood represented the body of Christ, the wine was the body wrapped in the shroud, while the Host was the unwrapped body.⁶⁵⁵ An Icelandic exposition of the Mass (*Messuskyringar*, ca 1400) also describes how the chalice is covered with the corporal out of caution and states that this covering signifies Christ’s concealment for three days in his tomb. The author notes that the corporal linens symbolise both the burial shroud and the stone that covered the tomb.⁶⁵⁶

An important factor to consider when discussing the textile wrappings of the consecrated Host is that of security and protection. Medieval scholars were concerned with the dangers of spilling Christ’s blood and body. What would happen if a mouse ate a piece of the Eucharist?⁶⁵⁷ The statutes of Eilif state that if the priest spills wine he had to lick up the drops. If the wine was spilled on wood, it should be carved out and burned, and the ashes deposited in the *piscina*.⁶⁵⁸ The consecrated bread had to be kept in a locked and secure place. If they were kept in such a state that mice or dogs could access them and make them unclean, the priest was suspended from his duty until he visited the bishop. The bishop would then revoke his right to celebrate Mass for three months, and he had to pay a fee of one mark for his transgression.⁶⁵⁹ Thus, the wrapping and concealment in textiles had a practical function, but one rooted in theological concerns for the dangers of contaminating or desecrating sacred matter

5.6 The Bursa and the Reliquary Effect

In the late-medieval period, the Host assumed many of the properties and status of relics; there were numerous stories of miraculous hosts bleeding and performing miracles, and the Host was staged and displayed in elaborate monstrances carried around in a procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi.⁶⁶⁰ In her discussion of late-medieval reliquaries, Cynthia Hahn argues that there

⁶⁵⁵ Durand and Thibodeau, 405.

⁶⁵⁶ Kristin Norseth, ed., *Messuskyringar: Norrøne Messeforklaringer i Norsk Oversettelse: Festskrift Til Førsteamanuensis Jan H. Schumacher*, trans. Elise Kleivane, (Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2014), 119 – 120.

⁶⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas argued that since the mouse was not made to receive the sacrament, it could not eat the host in a sacramental manner. This famous discussion of *Quid mus sumit* or ‘what does the mouse it’ was brought up by many medieval writers, for an overview of different positions, Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of Its Interpretation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 220 – 222. The issue was also discussed by Durand, see Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 344.

⁶⁵⁸ Lysaker and Wårvik, *Erkebiskop Eilifs tredje statutt*, 10.

⁶⁵⁹ Lysaker and Wårvik, 10.

⁶⁶⁰ For more on this, see Miri Rubin’s discussion of Corpus Christi Processions in Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 243 - 271.

was little difference between various sorts of sacred matter, with particularly blurred lines between relics and the sacred matter of the Corpus Christi.⁶⁶¹ However, as Miri Rubin pointed out, the Host was “God’s very body, not a sign of holiness”.⁶⁶² Still, the wrapping and unwrapping of the wafer and wine, the body of Christ, with the corporal linens can be compared to the wrapping of relics discussed in Chapter Three. As a consequence, the linens themselves acquired a special status that can be compared to that of textile contact relics. The idea of corporal linens as a form of contact relics can be found as early as the writings of St Jerome (c. 340 – 420) who argued that “from their association with the body and blood of the Lord, they are to be venerated with the same awe as the body and blood themselves.”⁶⁶³ This special status is reflected in the many regulations prohibiting anyone other than clerics of the major orders from touching and handling them.

Corporals could also themselves become relics. One famous example is the Holy Corporal of Orvieto. In the miracle story known as the Mass of Bolsena, a priest had secret doubts about whether the consecrated Host truly embodied the Real Presence. Suddenly the Host started bleeding onto the priest’s hands and the corporal. The story continues with the authentication and acceptance of the miracle by Pope Urban IV in Orvieto.⁶⁶⁴ On a more modest scale, corporals stained by consecrated wine – the blood of Christ – could also become relics. Durand stated that if this happened, the corporal was to be placed among the church’s relics.⁶⁶⁵ This instruction is also found in the statutes of Archbishop Nils Ragvaldsson of Uppsala (1441 – 48) and in the statutes of Strängnes diocese from the mid-fourteenth century.⁶⁶⁶

The idea of corporals as contact relics may help to explain the emergence of special textile cases designed to encapsulate corporal linens by the fifteenth century. The ornate surfaces of textile bursae enhanced their sacred content through textile strategies similar to the reliquary effect described by Hahn as a means of establishing “value, presentation and context”.⁶⁶⁷ This effect is not only in the container, but extends to the processes of encapsulating or wrapping and unwrapping or displaying the sacred in a framing action that defined the content as “*unique, authentic, powerful and effective*”.⁶⁶⁸ As discussed in Chapter Three, relic

⁶⁶¹ Cynthia Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016) 92.

⁶⁶² Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 36.

⁶⁶³ Nicola Lowe, “Women’s Devotional Bequests of Textiles in the Late Medieval English Parish Church, c. 1350–1550.” *Gender & History* 22 (2010): 412.

⁶⁶⁴ The miracle story was recounted by Gregory IX in a brief of June 25, 1337. See Ausdall, “Art and Eucharist” 584.

⁶⁶⁵ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 369.

⁶⁶⁶ Arbman, “Kalkkläden,” 162.

⁶⁶⁷ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 6.

⁶⁶⁸ Hahn, 7.

wrappings can be seen as ‘precious skins’ covering, protecting and clothing the holy relics. Interestingly, the word bursa stems from the Greek *bursa* meaning ‘skin’ or ‘hide’, emphasising its potential as a textile membrane.⁶⁶⁹ Textiles wrapping the Host establish a boundary between this most sacred matter and its surroundings, framing and regulating the encounter between the Host and the people in the church.

5.7 The Sacred and the Secret

Having discussed the rich religious symbolism of corporal linens and how the bursa functioned as a textile membrane or a womb-like container enhancing their sanctity, it is relevant to ask about the extent to which the laity could actually see the liturgical actions that unfolded on the altar during Mass. With the growing concern for the security and framing of the Eucharist following the theological developments of the thirteenth century, the immediate liturgical space surrounding the sacrament was increasingly enclosed and divided from the laity across churches in Western Europe. Miri Rubin has argued that “by the mid-fifteenth century a tendency to withdraw, reclaim, shield and re-appropriate the Eucharist is everywhere in evidence.”⁶⁷⁰ Screens between the nave and the chancel have been discussed as part of this tendency to protect and enclose the Sacrament.⁶⁷¹ However, there is little evidence to suggest that Scandinavian parish churches had screens in the nave-chancel division, as was the case in fifteenth-century English churches. Rather, Anne Nilsén has argued that after 1300 many chancel arches were rebuilt and widened to provide better visual access to the choir space.⁶⁷² Nilsén argues that the altar was marked by an elevated platform and enclosed by curtains and baldachins rather than chancel screening structures in these small churches.⁶⁷³ As discussed in Chapter Two, screens

⁶⁶⁹ The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek, ed. Franco Montanari, s.v. "βύρσα," accessed online September 2, 2020, <https://brill.com/view/db/bdgo>

⁶⁷⁰ Miri Rubin, “The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities,” in *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities, and Writing*, ed. D. Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 59.

⁶⁷¹ Paul Binski, “The English Parish Church and its Art in the Later Middle Ages; A Review of the Problem,” *Studies in Iconography* 20 (1999): 10 – 11.

⁶⁷² Small Romanesque stone and stave churches had previously a very small opening in the shape of a doorway; a physical and acoustical enclosing of the choir from the nave. See Nilsén, *Focal Point of the Sacred Space: The Boundary between Chancel and Nave in Swedish Rural Churches: From Romanesque to Neo-Gothic*, Uppsala: Uppsala University, 42 – 43. For Romanesque screens and rood lofts see Nyborg, “Choir Screens and Rood Lofts in Scandinavian Parish Churches before 1300,” *The Art and Science of the Church Screen in Medieval Europe: making, meaning, preserving*, ed. Spike Bucklow, Richard Bruce Marks and Lucy Wrapson (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2017): 246 – 260.

⁶⁷³ Anna Nilsén, *Focal Point of the Sacred Space: The Boundary between Chancel and Nave in Swedish Rural Churches: From Romanesque to Neo-Gothic* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2003), 99 – 105. I discuss the performative function of curtains and textiles in the small stave church of Urnes as “soft architecture” in a forthcoming book chapter on the Urnes stave church: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth “Soft Architecture: Textiles in the

with open-work tracery, such as the screen reconstructed in Endre Church, are known.⁶⁷⁴ In larger churches and cathedrals, screens like the Gothic example in Trondheim Cathedral would have been more similar to English norms. Thus, in a typical late-medieval parish church, the laity could have had more or less unrestricted access to the liturgical actions taking place at the main altar. Where screens existed, these structures were not necessarily barriers but visual means of communication that could enhance the viewer's experience and facilitate what Binski called a "'sacramental viewing' into the chancel".⁶⁷⁵ This argument has also been put forth by Jacqueline Jung's study of screening structures and human experience in German and French cathedrals.⁶⁷⁶ However, during the Eucharistic ritual, the celebrant faced the altar and obstructed the view. Most people would only catch a glimpse of the wrapping and unwrapping of the Host and the covering and uncovering of the chalice. This situation might have been different for masses at altars in the nave or smaller chapels.⁶⁷⁷ At these masses, people could observe and participate at close proximity as is illustrated in a detail of the Seven Sacraments by Rogier van der Weyden (fig. 2.6).

The veiling of sacred matter emphasised the secret nature of the Eucharistic ritual, as something that the laity could only partially observe and understand. In her discussion of wrapping practices and materials in Ancient Egypt, Christina Riggs points to "wrapping, concealment, and seclusion as means of knowing the divine".⁶⁷⁸ Riggs states that the word sacred, from Latin *sacer*, originally could mean to enclose, protect and bind.⁶⁷⁹ She argues that there is a parallel to the word 'secret' as: "both refer to something set apart and out-of-bounds that only certain people can be trusted to handle, care for, or begin to comprehend." Understanding textile wrappings as a strategy for 'knowing the divine' and associating them with something secret and hard to comprehend is relevant for understanding the textile

Urnes Stave Church" in *Urnes and its Global Romanesque Connections*, ed. Kirk Ambrose, Griffin Murray, and Margrete Syrstad Andås (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), forthcoming.

⁶⁷⁴ Anna Nilsén argues that the Husaby Screen (on which the reconstructed Endre screen as discussed in Chapter One is based) is post-medieval, probably late seventeenth century. See Anna Nilsén, *Focal Point of the Sacred Space*, 75 – 76 and 54. Simple, open work wooden screens from the medieval period are still preserved in Norwegian stave churches, such as the Hopperstad church. See Nilsén, 57. Forms of screens dividing off the entrance to the chancel are also known from medieval churches in Denmark through archeological evidence, Nilsén, 48.

⁶⁷⁵ Binski, "The English Parish Church," 13.

⁶⁷⁶ Jacqueline E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture, and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, Ca.1200-1400* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), see esp. "The Choir Screen as Bridge," pp. 45 – 70.

⁶⁷⁷ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven.: Yale University Press, 1992), 92 and 111.

⁶⁷⁸ Christina Riggs, *Unwrapping Ancient Egypt* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 187.

⁶⁷⁹ Riggs, *Unwrapping Ancient Egypt*, 187.

strategies of the medieval Eucharistic liturgy. In his discussion of the Canon, Durand states that the Eucharistic Ritual is “called the Secret, as if to say it is hidden from us because human reason cannot fully grasp so great a mystery”.⁶⁸⁰ According to Durand, the veiling of the altar, the priest (dressed in sacred vestments and hidden behind the altar curtains) and the Eucharistic matter signified this mystery.⁶⁸¹ In other words, textiles acted as physical barriers that enhanced the religious experience and emphasised the incomprehensible miracle unfolding at the altar.

In his discussion of medieval screens, Binski argues that the interplay between concealment and exposure served to enhance the visual experience: “partial concealment, like partial clothing, acts to heighten imaginative value and attractiveness.”⁶⁸² Melissa Katz offers a similar argument in relation to sculptures of Enclosed Virgins (*vierges ouvrantes*), proposing that the covering of an image serves to enhance its sacrality.⁶⁸³ Katz argues that “one need not see the inner image to understand its potential power” and that the viewer could “feel a sense of heightened emotion just by knowing that something lay within, even if it was not on view.”⁶⁸⁴ Unlike the consecrated Host which was left uncovered on the corporal cloth and displayed for the laity at the moment of elevation, the consecrated wine was kept within the chalice and often covered with a corporal cloth. Durand states that “this sacrament is the most hidden and most difficult to understand”.⁶⁸⁵ As Caroline Walker Bynum pointed out, there was a theological tradition of treating the Eucharist as essentially unseen: “As far back as the controversies of the eleventh century, major figures such as Alger of Liège, Lanfranc, and Guitmond of Aversa argued that the veiling of presence was necessary in order to support faith.”⁶⁸⁶ The limited visual access to the consecrated bread and wine provided by their wrapping with corporal linens may have enhanced the experience and understanding of these objects as sacred matter. In cases where the bursa was displayed leaned against the praedella, as shown in the Mass of St Gregory discussed in the opening of this chapter, this ornate textile container could serve as a visual reminder of the presence of veiled sacred matter on the altar (fig. 5.2).

⁶⁸⁰ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 291.

⁶⁸¹ Durand and Thibodeau, 291.

⁶⁸² Binski, “The English Parish Church,” 13.

⁶⁸³ Melissa R. Katz, “Behind Closed Doors: Distributed Bodies, Hidden Interiors, and Corporeal Erasure in ‘Vierge Ouvrante’ Sculpture,” *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 55–56 (2009): 210. See Gell, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia*, 87–91, and Alfred Gell, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 111–114.

⁶⁸⁴ Katz, “Behind Closed Doors,” 210.

⁶⁸⁵ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 378.

⁶⁸⁶ Caroline Bynum, “Seeing and Seeing Beyond: The Mass of St. Gregory in the Fifteenth Century,” in *The Mind’s Eye. Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, eds. Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 212.

Although the corporal linens were partly hidden for the laity, written sources such as testaments and donations suggest that people across social strata, especially women, were concerned with these sacred linens. Liturgical textiles, particularly fabrics used for corporal linens, were often given to the church by female donors.⁶⁸⁷ Durand specifically states that even though women – including nuns – were forbidden to touch sacred linens, they could make such textiles for the church: “Nevertheless, women can make vessels of this sort for the altar or ministry, following the example of Mary, who made and wove such things for use in the ministry of the Tabernacle of the Covenant.”⁶⁸⁸ Documentary evidence from medieval England shows that women often gave their personal textiles such as dresses and kerchiefs or household items like sheets and tablecloths to their local parish church, such as “*my best schete to be altare clothe, and my best kyrchyff to be a corporax*”.⁶⁸⁹ These gifts were given by women from different social backgrounds.⁶⁹⁰ A Norwegian counterpart is found in the 1349 testament of Ingeborg Munansdatter that gave her kerchief ornamented with gold threads to Munkeliv Abbey in Bergen, to be wrapped around Christ’s body.⁶⁹¹ In contrast to the Turku Capsis, where the dress of the depicted figure suggests a donation from a Dominican cleric, female donations of their own ‘best’ possessions did not require substantial funding or personal wealth. Nicola Lowe has argued that donations of kerchiefs to be used as corporal cloths carried a special significance, allowing women to access a space and a liturgy from which they were restricted:

Not only would it to come into actual contact with Christ’s body in the sacramental form of the Host; imaginatively it stood in the same relation to the Host as did the Virgin’s veil to the swaddled baby in the manger of Christ hanging on the cross.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁷ For this practice, see Nicola Lowe, “Women’s Devotional Bequests of Textiles in the Late Medieval English Parish Church, c. 1350–1550,” *Gender & History* 22 (2010). Katherine L. French, “‘I Leave My Best Gown as Vestment’: Women’s Spiritual Interests in the Late Medieval English Parish,” *Magistra* 4, no. 1 (1998), and Katherine L French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

⁶⁸⁸ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 243.

⁶⁸⁹ C W Foster, *Lincoln Wills: Volume 3, 1530-1532*, vol. 3 (London: British Record Society, 1930), British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lincoln-wills/vol3> [accessed online 26 June 2020]. Nr. 143, a will from Agnes Sygrave, Lincoln, dated June 1531. Discussed by French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, 44 and Lowe, “Women’s Devotional Bequests,” 407.

⁶⁹⁰ Lowe, “Women’s Devotional Bequests,” 415.

⁶⁹¹ «*eith gulrænt skauth om at hafua vars herra likam*» in DN XII no 98. Dated September 19, 1349. Margrethe Stang has proposed another interpretation of this donation, namely the kerchief as a “hungertuch” or Lenten veil to wrap a crucifix during Lent. See Margrethe C Stang, «Bildedonasjoner og donatorbilder. Lekfolks gaver til kirken som visuell kultur,” *Collegium Medievale* 28 (2015): 151.

⁶⁹² Lowe, “Women’s Devotional Bequests,” 424.

Since the corporal could be understood as a contact relic, and indeed could itself acquire the status of a relic if a drop of wine was spilled, the gift of a kerchief could elevate a feminised and personal textile to a sacred object.⁶⁹³ These female provisions could bring women in close proximity to the most sacred – and one could also argue also secret– matter within the church.

5.8 Conclusions

The objects discussed in this chapter are among the smallest but most significant liturgical textiles used in late-medieval churches. The corporal cloth, *capsis* and *bursa*, when used on the altar, would have been only partially seen by the medieval laity. Still, the frequent donations of personal textiles for corporals suggest that people across different social backgrounds knew the importance and religious significance of the linens wrapping the bread and wine. I have argued that the ceremonial wrapping and unwrapping of consecrated matter would have enhanced the sacrality of the Eucharistic ritual's performance and symbolism. The whiteness of corporal linens symbolised both the purity of the celebrant receiving the communion and the symbolic connection to the shrouds wrapping Christ's body after the Deposition from the cross. Since these linens were regarded as particularly sacred objects, they were kept in designated *bursae* or *capsis* embroidered or embellished in rich materials. I have argued that these textile cases 'work' in ways similar to reliquaries in that they established and communicated the sacred within. Furthermore, the iconography of the Skálholt *Bursa* defined the container as Mary's womb in which the body of Christ was presented in human form, thus making possible the ultimate sacrifice as re-enacted in the Eucharistic ritual. Since the concept of Real Presence was contested and difficult to understand, the veiling and unveiling of sacred matter emphasised the sacred as something secret that could only be partially seen or understood.

⁶⁹³ Lowe, 425.



Figure 5-1: (above, left) Lucas Cranach the Elder’s workshop, “The Mass of St Gregory with Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg” Conifer wood, 150,2 x 110 cm, Inv no 6270, Aschaffenburg, Staatsgalerie © Cranach Digital Archive www.lucascranach.org/digitalarchive

Figure 5-2: (above, right) Detail of a green velvet bursa, with embroidered image of Christ’s face, depicted as leaning up against the sepulcher on the altar in Cranach’s painting. This arrangement of the corporal cloth and the bursa on the altar reflect late medieval practice.



Figure 5-3: Detail of Cranach’s painting (above, left) and Notke’s panel (above, right) showing how the corporal cloth is depicted with blueish grey, thin creases indicating that the cloth was used to carefully envelope the Host.



Figure 5-4: Illuminated letter depicting the episcopal blessing of a corporal in a copy of the Pontifical of William Durandus, ca 1375 CE, Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS 143, f. 159v, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Paris, Photo: © IRHT.



Figure 5-5: *The Turku Capsis* with Crucifixion scene and Evangelist symbols, c. 1480, the box measures 22,5 x 23 cm, with a height of around 6 cm, gold and silk embroidery with metal closures, now in the Turku Cathedral Museum, (inv. no. HK6429:298). Photo: Finnish Heritage Agency



Figure 5-6: *The Skálholt Bursa*, c. 1500, velvet, gold and silk embroideries, metal embellishments and freshwater pearls, 25,4 x 25,4 cm. The embroideries depict the Annunciation, with scrolls floating above the figures' heads. Reykjavik: NMI (inv.no. 421). Photo: © NMI



Figure 5-7: (above, left) Corporal bursa from Grund Church, Iceland c. 1450- 1500, red velvet with metal embellishments including a metal depiction of the Apocalyptic Virgin. NMI: inv.no. 7053 Photo: © NMI

Figure 5-8: (above, right) Corporal bursa from Kálfafell Church, Iceland, sixteenth century, depicting Christ on the front side (partly hidden by the flap), wool and linen on tabby, NMI: inv.no. 11008. Photo: © NMI



Figure 5-9: Corporal bursa from an unknown church, Iceland, depicting the Coronation of the Virgin, wool embroideries on tabby linen. NMD: inv. no. D89. Photo: © NMD

Figure 5-10: Corporal bursa from Skálholt Cathedral, Iceland, sixteenth century, 24 x 24 cm, with velvet 'IHS' monogram and metal embellishments. NMI: inv.no. 11924. Photo: © NMI



6 Vesting Clerical Bodies

Undress me, Lord, of the old human and all his deeds and dress me as a new man, created in God's image.⁶⁹⁴

Laurentius of Vaksala, Summula

The ritual dressing process for priests is described in an early fourteenth-century Swedish Priest Book, the *Summa de ministris et sacramentis ecclesiasticis*, generally called the *Summula*, written by Laurentius of Vaksala (c. 1260–1332).⁶⁹⁵ The text explains in detail the preparation for the celebration of Mass. First, the medieval parish priest washed his hands and face and groomed his tonsured crown of hair. After the cleansing, each layer of clothing was carefully donned as he recited prayers reminding him of the spiritual significance of the vestments and the sacred virtues he was expected to uphold. The first layers were made of white linen, including the amice – a hood draped around his neck like a collar, and the alb – a voluminous and long garment. After the alb, a number of more ornate vestments were then applied: the belt (*cingulum*), the stole and the maniple (fig. 6.1), which could be elaborately embellished with multicoloured silks and gold embroidery. Following this private dressing ritual, the priest was then ready to enter the choir to perform the initial rite of sprinkling holy water among the laity. The final layer of ecclesiastical clothing was the chasuble, a highly symbolic vestment worn only for the eucharistic ritual. Donning the chasuble before the eucharistic celebration represented the final stage of vesting and was done in the choir. Priests also wore copes, a processional and festive garment used for processions and pre-Mass liturgies. Most preserved copes in Scandinavian collection are episcopal copes, and consequently, this vestment will be discussed at length in the following chapter on vesting the bishop.

← *The Århus Chasuble as presented in fig. 6.14.*

⁶⁹⁴ “Exue me, Domine, veterem hominem cum actibus suis, et indue me nouum hominem, qui secundum Deum creatus est.” in *Summula* fol. 39r. in Stina Fallberg Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk: Frälsningshistoriska perspektiv på Summula av Laurentius av Vaksala* (Skellefteå: Artos & Norma bokförlag, 2014), 113.

⁶⁹⁵ Laurentius of Vaksala is also known as Laurentius Olavi and Lars Olofsson. He wrote the *Summula* in the first decades of the fourteenth century. The main source for this manuscript is C64 in Uppsala University Library, Sweden. The manuscript is also preserved in three other nearly complete examples, as well as four fragments. Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 14.

Medieval manuals for parish priests, or Priest Books, often included some canon law, an exposition of the Mass, sermon exempla, liturgies for Masses, prayers and ordines for visiting the sick or burying the dead.⁶⁹⁶ For the discussion of liturgical vestments, the sections on vesting prayers are of particular interest. These simple prayers were to be said when putting on a vestment and became common practice during the eleventh century.⁶⁹⁷ They could also be found copied on flyleaves or in the margins of sacramentaries or missals.⁶⁹⁸ Manuals for priests such as the *Summula* describe how clerical bodies were vested in intricate layers of ecclesiastical clothing in preparation for the Mass.

This ritual re-dressing of the priest's body is known as the vesting ritual and took place in the sacristy, or at least not in direct view of laypeople. For each new vestment, the priest recited prayers signifying the spiritual importance of the garment and the symbolic virtues these textiles represented. The vesting prayers are embedded in chapter seven of the *Summula, De ornatu clericorum*, pertaining to the clothes of the clergy, which describes how the parish priest is ritually constructed as a "new man, created in God's image." This quote, which opened this chapter on vesting clerical bodies, can be found in a prayer from the *Summula* for when the priest dressed himself in the white alb. The vesting ritual was an act of personal devotion, in preparing both the priest's mind and his physical body for the imminent celebration of Mass; but was also a demonstration of public devotion, since the chasuble was donned in plain view of the laity.

In this chapter I take the vesting ritual as a framework to unwrap the significance of textile layers vesting clerical bodies. Accordingly, the discussion of vestments focuses on vesting as a transitive verb, which according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* can mean "to clothe or cover" or "to dress or apparel" as a formal act of ceremony.⁶⁹⁹ More figuratively, the act of vesting could also mean "to invest (a person) with some quality" revealing the performative and constitutive power of clothing.⁷⁰⁰ These connotations emphasise vesting as an *action*, and stress how the *act* of dressing and its various forms—undressing and re-dressing with ecclesiastical textiles—affected both wearers and audiences. For the wearers especially, each vestment in the ritual literally embodied them with virtue and desired behaviour.

⁶⁹⁶ Maureen C. Miller, "Reform, Clerical Culture, and Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. John Arnold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 313

⁶⁹⁷ Maureen Miller links the diffusion of vesting prayers in the eleventh century with a Carolingian initiative to improve the clergy. See Maureen Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, C. 800-1200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 77. See also Miller, "Reform, Clerical Culture, and Politics," 313.

⁶⁹⁸ Miller, "Reform, Clerical Culture, and Politics," 313.

⁶⁹⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "vest, v.," accessed online July 8, 2020, <https://www.oed.com>

⁷⁰⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "vest, v.," accessed online July 8, 2020, <https://www.oed.com>

In discussing the layers of the vesting ritual, I present the individual layers of clothing in the order presented in the Swedish *Summula*, starting with the amice and alb. The following section on ‘Minor Vestments’ includes the discussion of the belt, stole and maniple. For chasubles, the largest group of empirical material within this dissertation, I focus on the vestment as a eucharistic image from the perspective of Mass. Finally, the last part of this chapter will discuss the vesting of clerical bodies in the context of materiality, layering and performance. By focusing on each layer, the aim of this chapter is to analyse what these textile objects *do* and how they were experienced by clerics and laypeople rather than to pose the questions of production, provenance and technical analysis that have characterised previous scholarship. Because vestments were always experienced as worn on human bodies, the vesting rituals and liturgies of the Mass provide insight into how textiles became moving and embodied images at the centre stage of Mass.

6.1 Linen Garments – the Alb and Amice

The preparations for Mass had penitential and purificatory aspects.⁷⁰¹ According to the Swedish *Summula*, the exterior washing signified a clean and pure interior state and it was therefore necessary for the priest to confess his sins in order to proceed with a pure heart.⁷⁰² A fifteenth-century Icelandic exposition of the Mass describe the external washing of the body mirrored the internal cleansing of the priest as he prepared for Mass:

When the priest prepares for Mass, he washes himself carefully, and this symbolises that he must wash himself in repentance and good deeds, if he is to serve God. That he combs his hair is a token of him unravelling his thoughts for God. The head is a symbol of the heart, and the hair symbolises his thoughts.⁷⁰³

The first step in the dressing ritual involved grooming to prepare the body for vesting. In particular, liturgical combs like the one mentioned in the *Summula* were typically reserved for use before Mass as well as at ordination rituals for bishops. These combs could be beautifully

⁷⁰¹ Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 80, Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 113.

⁷⁰² “Sacerdos enim sacrificium Deo oblaturus primo manus et faciem lauat, per quem locionem significatur locio interior, que fit per cordis contricionem.” in *Summula* fol. 39r, in Sundmark, *Teologi För Praktiskt Bruk*, 112.

⁷⁰³ «Når presten gjør seg klar til messa, vaskar han seg nøye, og i det er det eit merke på at det er nødvendig for han å vaske seg i anger og gode gjerningar, om han skal tene Gud. Det at han kjemmer seg, er et teikn på at han skal greie ut tankane sine til Gud. Hovudet er et teikn på hjartet og håret på tankane.» in Kristin Norseth, ed., *Messuskýringar: Norrøne messeforklaringer i norsk oversettelse: Festskrift til Førsteamanuensis Jan H. Schumacher*, trans. Elise Kleivane (Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2014), 95. From manuscript AM 238 XXXVI fol, dated to c. 1400 century Iceland. See also page 166 - 167 for more information about this manuscript.

carved, as witnessed by a bone comb with facing animal heads found during excavations at Herøy Church in Northern Norway (fig. 6.2).⁷⁰⁴ Notably, Icelandic inventories mention liturgical combs among the altar equipment.⁷⁰⁵

In the *Summula*, as in most Priest Books, the first garment was called an amice (*amicus*, *ephod*, *superhumeralis*, *humeralis*), and comprised of a white linen rectangle with ties wrapped around the neck and shoulders to protect the other vestments from the wearer's skin and sweat.⁷⁰⁶ The vestment's name derives from Latin *amicus*, meaning 'wrapped around', denoting the textile's wrapping around the upper body and head of the priest.⁷⁰⁷ When the amice was pushed back, it created a visible collar over the other vestments (fig. 6.1). This noticeable part of the textile would sometimes have embroidered or woven décor called apparels. Apparels (from Latin *apparare*, to clothe or prepare) are small, rectangular panels or woven cloth or embroideries that often embellish the top of the amice, and they are also found on the cuffs and bottom of the alb or the dalmatic.⁷⁰⁸ From the description listed in the Icelandic inventories, amices were often embellished with precious silks, woven patterns or gold embroidery.⁷⁰⁹ In the panel painting of *The Mass of St Gregory with Cardinal Albrecht* attributed to the Cranach workshop, c. 1520 – 1525, the vestments worn by Pope Gregory include an amice embroidered with pearls and silk displaying two angels holding up the Veil of Veronica, demonstrating the material splendour that could go into the embellishment of the amice as a collar (fig. 5.1).⁷¹⁰ Both the Icelandic Exposition of the Mass and *Summula* describe the amice as a helmet of faith, referencing Eph 6:17.⁷¹¹ Since it was wrapped around the neck and throat, the amice also signified pure speech and that the priest should refrain from slander.⁷¹² Durand states that even

⁷⁰⁴ Now in the NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet collections, inv. No. T18223b.

⁷⁰⁵ Fredrik B Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen* (Kristiania: Grøndahl, 1910), 87 – 88. For example, «kyrkiukombur»: Ås k II 429.

⁷⁰⁶ Roger Reynolds E., "VI. Clerical Liturgical Vestments and Liturgical Colors in the Middle Ages," in *Clerics in the Early Middle Ages. Hierarchy and Image*, ed. Roger Reynolds E., Variorum Collected Studies Series 669 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 1, and Joseph Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient: Nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendungs- und Symbolik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1907), 21 – 22.

⁷⁰⁷ D. P. Simpson (ed.), *Casell's Latin Dictionary: Latin – English, English – Latin* (London: Casell, 1977) 40.

⁷⁰⁸ Apparels are defined as "a stiffened, decorated (often embroidered) panel or strip made separately but then stitched to an ecclesiastical garment such as an alb, amice or dalmatic" in Elizabeth Coatsworth and Gale Owen-Crocker, *Clothing the Past: Surviving Garments from Early Medieval to Early Modern Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 431.

⁷⁰⁹ *bunadr, baldskrin, gullhlad* in Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 122.

⁷¹⁰ The panel painting belongs to the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, exhibited in Staatsgalerie im Schloss Johannisburg, Aschaffenburg.

⁷¹¹ Norseth, *Messuskyringar*, 95, and Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 114.

⁷¹² *Summula* fol. 39r-v in Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 114. See also Durandus and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 114. Norseth, *Messuskyringar*, 95. According to Durand, the voice was located in the neck, in *On the Clergy and Their Vestments: A New Translation of Books 2-3 of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (Scranton, Pa: Scranton University Press, 2010), 144.

though the amice was the first of all of the layers of priestly clothing, it was “superior to all of them because chastity must at the same time be deep within the heart and shine outwardly in works”.⁷¹³ Thus, the garment stood to signify chastity and continence.⁷¹⁴

Few amices are preserved, but one example from Uppsala Cathedral is on display in the church treasury (figs. 6.3 and 6.4; cat.no. 19). The Uppsala Amice is made of a white linen rectangle with a narrow, embroidered apparel along the middle of the upper edge.⁷¹⁵ Simple tie strings are attached to the upper corners; these are now torn and would originally have been much longer.⁷¹⁶ These bands could be wrapped around the chest in a cross shape, folded over the back, and then tied around the waist, as illustrated in figure 6.1. The embroidered band would have been visible as a collar over the chasuble, and is embellished with hinged silver-gilt plates, freshwater pearls, precious stones and loop-braided and woven ribbons (fig. 6.4). The embroidery on the Uppsala Amice is a vivid example of the complexity of the textile materiality of late-medieval vestments: the pearl embroideries are particularly striking, with freshwater pearls attached to thin metal wires to construct three-dimensional petals surrounding a core of precious stones mimicking amethysts and rubies. These stones are encased in cross-shaped flowers of gilded silver, sewn onto the surface with tiny stitches in red silk. The loop-braided band is made of gold- and silk threads with precious pearls.⁷¹⁷ The ornamental and florid embroideries are characteristic of fifteenth-century Vadstena work, and the amice embroideries were probably made by the nuns in the 1430s.⁷¹⁸

With its three-dimensional and varied surface, the embroidery embodies core qualities of medieval aesthetics, characterised by Mary Carruthers as a “multisensory, cross-modal expression and strongly opposing formal values,” and by Paul Binski as a “crafted and pragmatic mixture”.⁷¹⁹ The Uppsala Amice surface is an assemblage of different materials and

⁷¹³ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 144.

⁷¹⁴ Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 114. See also Durandus and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 143 – 144.

⁷¹⁵ The linen cloth measures one meter in breadth and fifty-six centimetres in height and is woven in fine linen. Agnes Branting, “Några Meddelanden Om Svenska Mässkläder,” *Fornvännen* (1910): 173 – 174. See also Inger Estham, “Textilsamlingen från 1300-Talet till 1860-talet,” in *Uppsala Domkyrka, V. Inredning och inventarier*, ed. Herman Bengtsson (Växjö: Upplandsmuseet, 2010), 264 – 267.

⁷¹⁶ Agnes Branting estimated that each band originally would have measured around 1,25 meters. Branting, “Några Meddelanden,” 173.

⁷¹⁷ The embroidery measures 8 x 39 centimetres.

⁷¹⁸ Branting and Lindblom argued that this amice was made by Vadstena nuns for archbishop Jakob Ulvsson for the great church feat at Vadstena in 1489, while Geijer attributed the textile to Albertus Pictor’s workshop in Stockholm at the same time.⁷¹⁸ However, it is more likely that the textile was made at Vadstena earlier in the fifteenth century for the Uppsala Archbishop Jöns Håkansson (1422 – 1431) as argued by Inger Estham, possibly for the inauguration of Vadstena abbey church in 1430.

⁷¹⁹ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48, Paul Binski, *Gothic Sculpture* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2019), 139.

techniques including metalwork, weaving and embroidery, skillfully combined to strikingly embellish the cleric's garment. Much like the chasuble discussed later in this chapter, the amice's apparel adorned the dorsal side of the vested priest, establishing a visual focal point for the laity when the priest administered the sacrament with his back turned to the nave. This polyfocal and shimmering embellishment sought to engage the lay viewer when the priest himself was disengaging, singing Mass with a low voice and performing the secret mysteries of the eucharistic ceremony. The Uppsala Amice exemplifies the most embellished and precious of such linen vestments, a type presumably reserved for bishops and wealthier churches. Further evidence for the presence of richly adorned amices is found in a post-medieval inventory of vestments from Trondheim Cathedral, which lists an amice with embroideries in precious stones and another one with gold embroidered bands.⁷²⁰

Following the amice in the vesting ritual, the priest dressed himself in the alb (*alba*, *camisa*, *camisus*), a white and long tunic coming down to the ankles (fig. 6.1).⁷²¹ Durand describes how the alb "covers the body from top to bottom".⁷²² As the Latin name *alba*, or white, suggests, albs were expected to be white and the two examples discussed below are notably made of linen.⁷²³ The parts of the alb that would have been visible when the priest wore his chasuble on top – the lower front of the garment and the areas close to the wrists could be decorated with applied apparels similar to the ones found on the amice.

Albs with embroidered apparels are known from late-medieval depictions and documentary sources. In the fourteenth-century painted altar panel known as the Kvæfjord frontal, the bishop wears a long white alb embellished with a large apparel embroidered in red, yellow (perhaps gold) and black at the bottom front of the garment.⁷²⁴ Similarly, the bishop saints depicted on the early fifteenth-century embroidered altar frontal from Hólar Cathedral in Iceland all wear long white albs with applied décor in red and green (fig. 4.7). In addition to embroideries, the apparels could be embellished with gold, silk or pearls like the "messuserk med pell" listed in the Ylmheim inventory.⁷²⁵ Another arresting feature of medieval albs can be

⁷²⁰ «Noch een capitaell mit gesteente. Noch een capitell mit eenen vergulden boert ladewerck.» in Audun Dybdahl (ed.), *Nidaros Domkirkes og geistlighets kostbarheter: belyst ved 17 skriftlige kilder 1307-1577 med oversettelser og kommentarer* (Trondheim: Tapir, 2002), 127.

⁷²¹ Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung*, 57 – 61, Reynolds "Clerical Liturgical Vestments," 2.

⁷²² Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and their Vestments*, 148.

⁷²³ There might have been some exceptions to this rule; when the grave of Bishop Anders Sunesson (1201 – 1224) of Lund, Sweden, was opened in the 1830s he was found buried in a white silk alb, with pleats decorated with silk bands. Only fragments are preserved today. However, these fragments (although being described as fragments of an alb in literature) might have been from a dalmatic or over-tunic and not an alb.

⁷²⁴ Inv. no. C3221, KHM

⁷²⁵ DN XV nr 8

gleaned from these depictions, namely their voluminous shape. In the Hólar Frontal, the albs are all heavily folded, indicating great width and ample fabric. The few preserved medieval albs generally confirm that this vestment was of great width and length, with a circumference of up to six metres at the lower hem.⁷²⁶ This large amount of fabric created a billowing effect when the albs were gathered around the waist with a tied belt, allowing the priest to hike the fabric over the cord in order to adjust the length.⁷²⁷

Medieval liturgists assigned great importance to the materiality of albs. Durand states that the alb was made of white linen or Egyptian cotton to display purity, referencing Eccl 9:8 “At all times, may your vestments be white”.⁷²⁸ Moreover, Durand references the laborious process of making white linen, which “acquires a brightness that it does not have by nature” through thrashing the flax fibres and other human actions that produced the finely woven and white surfaces. As discussed in Chapter Four, the process of manufacture was considered a symbol of the purity of man, who could only obtain grace through the “practice of good works”.⁷²⁹ This moralistic interpretation of the alb’s materiality is repeated in the Swedish *Summula*, demonstrating that the material associations with purity and chastity were known in Scandinavia.⁷³⁰ Linen maintained a specific religious significance because of its close associations with the life and Passion of Christ, and due to biblical references to white linen clothing God and the angels. Thus, the wearing of white linen reinforced that the priest was clothed in the image of Christ.⁷³¹ However, the material significance of white linen vestments was also rooted in their aesthetics, in the *cleness* of the white surfaces, described by Durand as a “splendour of its dazzling brilliance” that made the vested priest “shine outwardly” as he entered the church.⁷³²

Since the alb represented the spiritual rebirth of the priest as he dressed in preparation for Mass, the garment became an important visual, spiritual and physical marker of the sacred body. In the Swedish *Summula*, a vestment prayer is given for the priest to recite: “Undress me, Lord, of the old human and all his deeds and dress me as a new man, created in God’s image.”⁷³³ As the priest was clothed in the alb, he was simultaneously “undressed” of his sins and recreated

⁷²⁶ Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung*, 77 – 78.

⁷²⁷ Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 86.

⁷²⁸ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 147.

⁷²⁹ Durand and Thibodeau, 147.

⁷³⁰ Sundmark, *Teologi För Praktiskt Bruk*, 113.

⁷³¹ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 149.

⁷³² Durand and Thibodeau, 147 – 148.

⁷³³ “Exue me, Domine, veterem hominem cum auctibus suis, et indue me nouum hominem, qui secundum Deum creates est” *Summula* fol. 39r. in Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 113.

as a new man in the image of God. According to Durand, the alb therefore symbolised chastity and purity.⁷³⁴

What is more, the symbolic and moralistic meanings given to vestments in Priest Books and other liturgical texts often reflected the physical shape and form of the garments themselves. For instance, the Icelandic exposition of the Mass states that the garment was voluminous to signify a full heart making room for good deeds.⁷³⁵ Moreover, the voluminous shape of the alb symbolised that the priest should have ample space in his heart for good deeds and a chaste life, and the length came to signal strength and perseverance.⁷³⁶ According to the old Swedish treatise *De Siw Sacramenten* (The Seven Sacraments) the apparels represented the wounds of Christ, underlining the associations with Christ's body and sacrifice.⁷³⁷ Embellishments worked in red, such as the ones depicted in Kvæfjord, would emphasise this Christological symbolism. Following the definition of white linen as the Flesh of Christ discussed in Chapter Four, the priest was essentially clothed in Christ, and the embellished apparels referencing Christ's wounds enhanced this clothing rhetoric. The Lund Alb has sections of blue linen, but medieval pictorial depictions such as the Hólar and Kvæfjord frontals show bishops wearing albs with more elaborate apparels in red and gold embroideries emphasising the symbolic correlations to the five wounds of Christ.

Two linen albs are preserved from medieval Scandinavia; one is now located in the Lund Cathedral Museum and the other is originally from Forsby Church, now in the History Museum in Stockholm.⁷³⁸ These two examples represent a group of liturgical clothing that was worn by all clergy, from deacons to bishops. Larger churches and cathedrals would have had sizable collections of albs, as even the small stave church at Ylmheim in Norway owned nine albs with embellished apparels in the fourteenth century.⁷³⁹ Due to their daily wear and continued use after the Reformation, these vestments were worn-out and are rarely preserved. Both the Lund and Forsby albs have linen gores inserted under the arms to create ample folds of fabric on the sides of the garments (figs. 6.5 and 6.6).⁷⁴⁰ The Lund Alb has long and tapered arms with apparels made of blue linen applied to the cuffs and the lower front. The alb has been

⁷³⁴ Durandus and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 147.

⁷³⁵ Norseth, *Messuskyringar*, 95.

⁷³⁶ On the shape, see Norseth, 95, and on length: Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 113.

⁷³⁷ Sundmark, 113, Sam. Henning, *Stælinna Thrøst: Første Delin Aff the Bokinne Som Kallas Stælinna Thrøst*, Samlingar, Svenska Fornskrift-Sällskapet (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1954), 60.

⁷³⁸ The Forsby alb has inv. no. 34883, SHM, the Lund Alb is in the Lund Cathedral Museum.

⁷³⁹ DN XV nr 8. In addition to these nine albs with silks and embroideries, the church also owned two older linen sarks; "slopparforner".

⁷⁴⁰ The Lund Alb measures 169 centimetres in length, and 350 centimetres in width at the lower hem. The Forsby alb has shape as the Lund Alb.

C-14 dated to between 1320 and 1415 (cat.no. 20).⁷⁴¹ The Forsby alb has a similar shape to the Lund Alb, but is less well preserved and has been C-14 dated to the first half of the fifteenth century.⁷⁴² The Forsby garment is well sewn with attention to details such as the meticulously executed hem at the shoulders, but is not decorated.

In the case of the Lund Alb, marks of corrosion form patterns that were likely made during storage, and the relatively good condition of the garment suggests that it was kept for several hundred years after it went out of use, until it was given to the museum in the mid-nineteenth century.⁷⁴³ Indeed, among the few preserved albs from medieval Europe there are several examples of garments regarded as a contact relics or particularly sacred vestments that were kept in the church's treasury. In many cases, the surviving examples were connected in some way to especially holy members of a cathedral's past or to saints.⁷⁴⁴ The Lund Alb has been connected to a 1468 letter from the Danish King Christian I where he requests a "sark" from the church (*ænsærckvdi ether kirkæ*) that could help women in childbed.⁷⁴⁵ We do not know if the Lund Alb is the holy 'sark' requested by King Christian, but the C-14 dating confirms that the garment predates the letter by at least fifty years and could very well have been in Lund Cathedral at that time.⁷⁴⁶ Despite this lack of certainty, the careful treatment and post-medieval survival implies that this was no ordinary garment but a revered object.

⁷⁴¹ Margareta Nockert and Göran Possnert, *Att datera textilier* (Stockholm: Gidlund, 2002), 67.

⁷⁴² Unpublished archival documents from SHM museum provided to me during research visit.

⁷⁴³ Emma Malmqvist, "Skjortan från Lunds Domkyrka – en jämförande studie mellan den liturgiska mässskjortan och den profana särken under senmedeltid" (Master's thesis, Lund University, 2008), 10.

⁷⁴⁴ The Lucera Alb, now in Museo Diocesano in Lucera, Italy, may have been made to commemorate the venerated Bishop Blessed Augustin Kažotić (1260 – 3 August 1323). Coatsworth and Owen-Crocker, *Clothing the Past*, 193 – 195. Another example is an alb attributed to St Bernulph of Utrecht, now in the Museum Catharijneconvent. Coatsworth and Owen-Crocker, 183. A late twelfth-century alb in Basilica de Sancta Maria Maggiore in Rome has a label identifying the garment with St Thomas Becket. The label is, however, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. Coatsworth and Owen-Crocker, 179

⁷⁴⁵ Malmqvist, "Skjortan från Lunds domkyrka," 10. Expecting his first child with his new queen Dorothea of Brandenburg, King Christian was eagerly waiting for an heir and wanted to make sure that the delivery would go well. Clothing were among the most common contact relics, believed to inhibit some of the healing virtues of the holy women or men who had worn the garment. According to Robert Bartlett, tunics or cloaks that could be worn or laid around the body were particularly appropriate for helping women in childbirth, preferably those of the ruling classes. Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 246.

⁷⁴⁶ Previous research has argued that the Lund Alb is in fact the miraculous 'sark' and suggested that it was believed to have belonged to a female saint. However, the voluminous shape corresponds well with other medieval albs and it is unlikely that the garment was originally a chemise worn by a female.

6.2 Minor Vestments: the Girdle, Stole and Maniple

The textiles referenced in the next stages of the vesting ritual include the girdle, stole and maniple. These can be described collectively as “minor vestments,” using a term employed by Elizabeth Coatsworth and Gale Owen-Crocker to indicate vestments that are not items of dress, but “nevertheless insignia of diaconal and priestly (sometimes specifically episcopal) office”.⁷⁴⁷

As mentioned above, the voluminous alb required a belt in order to be worn. This ecclesiastical girdle was a long narrow belt called a cincture (*cingulum, zona, baltheus*).⁷⁴⁸ It could be made of elaborate silk bands or tablet woven bands and was tied firmly around the waist, often with fringes or tassels at the ends.⁷⁴⁹ The practical function was underlined in the Icelandic exposition of the Mass, which described how the belt prevented the priest from stumbling in his wide alb. Symbolically, the belt stood for the priest’s resolution to control his earthly desires.⁷⁵⁰ Durand merged both the practical and the symbolic functions, stating: “this is done lest the priest’s steps be impeded by the loose vestments falling, so that the chastity of the priest, signified by the alb, is not destroyed when struck by some outside stimulus.”⁷⁵¹ The Swedish *Summula* explained that since the girdle was tied around the lower back of the priest (*lumbos sacerdotis*) where the sexual desires were believed to lie, it represented the righteousness and ability to control the priest’s desires and help him live chastely.

After the alb was tied at the waist with the girdle, the priest draped his stole around his neck.⁷⁵² The fringed stole (*orarium*) was around five to ten centimetres in breadth and could measure almost three metres in length.⁷⁵³ This long band was crossed in front of the chest and slipped under the belt (*cingulum*) in order to fasten the vestment. Deacons and sub-deacons wore the stole differently, one using the textile as a sash-like belt draped over the left shoulder and the other crossing it diagonally over the breast.⁷⁵⁴ When worn crossed over the chest, the stole was an important marker of priestly office, since many liturgical rituals were performed without the chasuble.⁷⁵⁵ Durand underlines that the priest cannot “baptize, bless, or do other

⁷⁴⁷ Coatsworth and Owen-Crocker, *Clothing the Past*, 309.

⁷⁴⁸ Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung*, 101 - 102, Reynolds, “Clerical Liturgical Vestments,” 2-3.

⁷⁴⁹ Braun, 114 and Branting, “Några meddelanden om svenska mässkläder,” 171.

⁷⁵⁰ Norseth, *Messuskýringar*, 95. See also Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 115.

⁷⁵¹ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 151.

⁷⁵² Note that in some priests’ books, there are entries for the dalmatic or tunicella at this point, but the *Summula* proceeds to the stole. The dalmatic will be discussed in the following chapter, this chapter follows the structure of the *Summula* focusing on the vesting of the bishop.

⁷⁵³ Reynolds, “Clerical Liturgical Vestments,” 6-7, Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung*, 597.

⁷⁵⁴ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 156.

⁷⁵⁵ See below the discussion of chasuble. The distinction between how stoles were worn by deacons and priests is evident in the ordination ritual, discussed later in this chapter.

things of this sort that require prayer (...) without the *orarium* [the stole]”.⁷⁵⁶ Thus, the stole was closely associated with administering the sacraments.

The stole signified the “gentle yoke of the Lord”.⁷⁵⁷ As the priest put it around his neck, and when he removed it, he kissed the garment to express his desire to subject himself to God. A vestment prayer found in the *Linköping brevarium* describes the vestment as a “stole of justice” that will cleanse the priest’s mind.⁷⁵⁸ The Swedish *Summula* states that the priest should remind himself of Christ’s Passion and his urge to live in imitation of Christ’s model when he crossed the stole over his chest.⁷⁵⁹

In both the Kvæfjord and the Hólar Frontal, the stole is represented as long enough to show under the chasuble. Fragments of fifteenth-century stoles confirm that they were indeed long enough to reach below the priest’s upper garments. For instance, a stole re-purposed as an orphrey cross on a chasuble from Vansö Church, Sweden, was originally 2.78 metres long.⁷⁶⁰ As was common for late-medieval stoles, the bands broadened at the ends to form a trapezoid shape. These decorative ends, called terminals, were often decorated with embroideries and fringes. In the Vansö Stole, the trapezoid terminals are embroidered with heraldic shields showing the coat of arms of Strängnäs Cathedral and Bishop Kort (Conrad) Rogge (1479 – 1501).⁷⁶¹ Stole terminals decorated with embroidery, fringes, tassels or bells highlighted the most visible part of this long vestment.⁷⁶²

After draping the stole over his shoulders, the priest put a maniple over his left forearm. The maniple (*mappula*, *sudarium*, *fanon*, *manuale*) was a narrow band measuring five to ten centimetres wide that was folded over the arm to fall in equal lengths on both sides.⁷⁶³ Sometimes it is also described as a *sudarium*, referencing its original usage as a napkin for wiping sweat off the priest’s face. The idea of the maniple as a face cloth related it to the Veil

⁷⁵⁶ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 157.

⁷⁵⁷ Durand and Thibodeau, 155. See also Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 155.

⁷⁵⁸ Sven Helander et al., *Mässa i Medeltida Socken* (Skellefteå: Artos bokförlag, 2006) 15. Main source for this discussion was *Missale Lincopense*, A. 97, National Library of Sweden, Stockholm.

⁷⁵⁹ Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 116.

⁷⁶⁰ Branting, “Några Meddelanden Om Svenska Mässkläder,” 183. According to Agnes Branting, this represent a normal length for late fifteenth-century stoles.

⁷⁶¹ Branting, 183.

⁷⁶² Fragments of a patterned red silk velvet stole from Uppsala Cathedral (late fifteenth century) have similar trapezoid terminals, a common feature of late-medieval stoles. Estham, “Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-talet,” 286. A preserved but very worn stole from Sigtuna have traces of gold and silk ornaments resembling lacework on a purple velvet background, see Agnes Branting “Medeltida stola med knypplad ornering,” *Fataburen* (1907): 232 – 233.

⁷⁶³ Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung*, 517, Reynolds, “Clerical Liturgical Vestments,” 6. The maniple could be fastened around the wrist with stitches, creating a loop in which the arm could slide into, or with bands and needles. On the fastening of maniple, see Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 536.

of Veronica, one of the most important textile relics in the western medieval church.⁷⁶⁴ However, by the late Middle Ages this utilitarian function was entirely lost, and the vestment was highly ornate and embellished with colourful silks, pearls and precious stones. Contrary to its practical origin, the vestment could be quite unpractical as it could fall into the chalice and cause wine to spill. Still, it was of high symbolic importance as it presented the cleric as a servant with the maniple as a ‘napkin’ to prepare the eucharistic table.

According to Durand, the maniple should remind the priest to be vigilant, and wipe off the “sweat of the soul” and the “drowsiness of the heart” in order to stay awake and do good work.⁷⁶⁵ In the Swedish *Summula*, the priest is encouraged to think about his rewards in Heaven when the work is hard (Matt 5:12, Luk 6:23), and the sweat wiped off with the maniple was a symbol of the hardworking priest.⁷⁶⁶ In the Icelandic exposition of Mass, this symbolism is extended to represent the hard work required for every man, so that he must never be idle.⁷⁶⁷ Wearing the maniple on the left hand symbolised that the left side was associated with worldly things; the priest was bound to the worldly but prepared for the Heavenly, represented by his right side.⁷⁶⁸

Only fragmentary maniples, some of which were reused in other forms of vestments, are preserved from the period considered within this dissertation.⁷⁶⁹ An intriguing case of the re-use of medieval stoles and maniples is found in an altar frontal from an unknown church in Gotland, Sweden, made of a series of narrow gold and silk-brocades with trapezoid terminals.⁷⁷⁰ Written sources, however, describe the volume of maniples that once existed. As late as 1652, Uppsala Cathedral owned forty-four stoles and maniples, many of which were reused as cinctures. The Icelandic inventories often describe stoles and maniples made of materials like golden brocades and silk embroideries.⁷⁷¹ An inventory of the private chapel of Blanche of Namur, Queen of Sweden and Norway, lists a stole and maniple of ‘heathen cloth,’ possibly matching the chasuble of heathen cloth mentioned in the same inventory.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁴ Veronicas veil is discussed in Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 78 – 79.

⁷⁶⁵ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 159.

⁷⁶⁶ Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 117.

⁷⁶⁷ Norseth, *Messuskýringar*, 96.

⁷⁶⁸ Sundmark, *Teologi För Praktiskt Bruk*, 117. See also Durand, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 160.

⁷⁶⁹ An Opus Anglicanum maniple from around 1300 is preserved in the Uppsala Cathedral treasury. Estham, «Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-Talet,» 246 – 249. See also Branting, «Några meddelanden om svenska mässkläder,» 181 – 182.

⁷⁷⁰ Branting, «Några meddelanden om svenska mässkläder,» 185. Now in Gotland’s museum, Magasin Visborg.

⁷⁷¹ Wallem, *De Islandske kirkers udstyr i middelalderen*, 122.

⁷⁷² «Jtem stola ok manipulum med hæidin stykki wræit til» DN III 344.

As this study argues, the layering of textiles elevated the sanctity of the wrapped and concealed contents, conjuring connections between the sacred and the secret.⁷⁷³ In particular, the layering of vestments also elevated the cleric as a way to signify opulence.⁷⁷⁴ If we look at medieval depictions of clothed priests in the Kvæfjord and Hólar Frontals, we notice how each layered vestment is shown: the lappets of the stole peek out from below the chasuble, and the alb is voluminous and visible beneath the over-garments. The preserved albs examined in this study confirm that these garments could be very large, with a lower circumference of up to six meters. Gores and pleats added extra volume, so that a belt was required in order for the priest to be able to wear the garment. The amice is folded like a collar over the top of the chasuble, and the maniple decorates the arm and would move as the priest officiated the sacraments. The most visible parts of these ‘under-vestments,’ the collar of the amice, the bottom and arms of the alb, and the lower part of the stole, were often more richly decorated.

Embellishments on the minor vestments are focused on areas that would have been visible when worn under the chasuble. Thus, the visual display of vested clerics hinted towards the complexity of their clothing, and to what was underneath and only partially visible. Although the vesting of priests was performed in the sacristy in a ‘private’ ritual, all of the garments were in fact visible to the laity. In contrast to the ‘hidden’ layers and layering, the donning of the chasuble, the final stage of vesting for Mass, was a public ritual occurring in the middle of the larger Mass.

6.3 The Chasuble

To summarise, when the priest entered the choir to initiate the service, he wore the amice, alb, girdle, stole and maniple. The first part of the Mass, the sprinkling of holy water or the *aspergillum*, was therefore performed without the chasuble. The priest then robed himself in the chasuble (*planeta, casula*), a highly symbolic vestment.⁷⁷⁵ When the chasuble was put on, the amice was pushed back to create a collar over the vestment. In general, the chasuble was reserved for the eucharistic celebration and hence taken off for the reading of sermons. In the re-creation of Sunday Mass at Endre Church discussed previously in this study, the priest disrobes himself of the chasuble before approaching the opening in the choir screen to begin

⁷⁷³ As discussed in Chapter Three.

⁷⁷⁴ Marzia Cataldi Gallo, “Sacred Vestments: Color and Form,” in *Heavenly Bodies. Fashion and the Catholic Imagination*, ed. Andrew Bolton, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 20.

⁷⁷⁵ Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient*, 154, and Reynolds, “Clerical Liturgical Vestments,” 5.

his sermon. The chasuble is carefully folded and put on the right side of the altar.⁷⁷⁶ After having finished the sermon, the priest again puts on the chasuble to proceed with the eucharistic liturgy.⁷⁷⁷ Thus, the public donning of the chasuble signified the initiation of the holiest part of the Mass: the consecration and elevation of bread and wine.

In the Swedish *Summula*, the chasuble stood for love and charity.⁷⁷⁸ This symbolism is echoed in a late fifteenth-century vesting prayer for the chasuble in a Brevarium from Linköping, Sweden, describing the chasuble as “the ornament of humility, love and peace”.⁷⁷⁹ The prayer employs clothing rhetoric to describe how the priest prays to be “clothed in humility, love and peace,” “clothed in justice” and “undressed of my vices”.⁷⁸⁰ Since the chasuble represented the final stage of vesting, the garment symbolically encompassed all the virtues represented by the layers underneath. Or as Durand describes, the chasuble stands as the fulfilment of all of the other vestments: it covers them and contains them within itself.⁷⁸¹ Thus, the chasuble garment covered and enclosed all of the other vestments like a ‘little house,’ referencing the Latin term *casula*.⁷⁸² In the Icelandic exposition of the Mass it is similarly described as a “tent on top of the other vestments”.⁷⁸³ The idea of the chasuble as a tent or a ‘little house’ can be seen as a metaphor of the chasuble as the final layer of vesting, enclosing all of the other vestments.

Chasubles were often made of silks and velvets with embroidered bands called orphreys arranged as crosses, fork-shaped crosses or pillars down the dorsal (back) side of the vestment. In the fifteenth century, chasubles had changed from a full bell-shape to the slightly narrower silhouette illustrated in fig. 6.7. In the sixteenth century, chasubles were given an even narrower shape and often cut by the shoulders. This gradual change in form can be linked to liturgical, functional and material concerns.⁷⁸⁴ A narrower shape would lighten the physical weight of the

⁷⁷⁶ Helander et al., *Mässa i Medeltida Socken*, 26.

⁷⁷⁷ Helander et al., 27.

⁷⁷⁸ Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 117.

⁷⁷⁹ Knut Peters, ed., *Breviarium Lincopense. Fasciculus I. Ex Unica Editione 1493*, vol. 1 (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1950), 28. See also Durandus and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 163; Norseth, *Messuskýringar*, 96.

⁷⁸⁰ Peters, *Breviarium Lincopense*, 28: “Indue me domine ornamenta humilitatis charitatis et pacis vt vndique munitus virtutibus possim resistere vicijs hostibus mentis et corporis. Fac me queso deus omnipotens: ita iusticia induit sanctorum tuorum me rear exultation letari. Quatinuse mundatus a sordibus peccatorum meorum consortium habere me re artibiplaceantium sacerdotum me que deus pia tua gratia ab omnibus vicijsexuat. Quem reatus pro prieconscientie grauatur. Per.”

⁷⁸¹ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 163.

⁷⁸² Durand and Thibodeau, 163

⁷⁸³ Norseth, *Messuskýringar*, 96.

⁷⁸⁴ Some scholars have argued that chasuble designs with embroidered dorsal crosses and less fabric over the arms was a consequence of the renewed focus on eucharistic presence and the elevation. Designs favouring a

garment as the priest lifted his arms to elevate the consecrated bread and wine. Another factor influencing this gradual shift in chasuble designs is the late-medieval taste for complex silks and velvets as the background fabric for the garment. Complex velvets were stiffer and did not drape as easily as the silks and linen fabric of earlier vestments. Since these textiles were not suited for embroideries, embroidered imagery was focused in bands arranged as Latin or fork-shaped crosses on the dorsal side of the garment, comparable to the embroidered bands of the altar frontals as discussed in Chapter Four .

Chasubles stand unparalleled as the largest group of preserved vestments from medieval Scandinavia. Many chasubles continued to be used for centuries after the Reformation, although post-medieval repairs or alterations are common.⁷⁸⁵ Chasubles are still used by priests in the Evangelical Lutheran churches of Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, and are perhaps the one liturgical garment from the medieval system of layered vestments that is still familiar for most Scandinavians to this day. The materials, shape and embellishments of medieval chasubles varied greatly and a comprehensive review of the broad visual language of late-medieval chasubles is beyond the scope of this dissertation. In order to survey the material and select case studies for further discussion, a table of seventy-six preserved chasubles with dorsal orphreys was assembled based on chasubles dated c. 1400 – 1550 in the collections of major museums and cathedral treasuries across Scandinavia.⁷⁸⁶ Examples where the orphreys are re-used from either dalmatics or copes are excluded, since the iconography of these embroideries was composed for a different vestimentary context than the chasuble.⁷⁸⁷

The statistics presented in Table 2 reveal that the majority of orphrey imagery has a strong eucharistic focus. The imagery can be divided into two main groups: images of Christ, mainly the Crucifixion, as well as ornamental crosses (thirty-four examples) and Marian iconography (twenty-nine examples).⁷⁸⁸ These motifs are located at the centre of the cross and are often combined with images of angels or saints in the cross arms or at the cross foot. The remaining seventeen percent of the chasuble designs include examples of crosses or bands with

large embroidered dorsal image provided a strong visual focal point for the laity at this crucial moment in the liturgy, when the priest administered the sacrament with his back turned against the laity.

⁷⁸⁵ For instance, all three of the chasubles discussed in detail in the following, the Bremnes Orphrey, the Uppsala Chasuble and the Århus Chasuble underwent post-medieval alterations.

⁷⁸⁶ Finnish examples are not included in this table, surveying this material was beyond the scope of this study. However, desk studies of preserved chasubles in Finnish collections indicate that the iconography of dorsal cross orphreys reflect the main motifs as presented in the table; mainly Marian motifs or Crucifixion scenes.

⁷⁸⁷ This table is not exhaustive but builds on surveyed collections from main museums and cathedral treasuries as mapped out in the Introduction. Chasubles preserved in situ in parish churches and smaller regional museums were excluded.

⁷⁸⁸ For example, chasubles from Enåker SHM:34349.13 and Umeå SHM: 4000.

saints in architectural niches.⁷⁸⁹ The eucharistic symbolism of orphreys was not only communicated through iconography, but also through their materiality. In the following section, the concept of chasubles and orphrey embroideries as eucharistic images will be discussed with three case studies chosen from the examples presented in Table 2: the Bremnes Orphrey, the Marian Chasuble from Uppsala, and the Århus Chasuble.

Embroidered images of the Crucifixion were among the most common motifs of late-medieval chasuble orphreys, as shown in the thirty-four examples presented in Table 2.⁷⁹⁰ Motifs vary from the single figure of Christ on the Cross to complex assemblies including Mary Magdalene hugging the cross foot, the Virgin and John the Apostle mourning Christ, and eucharistic angels holding vessels to collect blood from Christ's wounds. Orphrey images were the chasuble's main focal point. At the moment of elevation, when the people in the church focused their gaze towards the elevated God-Host, they simultaneously looked towards the back of the priest as he lifted his arms to display the consecrated bread. Since the priest administered the sacrament with his back towards the nave, the chasuble became what Barbara Eggert described as a "pictorial code", a substitute for words and actions the laity could neither hear or see.⁷⁹¹ This context provides a starting point for interpreting the typical iconography of dorsal crucifix orphrey embroideries. One such example is found in the embroidered orphrey from Bremnes Church in Western Norway.

6.3.1 The Bremnes Orphrey

The late-medieval embroideries of the Bremnes Chasuble are unique examples of intricate needlework with beads of glass, coral and freshwater pearls still preserved (fig. 6.8; cat.no. 21). Stylistically dated to the first half of the fifteenth century, the Bremnes Chasuble challenges established scholarly understanding of medieval iconography and materiality. Only the orphrey is medieval, as it has been sewn onto a seventeenth-century silk damask chasuble. Fortunately, the cross-shaped orphrey was not cut to size during this post-medieval remodelling, preserving

⁷⁸⁹ For example, chasubles from Hedrum (OK 3699), Hölo (31142), Unknown church (Denmark, 12155).

⁷⁹⁰ Crucifixion scenes became the typical chasuble iconography throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Evelyn Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien III: Stickerie bis um 1500 und figürlich gewebte Borten* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2012), 299.

⁷⁹¹ Barbara M Eggert, "Performative Paramente. Zu Funktionen bildlicher darstellungen auf liturgischen Gewändern im Kontext des Messerituals (13. - 16. Jahrhundert)," in *Mode Und Bewegung: Beiträge Zur Theorie Und Geschichte der Kleidung*, ed. Anna-Brigitte Schlittler and Katharina Tietze, (Berlin: Edition Imorde, 2013), 116. Eggert here points not only to visual restrictions to the celebration of Mass, but also to the extensive use of Latin in medieval liturgies. On literacy in late-medieval Scandinavia, see Arved Nedkvitne, *The Social Consequences of Literacy in Medieval Scandinavia*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

the full length even though a piece of the band hangs down from the bottom of the garment.⁷⁹² The iconography depicts the crucified Christ above Saints Margaret and Andrew. Christ is shown leaning his head to the left, with small drops of blood dripping down his forehead. Each thorn in the crown is beautifully embroidered with tiny silk stitches in gradient colours from green to turquoise, and the yellow thorns terminate in bright red blood where they pierce the pale skin. Large nails secure Christ's hands to the green cross, marked by bright red blood that streams down from the wounds. The silk thread representing the blood stream has a remarkably vibrant red colour and is well preserved. On the orphrey, Christ's body is constructed in two layers of padded linen to create a striking three-dimensional effect. The crucifix is surrounded by gold embroidery where bundles of six to seven metal threads were secured to the ground fabric with stitches of red silk thread. The sinuous golden threads and the shiny red silk stitches result in a varied and shimmering surface that frames the crucified Christ. Both saints below the Crucifixion are embroidered directly onto the silk damask using fine silk stitches in many colours. Precious pearls, beads and gems are used throughout the embroidery.

In late-medieval chasuble orphreys, iconography and materiality work together to visualise the Eucharist during Mass.⁷⁹³ The precious materials in the Bremnes Orphrey provide splendour and dignity to the vestment, as was appropriate for textiles made in honour of God. In the Bremnes Orphrey, however, these materials reinforce and evoke the meaning of the iconography and the liturgical context of the vestment. As I have argued elsewhere, the materiality of coral and pearls helped to articulate the iconographical focus of the embroidery on this specific orphrey.⁷⁹⁴ Clusters of small coral beads and freshwater pearls are found above Christ's right arm and below his feet (fig. 6.9). Discussed in detail in Chapter Five, pearls could allude to the body of Christ and the Host. Coral beads were also a highly sought-after material for the embellishment of late-medieval liturgical textiles, as well as goldsmith work, rosaries and jewellery. Medieval coral was harvested from the Mediterranean, off the coasts of Africa and Spain, and had a deep red colour.⁷⁹⁵ Their vibrant red surfaces as well as ancient myths of

⁷⁹² The orphrey cross measures 46 cm in width, 126 cm in length and 10 cm in breadth.

⁷⁹³ Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien*, 301.

⁷⁹⁴ Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth, "Corals, Blood and Precious Pearls: The Materiality of a Late Medieval Textile," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 86, no. 3 (2017): 183.

⁷⁹⁵ This colour contrasts to the pinkish colour we often associate with corals today. For harvesting and trade of medieval coral from the Mediterranean basin, see: Shannon Kelley, "The King's Coral Body: A Natural History of Coral and the Post-Tragic Ecology of The Tempest," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 14 (2014): 119.

origin associated corals with blood.⁷⁹⁶ Believed to be neither animal nor plant, Pliny described how the coral magically transformed from soft to hard matter as it was harvested from the sea.⁷⁹⁷ This myth of petrification derives from the story of blood from Medusa's head streaming down to the ocean where it petrified into red corals.⁷⁹⁸ In Christian imagery, this red stone often signified petrified blood from Christ's Passion.⁷⁹⁹ Thus, the red corals and white pearls acted as material signification of the matter most central to the Crucifixion scene: flesh and blood, Host and wine. Eucharistic references are particularly evident in Crucifixion scenes where angels hold chalices to collect the blood streaming from Christ's wounds, such as a fifteenth-century chasuble from Uppsala Cathedral.⁸⁰⁰ In Bremnes, it can be argued that the large coral bead strategically placed above Christ's wound on his right arm and the clusters of small coral and pearl beads beneath his feet reference the same eucharistic theme, drawing attention to the wounds of Christ.

The Christ figure in the Bremnes embroidery was originally covered in tiny, white silk stitches following the lines of his body, which created a gleaming, three-dimensional surface and overall sculptural effect when combined with the layers of padded linen (fig. 6.10). The cross is embroidered in vibrant green silks in many shades, evoking the Tree of Life (*arbor vitae*). Evelyn Wetter argues that the combination of Christ as the Host (*corpus Christi*) and the Tree of Life, found in many fifteenth-century orphrey crucifixes, was a direct reference to the eucharistic liturgy.⁸⁰¹ Christ's white body, padded to create an illusion of flesh, together with the bright red stitches in his wounds, echoes the same material and eucharistic theme.

6.3.2 The Marian Chasuble of Uppsala

One of the most exquisite Marian chasuble embroideries is found in a late-medieval work from Uppsala Cathedral (fig. 6.11; cat.no. 22). Marian orphrey iconography could vary from a small and isolated embroidered figure of the Virgin and Child applied to an otherwise vegetal or florid

⁷⁹⁶ The entwining of coral matter and blood is evident in its medieval usage as a remedy against any sort of bleeding (including menstruation) according to Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals*, trans. D. Wyckoff (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 81.

⁷⁹⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. W.H.S. Jones, vol. VII (LCL 418), The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 477 and 479.

⁷⁹⁸ Magnus, *Book of Minerals*, 81.

⁷⁹⁹ As noted by Marcia R. Pointon, *Brilliant Effects: A Cultural History of Gemstones and Jewellery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 136.

⁸⁰⁰ The background fabric is a fifteenth-century brocade from Asia Minor. The dorsal orphrey cross has angles collecting the blood from Christ's wounds in chalices. See Estham, "Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-talet," 279 – 281.

⁸⁰¹ Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien*, 321.

embroidered cross orphrey, like in the Lunder Chasuble, to large narrative cycles with scenes from Mary's life, as in the chasuble from Uppsala.⁸⁰² Late-medieval images of Mary as Virgin (Annunciation, Mary and Elisabeth), the *Regina coeli* (Mary as Queen of Heaven, the Apocalyptic Madonna), *Sponsa Dei* (Mary as God's bride) and the Madonna or Virgin with Child are the most common types of Marian imagery found on chasubles.⁸⁰³ It is interesting to note that Marian iconography as a more devotional subject, such as the *Mater Dolorosa* or the *Pietà*, the *Madonna lactans* or the *Madonna Misericordia* (Virgin of Mercy, Schützmantelmadonna), is rarely found on these vestment embroideries.⁸⁰⁴

Due to the high quality of the needlework and the detailed and beautiful figural compositions, Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom describe the Marian Uppsala Chasuble as the most magnificent chasuble preserved from medieval Sweden.⁸⁰⁵ Agnes Geijer argues that the richness of these chasuble embroideries evoked the famous vestments of the Golden Fleece.⁸⁰⁶ The dorsal side does not have an orphrey band or cross following the typical chasuble design. Rather, the surface is entirely covered in elaborate raised work with gold threads, multi-coloured silks and, originally, a multitude of freshwater pearls (of which almost none are preserved). The main motif is a tall figure of the seated Crowned Virgin with Child surrounded by rays with the moon beneath her feet. This image of the Apocalyptic Virgin is surrounded by seven quatrefoils with scenes from the Joys of Mary: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, the Women at the Empty Tomb, the Ascension, the Coming of the Holy Spirit and the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin. At the bottom is an angel, which was partly cut off when the chasuble was shortened and altered in the late Middle Ages. The entire background is embroidered with golden roundels and red silk and lined with Chinese silk

⁸⁰² The Lunder Chasuble Orphrey may have been embroidered in Norway, but the applied fragment of the standing Virgin and Child is a Netherlandish work, from the early sixteenth century. See Helen Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud: middelalderske paramenter i Norge* (Oslo: Cammermeyers boghandel, 1941), 132. The Lunder chasuble is now in the National Museum in Oslo, inv. No. OK-10409.

⁸⁰³ For a discussion of the different types of Marian imagery, see Lasse Hodne, *The Virginity of the Virgin: A Study in Marian Iconography* (Roma: Scienze e Lettere, 2012), 97.

⁸⁰⁴ See brief description of Marian chasuble iconographies in Table 2.

⁸⁰⁵ Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader Och Broderier i Sverige (Faksimileupplag)*, 2 vols. (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1997), 112.

⁸⁰⁶ Agnes Geijer, *Medieval Textiles in the Cathedral of Uppsala, Sweden* (Redditch: Read Books Ltd, 2011), unpaginated.

brocade.⁸⁰⁷ Inger Estham argues that the chasuble was made by a professional embroiderer in or around Uppsala in the 1450s – 1460s.⁸⁰⁸

The precious materiality, in combination with imagery visualising the Eucharist, invests the Marian Chasuble of Uppsala with multiple layers of meaning. The high quality of craftsmanship and the precious materials give the vestment a visual and material splendour fitted to honour God. The entire chasuble is covered in embroidery in gold and multi-coloured silks. Originally, the Virgin's Crown would have been embellished with small freshwater pearls, but these are now lost. Likewise, many of the red silk stitches that created a bright red backdrop for the small golden disks of the garment's background no longer remain. Traces of these stitches along the lower hem of the chasuble indicate how the bright red colour would have contrasted with the gold embroidered roundels, of which many are now quite faded (fig. 6.12). This pattern would have alluded to a type of early Asian velvets that were popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth century: a plain-coloured velvet with gold disks in offset rows (fig. 6.13). Recent studies have shown the wide geographic dissemination of such velvets, suggesting that variations of this type arrived from the Mongol Empire to Europe in large numbers.⁸⁰⁹ Such velvets represented luxury and rank, and the embroidered pattern thus evoked especially luxurious materiality. As Michael Peter states, such fabrics “were a meaningful testimony of rank and political ambition among the ruling classes of the fourteenth century, serving as both symbols of status and as luxury goods of great value”.⁸¹⁰ Thus, the embroidered background was a striking and appropriate framing of the Enthroned Virgin.

The Marian iconography of the Uppsala Chasuble can also be seen as a conceptualization of eucharistic themes. The idea of Mary as a vessel for the Host, as discussed in the previous chapter, implied that the Eucharist was essentially given through her.⁸¹¹ The Virgin Enthroned is, as Kristin van Ausdall describes, “a physical protector of Christ”. In the Uppsala Chasuble, the small and naked Christ-Child embraced by the Virgin foreshadows the

⁸⁰⁷ The front of the chasuble underwent significant repairs in the seventeenth century, when an orphrey band from another vestment was inserted down the front middle. It has three pictures of the Virgin and Child; at the top is *Anna Selbdritt* (St Ann with Mary and Child). In the middle is the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth, and at the bottom is St John the Baptist. Surrounding this bands are four figures representing the cathedral's patron saints: St Lawrence and St Eric. The Eric image is very damaged and partly concealed with a picture of St John the Divine. Under them: St Catherine and St Barbara. The Evangelist symbols above and below the female saints. The Chinese silk lining, probably from the thirteenth – fourteenth century, was also inserted during the seventeenth-century repairs.

⁸⁰⁸ Estham, «Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-talet,» 272 – 273.

⁸⁰⁹ Michael Peter, “A Head Start through Technology: Early Oriental Velvets and the West,” in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, eds. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016), 303.

⁸¹⁰ Peter, “A Head Start through Technology,” 305.

⁸¹¹ Ausdall, “Art and Eucharist in the Late Middle Ages,” 555 – 556.

eucharistic sacrifice.⁸¹² Thus, the Virgin is also a priest-intercessor as she presents the sacrifice and hope of salvation. This symbolism was especially fitting for the garment that constituted the priestly body and was worn during the eucharistic ritual. In this context, the chasuble creates and demonstrates a parallel between the role of the Virgin as a priest-intercessor and the celebrant.

This eucharistic symbolism can be further explored in the striking mantle that wrapped and enveloped the Virgin and Child (fig. 6.12). Padding and relief embroidery transformed the cloak into a three-dimensional and heavily folded surface. Unlike early modern paintings where the pattern follows the shapes of the fold, the pattern of the mantle – large gold embroidered disks - is laid over the surface as a flat ‘grid’.⁸¹³ However, the relief moulding of folds counteracts this notion of ‘flatness’ and emphasizes the three-dimensionality of the wrapped fabric surrounding the Virgin and Child. With the abundance of costly textiles in the Mary figure, the focus is directed towards her clothes in an amplification of the idea of the Virgin’s beauty. The textile plasticity of Mary’s mantle alludes to sculpted images rather than paintings and illuminations

Mary’s mantle was also invested with specific devotional meaning, as is evident in late-medieval images of the Lady of Our Mercy or the *Schützmantelmadonna*, where Mary protects people under her cloak. The protective cape is then, as David Morgan writes, “not only an article of clothing and a symbol of her royal stature but the device of compassion extended to her faithful.”⁸¹⁴ Such devotions are known in medieval Scandinavia through Marian poems and songs. References to the image of Our Lady of Mercy are found in the Norse word *varndarskauti*, as found in the Norse poem *Lilja*, meaning a protecting mantle (lit. “cloak-hem of protection”), referring specifically to the edges or the hem of a mantle – the *skaut*,⁸¹⁵

Hear me now, sublime dwelling
of all the virtues of heaven and earth,
great queen of men and angels
mother of God and healing of people;

⁸¹² Ausdall, 560.

⁸¹³ Tristan Weddigen, “Fold,” in *Textile Terms: A Glossary*, eds. Anika Reineke et al. (Emsdetten: Edition Imorde, 2017), 109–12. Weddigen discusses ornamented folds in late-medieval art as a discovery of the optical grid, see esp. p. 110.

⁸¹⁴ David Morgan, “Vestments and Hierarchy in Catholic Visual Piety,” in *Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination*, ed. Andrew Bolton (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 103.

⁸¹⁵ ‘Anonymous Poems, Lilja 86’ in *Poetry on Christian Subjects. Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 658-9. Lyrics in praise of Mary, were often circulated separately under the title *Máriúvísurir Lilju*. The Norse word *varndar skaut* also occurs in *Stjórn*’s description of the saved, see C. R. Unger (ed.), *Stjorn, Gammelnorsk bibelhistorie fra verdens skabelse til det babylonske fangenskap* (Oslo: Feilberg og Landmarks forlag, 1862): 3.

when I suffer in great need,
be near my soul;
enfold [it] in your famous protecting mantle,
my true hope for the help of men.⁸¹⁶

In the beautifully modelled mantle of the Uppsala Chasuble, the textile folds that frame the Virgin and Child could evoke ideas about the protective capacities of Mary's "famous protecting mantle" as described in the poem *Lilja* above. Furthermore, this symbolic meaning of the cloak emphasizes the Virgin as the protector of Christ, and as a vessel presenting the Host. The wrapped cloth parallels both the wrapping of corporals to veil and unveil sacred matter during the eucharistic ritual and the burial shroud in which Christ was wrapped after the resurrection.

6.3.3 The Århus Chasuble

The widespread use of Crucifixion and Marian iconographies on medieval chasubles reflects the garment's central role in the eucharistic liturgy. However, chasubles made of Islamic silks with Arabic inscriptions and animal motifs represent another group of late-medieval vestments that may appear more puzzling to the modern viewer. A striking example of such vestments is preserved in the National Museum in Copenhagen, known as the Århus Chasuble. The body is made of c. 1300 striped gold brocade, so-called *Panni Tartarici*, with animal motifs and inscriptions reading "al (s)ultan (a)l-'a[lim]" meaning "the wise sultan" (figs. 6.14 – 6.17; cat.no. 23).⁸¹⁷ Western medieval sources describe these fabrics as *Panni Tartarici*, *dras de tartais* or *tartaires*, referring to their origin in Mongol-ruled territories of Central Asia and the Middle East.⁸¹⁸ At the dorsal side is a blue velvet cross orphrey with relief embroideries in silks, pearls, corals, metal embellishments, glass beads and gilded beads, dated around 1500 (Figs. 6.16 and 6.17). Unlike the Bremnes Orphrey and the Marian Chasuble from Uppsala, the Århus Orphrey cross does not have figurative motifs but is covered in floral ornaments (fig. 6.17).

⁸¹⁶ In Norse, the 'famous protecting mantle' is described as 'vefþúágætu verndarskauti'.

⁸¹⁷ Corinne Mühlemann argues that the Århus silks were made in a workshop in the eastern parts of the Ilkhanid empire or to the western parts of the Chagathai empire, see Corinne Mühlemann, "Gold-Seide-Stoffe mit Streifendekor aus Zentralasien und dem Östlichen Mittelmeerraum um 1300. Webtechnik, Inschriften und Funktion im Kontext" (PhD diss., Universität Bern, 2018).

⁸¹⁸ David Jacoby, "Oriental Silks Go West: A Declining Trade in the Later Middle Ages," in *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, eds. Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf, vol. 15 (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 71.

The orphrey cross was probably applied to the vestment around 1500, possibly when the chasuble was remodelled for a narrower fit.⁸¹⁹ The embroideries represent a form of craftsmanship that was popular in late-medieval northern Europe but has gained little recognition in scholarship. Relief embroidery was described by Jakob von Falke as the ‘downfall’ of medieval embroidery art, as the padded structures made the textiles stiff and unmoving.⁸²⁰ However, as discussed in Chapter Four, these concepts reflect a modern aesthetic valuing finished silk and ‘flat’ embroideries – sometimes described as needle-painting – over complex and multi-material relief surfaces, a bias rooted in the former’s association with painting and the modernist concept of ‘high art’. Challenging previous negative valuations, Wetter argues that the florid embroideries seen in the Århus Orphrey cross were sought after for their capacity to display wealth through extensive beading and ornamentation.⁸²¹ Furthermore, Wetter describes motifs such as rosettes, garlands and trees that occur in many late-medieval orphreys carried specific Marian and Christological references: “While the rose symbolizes the Virgin Mary, the tree – the *arbor vitae* or Tree of Life – represents Triumph over death through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.”⁸²² Notably in the Århus Orphrey, the same material interplay between small coral beads and freshwater pearls as in the Bremnes Orphrey is found.⁸²³ In other words, although less conspicuous than large-scale figurative motifs, the florid orphrey on the Århus Chasuble Orphrey evoked the same sacrificial theme as the Bremnes and Uppsala examples. Moreover, as argued in Chapter Four, florid and three-dimensional embroidery created varied and complex textile surfaces instrumental to the aesthetic value of late medieval vestments. Precious materiality as a layer of meaning is also evident in the Århus Chasuble; striped Islamic silks with Arabic inscriptions were highly sought after across medieval Europe for ecclesiastical vestments but also for other high-status garments, for example in royal courts.⁸²⁴

⁸¹⁹ The silks are dated to around 1300, and the older garment was probably wider and bell-shaped chasuble with a small dorsal orphrey cross made of gold brocade. This older orphrey cross was discovered during conservation. See Fritze Lindahl and P. J. Riis, “Messehagelen Fra Vor Frue i Århus” in *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* (Copenhagen: Nordisk forlag, 1949), 74 – 76.

⁸²⁰ Jakob von Falke, «Geschichtlicher Gang der Stickerei bis zu Ihrem Verfall im Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts,» *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, 4 (1869): 282. Falke’s devaluation of relief embroidery is further discussed in Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien*, 307.

⁸²¹ Wetter, 307.

⁸²² Wetter, 321.

⁸²³ Most of the Århus pearls are now lost, but the bare linen tabby indicates the areas that was originally covered in pearls.

⁸²⁴ For ‘tartar cloths’ in fourteenth and fifteenth century European courts, see Jacoby, “Oriental Silks Go West,” 73 – 74.

6.4 The material Significance of ‘heathen cloths’

It is perhaps puzzling to the modern viewer that a fourteenth-century priest in a Danish abbey church would wear a chasuble with large-scale Arabic inscriptions paying homage to a Mongol ruler – the Wise Sultan – on the most prominent position on vestment’s dorsal side. However, vestments made in striped silk brocades traded from the Mongol empire represented the most luxurious silks available to Western churches. The Århus Chasuble from the Church of Our Lady in Århus, which was the abbey church of a Dominican priory, presents one such example.⁸²⁵

Although the Århus Chasuble, originally from is the only preserved example of such vestments in the Scandinavian corpus, there are many examples of ecclesiastical textiles made of Islamic silks described as ‘heathen cloths’ in documentary evidence: written sources list such items as *heidinstykki*, *heiditstykki*, *hadinstykki*, *häditstykke*, *heidenischwerc*, or in Latin *pannis tartaricum* or *saracenum opus*.⁸²⁶ For example, in the c. 1490 Hilleshög letter discussed in Chapter Four, the priest requests two dalmatics for Linköping Cathedral made of “those striped pieces or other heathen ware”: “*so daen striped stykker eller andre verge hedench*”.⁸²⁷ The specific reference to ‘striped pieces’ may refer to striped golden brocades with Arabic inscriptions. Other examples include a late fourteenth-century inventory from Vallna Church in Iceland listing a chasuble made of heathen cloth; *hökul sömlingan medur heididstycki*.⁸²⁸ Likewise, a 1365 post-mortem inventory of the textiles in the private chapel of Queen Blanche of Namur, Queen of Sweden and Norway, lists a silk described as ‘*heidit stykki*’ with gold and blue velvet, a chasuble made of expensive ‘*hæidit stykki*’ and a stole and maniple in the same material.⁸²⁹ Among the possessions of Archbishop Aslak Bolt as he came to Trondheim in 1429 was a set of Mass vestments in heathen cloth with gold orphreys.⁸³⁰ As discussed in previous chapters, Islamic silks were not only sought-after for the making of chasubles, dalmatics and copes, but they could also clothe reliquaries or wrap relics; and furthermore, a corporal burse

⁸²⁵ The Church of Our Lady in Århus is known in Danish as *Vor Frues Kirke*. It formed the southern wing of the Dominican priory Our Lady’s Priory (*Vor Frues Kloster*) and was heavily expanded in the period 1250 – 1500. It is one of the largest medieval churches in Denmark.

⁸²⁶ Hjalmar Falk, *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde mit Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Terminologie* (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1919), 72.

⁸²⁷ Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier*, 68 – 69.

⁸²⁸ *Petrsmåldagar*, DI, vol 3, nos. 419 – 498, p. 513. The collection of máldagi collected by Bishop Petr is dated 1349.

⁸²⁹ “*Jitem æit hæidit stykki med gul ok blaat fel j. vi. alna langht.*”: in a postmortem inventory of Queen Blanka of Namur (who died 1363 or 1364) DN II 271 (no 344).

⁸³⁰ *messuhokull med dyrt heiditstykki ok senkt med gull*”: DI V no. 587.

made of ‘*hedhen stycke*’ was also among Archbishop Aslak Bolt’s possessions.⁸³¹ These documents suggest that vestments made in ‘heathen cloth’ were reserved for the wealthiest churches and donors, reflecting the costliness of Islamic silks.

Avinoam Shalem argues that terminology from inventories and other contemporary sources describing these textiles as ‘heathen’ does not automatically mean that Western patrons wanted such objects because of their Islamic origin: “The identification of some objects in medieval church inventories as *opus saracenum* or *arabie* does not confirm that the objects were accepted in treasuries for that specific reason.”⁸³² Rather, Shalem argues that the main motivation for acquiring Islamic textiles was their precious materials and splendid workmanship, underlining the “obvious aesthetic qualities of such Islamic art, its richness of materials and colour and its high quality of workmanship”—what Shalem goes on to describe as “Islamic high art”.⁸³³ The demand for *Panni Tartarici* silks even resulted in Italian weavers from the last quarter of the fourteenth century designing fabrics to mimic these Islamic textiles with pseudo-Arabic inscriptions.⁸³⁴

Islamic objects were radically transformed as their incorporation into Western treasuries established them as sacred within Christian traditions.⁸³⁵ Islamic textiles, as well as other small artefacts, were remodeled into new objects for usage in the Western medieval church. One example of this is the so-called Fermo Chasuble, where fabrics from a ceremonial tent were refashioned into a lavish chasuble for use in Fermo Cathedral.⁸³⁶ Shalem underlines how these transformations ultimately altered the function of Islamic objects and can be seen as a process of ‘Christianization’:

The major method of Christianization was the alteration of function. Most of the Islamic artefacts in church treasuries were originally used in an Islamic secular context and they lost their former function in favour of a sacred one as soon as they reached a treasury.⁸³⁷

⁸³¹ DI V: 587.

⁸³² Avinoam Shalem, *Islam Christianized: Islamic Portable Objects in the Medieval Church Treasuries of the Latin West* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998), 172.

⁸³³ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 143.

⁸³⁴ These silks displayed alternating bands with animal and flower motifs as well as Arabic calligraphy. However, the inscriptions were ornamental and illegible and are known in literature as pseudo-Arabic. See Rosamond E. Mack and Denis Mack Smith, *Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300-1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 41 – 42.

⁸³⁵ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, esp. Chapter 6: “From Secular to Sacred: Types of ‘Christianization’ and Their Implications,” 129 – 141.

⁸³⁶ Avinoam Shalem (ed.), *The Chasuble of Thomas Becket: A Biography* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2017).

⁸³⁷ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 130.

Textiles, together with other Islamic objects such as glass and rock crystal, were re-fashioned and mounted into new objects used in the Christian liturgy.⁸³⁸ We do not know much about the original usage and context of the Gdąnsk *Panni Tartarici* silks used in the Århus Chasuble, but Birgitt Borkopp-Restle argues that they were produced in large quantities for the Mongol rulers and not woven as individual commissions.⁸³⁹ They probably arrived in Gdąnsk as panel lengths of fabric through long-distance trade, and then were tailored into copes, dalmatics and chasubles donated to the Church of Saint Mary by its wealthy merchant patrons.⁸⁴⁰ It is unclear how the Århus Chasuble travelled from Gdąnsk to the Dominican abbey church in Århus, but precious vestments of this nature were particularly suitable and sought-after for diplomatic gifts and donations.

The tailoring of vestments from Islamic silks can be seen as a form of Christianisation, but there is obviously also a functional aspect in making liturgical vestments to clothe altars and clerical bodies. Function in the sole sense of use-function, however, cannot explain why these silks were traded over great distances to be used for ecclesiastical garments. Rather, this process reveals a concern for the aesthetic qualities of Islamic fabrics. Shalem argues that the mounting of Islamic objects for Western treasuries often stressed the beauty of the materials and the splendid craftsmanship the objects displayed. At the same time, this process often reduced the Islamic character of the objects.⁸⁴¹ Through the consecration of new vestments, the process of Christianisation of Islamic silks for ecclesiastical purposes was situated within a specific ritual context.⁸⁴² As discussed earlier in this chapter, liturgical vestments were blessed by the bishop and considered *ars sacra*. Thus, when the Århus Chasuble was taken into use in the abbey church, it was not primarily marked as an Islamic object, or an object made elsewhere, but as a Christian and holy vestment made in beautiful and precious materials.

In the context of the experience of Islamic textiles within Western medieval churches, scholars have discussed whether Arabic inscriptions on western vestments were recognizable or legible to a lay audience. Juliane von Fircks argues that even though medieval viewers could not read such inscriptions, they were recognised as writing distinct from the garment's other ornaments. Moreover, she suggests that these "foreign-looking characters must have had an

⁸³⁸ Shalem, 132.

⁸³⁹ Birgitt Borkopp-Restle, "Striped Golden Brocades with Arabic Inscriptions," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, eds. Juliane von Fircks and Regula Schorta (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016), 291.

⁸⁴⁰ Borkopp-Restle, "Striped Golden Brocades," 291 – 292.

⁸⁴¹ Shalem, *Islam Christianized*, 132 - 133.

⁸⁴² Shalem, 129 – 130.

aura of the mysterious, the arcane, the magical”.⁸⁴³ Borkopp-Restle also points out that at least some of the Hansa traders responsible for the trade and commission of Islamic silks to Gdąnsk would have been familiar enough with Arabic to recognise basic phrases such as the tributes to rulers rendered on these silks.⁸⁴⁴ In a cope of striped brocade with Arabic inscriptions from the treasure of St. Mary’s Church in Gdąnsk, the pattern and thus the inscriptions are turned upside down.⁸⁴⁵ Having examined the tailoring of the Gdąnsk *Panni Tartarici* vestments, Borkopp-Restle interprets this arrangement as a conscious decision intended to obscure the legibility of the Arabic inscriptions.⁸⁴⁶ In the Århus Chasuble, the fabric is vertically oriented in the chasuble front piece, while the two lengths of cloth on the dorsal side have opposite vertical pattern directions. While the decision to orient the dorsal fabrics sideways may reflect a similar concern, it can also be viewed as a result of a pragmatic concern for utilising the precious silk in a more cost-efficient manner. The tailors wanted to use the fabric in the best way to make vestments; the bottom of the Århus Chasuble is finished with left-over pieces turned diagonally. Furthermore, the arrangement of the two pieces with opposite pattern directions may reflect aesthetic ordering principles such as a desire to create a symmetrical and coherent rhythm in the stripes on either side of the orphrey crucifix.

In general, there are no written sources objecting to the use of Islamic textiles with inscriptions declaring their non-Christian origin for liturgical vestments in the medieval West. Thus, even though Arabic inscriptions may have been recognised as such, and in rare cases even understood by some viewers, this clearly did not make such textiles less suitable for liturgical usage. For the Århus Chasuble, the careful arrangement of the *Panni Tartarici* cloth reflected a concern for the aesthetic qualities of the golden silks, creating a visual rhythm across the vestment’s dorsal side. As discussed above, the mounting of Islamic objects often emphasised the aesthetic qualities of their materials and their splendid craftsmanship. Simultaneously, the new mounting or re-fashioning reduced the work’s Islamic character, making the inscriptions harder to read and transporting the fabric (in the case of the chasuble) from its original secular context into a sacred object used in an abbey church in medieval Denmark. Despite the transformation initiated by a process of Christianisation and

⁸⁴³ Juliane von Fircks, “Islamic Striped Brocades in Europe: The ‘Heinrichsgewänder’ in Regensburg from a Transcultural Perspective,” in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, eds. Regula Schorta and Juliane von Fircks (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016), 283.

⁸⁴⁴ Borkopp-Restle, “Striped Golden Brocades with Arabic Inscriptions,” 298.

⁸⁴⁵ This cope, measuring 333 x 136,5 cm, is dated to the first half of the fourteenth century and is now in the St.-Annen-Museum in Lübeck, inv. no. M3.

⁸⁴⁶ Borkopp-Restle, “Striped Golden Brocades with Arabic Inscriptions,” 293.

‘aestheticisation’, the repeated description of such vestments and fabrics in Scandinavian sources as ‘heathen cloths’ indicate that medieval viewers had a conscious understanding of the non-Christian origin of these striped, golden fabrics. However, their context of origin did not make them problematic or less sought-after for liturgical vestments. On the contrary, the rare survival of the Århus Chasuble stands as a powerful example of a group of elite or luxury vestments that were among the most costly and precious vestments the medieval church could acquire in late-medieval Europe.

6.5 The Interplay Between Linen and Ornate Textiles

The discussion of priestly vestments in this chapter has discerned a material and symbolic separation between linen vestments and ornate vestments as two distinct categories of textile layering. This interplay between linen and ornate textiles is also reflected in the layered application of fabrics clothing relics, altars and the Host. Although relics could be wrapped in entirely in silks, they were commonly enfolded in one or more initial layers of linen with layers of silk on top.⁸⁴⁷ Altars were consistently clothed in layers of white linen cloths before the additional dressing of the altar front in lavish frontals and frontlets. The consecrated Host was veiled in white linen corporals which were concealed in an ornate burse or *capis*. Similarly, the dialogue between a more restrained and brilliantly white layer of linen vestments and the ornate and colourful ‘top layers’ is also found in the vesting of clerics. The priest was vested in the linen amice and alb, before applying the minor vestments and the chasuble. As will be discussed in the next chapter, episcopal vestments also adhere to this custom. Liturgical commentaries repeatedly state that the initial layers, whether referring to the altar cloth, the corporal cloth, or the alb, were to be made in white linen. In some cases, these linen vestments were adorned with embroideries and applied décor, but their main feature was nonetheless the plain surfaces of finely woven and bleached linen fabrics.

The concept of *cleneness* - the understanding of white linen as *pure* - was fundamental to the importance of this initial layer of linen vestments. Both the amice and alb signified Christ, and the donning of these vestments initiated a transformation of the priest who, when fully vested, emerged as a new man ‘Clothed in Christ’. The Christological associations of linen, as discussed in Chapter Four, enhanced this textile symbolism. The material significance of linen

⁸⁴⁷ Sofia Lahti, “Silver Arms and Silk Heads Medieval Reliquaries in the Nordic Countries” (PhD dissertation, Åbo, Finland, Åbo Akademi University, 2019), 303.

layers was not only rooted in its religious associations, but also in its aesthetic qualities. Durand's description of how white altar vestments clothed the altar so that it was "shining with brilliance" and how the priest was vested in "dazzling brilliance" reveal a concern for the aesthetic effects of white linen cloths. While woven linen cloths could not reflect light in ways comparable to ornate vestments, linen of the finest quality, when laundered and bleached, was reflected in the lamps and candles surrounding the altar space. In other words, such seemingly featureless white fabrics were instrumental to the medieval textile rhetoric of clothing the sacred.

While liturgists associated linen vestments with purity and chastity, the use of luxurious ornate vestments was justified as symbols of man's devotion to God. Durand points out that ornate vestments were not used because God loves ornaments of gold more than cheaper ones, but because "men freely offer to God what they love the most, and they conquer their avarice by putting them in divine service".⁸⁴⁸ According to Durand, the most precious materials should be used for the divine service in order to conquer men's greed, as a moral duty that signalled piety and was a powerful symbol of the future glory. To warrant these claims, Durand references the Old Testament vestments:

And so in the Old Law it was decreed that the Priest's upper garments be made of gold, hyacinth, purple, twice-dyed scarlet, twisted flax, and other precious materials, to show with what diverse virtues the priest ought to shine.⁸⁴⁹

He goes so far as to describe embellishing vestments in precious materials as a "moral duty", a symbol of the generosity and devotion of man.⁸⁵⁰

The extensive use of precious materials, including silks, gold and pearl embroideries and velvets, was not only a means of establishing clerical authority and devotion, but was integral to religious experience.⁸⁵¹ The complex textile surfaces, created through the interplay between silks, velvets, fringes, embroideries and added embellishments, created *varietas*, a value central to medieval aesthetics. The tactile and varied surfaces were appreciated for their aesthetic effects such as the ability to 'shine' within the dimly lit church. The interplay between linen and ornate surfaces also worked to create aesthetic experience. The positive senses and

⁸⁴⁸ William Durand and Timothy M. Thibodeau, *The Rationale Divinorum Officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 47.

⁸⁴⁹ Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 47.

⁸⁵⁰ Durand and Thibodeau, 47.

⁸⁵¹ For arguments about the ornate style and clerical authority and self-fashioning, see Chapter 6 "Good Lordship" in Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 207 – 237.

metaphorical associations of *cleneness* in linen vestments opposed the no less important mixed and complex aspects of *varietas* in ornate vestments.

Where white linen ‘worked’ to enhance *cleneness* and purity, ornate surfaces ‘worked’ to engage and persuade the beholder of the sacred position of the celebrant. Ornate vestments should, as stated in the above quote from Durand, make the priest shine not only through his virtues but through the use of precious materials. Ornate surfaces established a visual and sensory contrast to layers of white linen. The idea of sacred objects and bodies as ‘shining’ was central to the visual appearance of reliquaries, altars, corporal burses and clerical bodies alike. Performances like veiling and unveiling, as well as bodily movements, enhanced these effects. This material interplay between the purity of white linen and the dazzling brilliance of precious materials can be understood as a visual ‘language of holiness’ articulating the virtues and sacred position of vested clerical bodies. While white linen vestments establishing the innermost layers indicated Christ through their bright and ‘pure’ surfaces, ornate vestments communicated meaning through the aesthetic experience of diverse and luxurious material displays. The ornate style with silks, gold and precious materials was instrumental to this language, since this clerical culture “associated holiness with beautiful materials”.⁸⁵² According to Maureen C. Miller, “gold-ornamented garments (...) were at the very heart of clerical spirituality and priestly self-image.”⁸⁵³ Beautiful materials acted as a material and visual language communicating the sacred status of priestly wearers. This language was directed towards both clerics and laity.

6.6 Clothed in Christ: Vestments and Clerical Spirituality

This chapter has employed the medieval vesting ritual as a framework for unveiling the layer upon layer of garments that clothed medieval priests. Having surveyed preserved vestments and contemporary liturgical texts, it can be said that these layers, especially as described in vesting prayers, were intended to shape the cleric’s spiritual aptness. The sacred status of liturgical garments was underlined by the fact that each vestment was blessed by the bishop before being taken into service. Durand stresses that this was done not because they were perceived as animate objects, but in order to instil a greater reverence for them:

⁸⁵² Miller, 139. Miller’s study focuses on the period where this ornate style was established, c. 800 – 1200. By the late fifteenth century, the focus of this dissertation, this style was firmly established and highly articulated as a vital part of clerical culture

⁸⁵³ Miller, 137.

And note that the blessing and consecration of churches and ecclesiastical vestments and ornaments is not done because these things themselves can receive grace, because they are inanimate objects, but because grace is known through them, as it were, to men; so that those things that are blessed and consecrated and placed in service of the divine cult, and rendered fitting of it, inspire a much greater reverence.⁸⁵⁴

Vestments were important for clerical spirituality because, as Durand states, grace was known through them. Thus, priestly garments as sacred textiles held a central position in ordination rituals, the liturgical ceremonies that established the priest as sacred.

Similar to the consecration of altars discussed in Chapter Four, the ceremony included cleansing, anointment and dressing or wrapping with textiles. However, vestments held an even more prominent position in the rite of priestly ordination, as described in Scandinavian context in the Lund and Roskilde pontificals.⁸⁵⁵ Specific instructions for removing and donning vestments, such as vesting the ordinand with a stole over both shoulders and the chasuble on top, show how clothing was used as constitutive acts in ordaining priests.⁸⁵⁶ All of the major orders, generally defined as sub-deacon, deacon and priest, were distinguished by the central role of vestments in the ordination ritual.⁸⁵⁷ Sub-deacons were given the maniple and a dalmatic, deacons received stoles, while priests received both stoles and chasubles.⁸⁵⁸ Thus, these vestments became potent symbols of their sacred position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. After having received the stole as “the yoke of the Lord” the priest was vested in his chasuble accompanied with another prayer: “Accept the vestment of priesthood, which signifies charity,

⁸⁵⁴ Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 99.

⁸⁵⁵ Liturgies for ordination of priests are found in two fifteenth century sources of episcopal ceremonial in Scandinavia: *Pontificale Roskildense* and *Pontifikale Lundense*, see See Bengt Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin i Lund och Roskilde under medeltiden* (Lund: Gleerup, 1955), 153 – 171, 244 – 260 and 279 – 300. Fragments of other pontifical in Nordic libraries are not sufficient to show how priests were ordained in the provinces of Nidaros and Uppsala and their suffrage dioceses. Church historian Hilding Johansson argues that rituals in the Uppsala province may have been similar to the Lund usage: Hilding Johansson, “(Review:) Bengt Strömberg, *Den Pontifikala Liturgin i Lund Och Roskilde under Medeltiden*,” *Svenskt Gudstjänstliv. Årbok För Liturgi, Kyrkokonst, Kyrkomusik Och Homiletik* 32 (1957): 39.

⁸⁵⁶ The ordinand was dressed in a white alb with the stole diagonally draped diagonally like a sash, which was the traditional way of wearing stoles for deacons. As the ordinand kneeled before the bishop performing the ceremony, the bishop transferred the power to apostolic succession with the imposition of hands. After the first ordination prayer, the bishop rearranged the stole to fall over both his shoulders. See Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin*, 254.

⁸⁵⁷ There were significant variations in practice in terms of age requirements, but also for which orders were considered major. In some cases, bishops are regarded a separate major order; see Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 67.

⁸⁵⁸ See the Lund pontifical in Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin*, 252 (for sub-deacons/ dalmatics), 254. (for deacons/ stole), and 257 (for priests/ stole and chasuble). For a general discussion on ordination rituals in the medieval Western tradition see Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 87.

for God is able to advance you in charity and perfection.”⁸⁵⁹ The newly vested priest then knelt again before the bishop who anointed his palms with chrism.

The vesting rituals examined in this chapter were personal and ritualised acts of devotion. Since the vesting ritual was performed in the sacristy, or in a part of the choir separated from the laity, these prayers were directed towards the spiritual awareness of medieval priests.⁸⁶⁰ The central role of sacristies as a designated space for the safe storage of and dressing with sacred vestments is reflected in the medieval variations of the term “vestry” (*vestrye, westre, vesterie*) from Latin *vestiarium* (“wardrobe”).⁸⁶¹ Durand compares the sacristy with Mary’s womb “in which Christ clothed Himself with the sacred vestments of His flesh. The priest processes to the people from the place where he put on his vestments because Christ, proceeding from the womb of the Virgin Mary, came into the world.”⁸⁶² Thus, the sacristy became a transitional space where the transformation of priests was likened to the birth of Christ, so that when the priest “processes to the people” he was clothed in Christ. The emergence of sacristies in parish churches across Scandinavia coincides with a renewed focus on and proliferation of vesting rituals from the fifteenth century onwards.⁸⁶³ Further research is needed to explore possible connections between the propagation of sacristies and the increased focus on vesting rituals in late-medieval Scandinavia.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁵⁹ «Accipe vestem sacerdotalem, per quam caritas intelligitur. Potens est enim Deus, vt augeat tibi caritatem et opus perfectum.» in Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin*, 257.

⁸⁶⁰ It can be argued, that the spiritual and intellectual awareness decreed in vesting prayers did not always have the desired effect on medieval priests. Many examples of misbehaving priests occur in documentary sources, see for example Erik Gunnes, “Prester Og Deier – Sølbatet i Norsk Middelalder,” in *Hamarspor. Festskrift Til Lars Hamre*, eds. Steinar Imsen and Gudmund Sandvik (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982), 20–44. However, the vestment prayers in general reflect a culture in which vestments were instilled with increasing sacredness, important to clerical spirituality.

⁸⁶¹ Jan Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 1079 – 1080.

⁸⁶² Durand and Thibodeau, *A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, 21.

⁸⁶³ Sacristies are rarely found in Scandinavian churches before the fourteenth century and onwards. Except from a couple of late twelfth/ early thirteenth-century stone churches (e.g. Tingelstad Church, Gamle Aker Church) sacristies were not common before the fifteenth century in Norway. In the late-medieval period sacristies are found in churches where there was a strong influence from church centers (Trondheim, Oslo, Hamar). In Sweden, sacristies became more common from the end of the thirteenth century and into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In Denmark, there are some early examples found in abbeys, but sacristies were not common before the fifteenth century. In Finland, sacristies became more common from the early fourteenth century. Erik Horskjær et al., «Sakristi,» in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder fra vikingtid til reformasjonstid*, ed. F. Hødnebo, XIV (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1969), 671 – 673.

⁸⁶⁴ Discussing the emergence of Swedish sacristies, Erik Horskjær et al. suggest that this development may be explained by new liturgical functions, however, the text does not expand on this. Erik Horskjær et al., “Sakristi,” 671 – 673. The connection between vesting rituals and the emergence of sacristies is not explored in research. Arne Berg, in his discussion of three late-medieval sacristies in central Norway, points to the safe-keeping of valuable goods and tithe. Arne Berg, «Tre Sakristi i Nord-Trøndelag,» *Foreningen Til Norske Fortidsminnerkers Bevaring. Årbok 1984*. 138 (1984): 139–74.

Entering the church from the sacristy as “womb”, the priest was not only re-dressed but symbolically re-born as Christ’s vicar on earth.⁸⁶⁵ Medieval commentaries discussed in this chapter reveal that liturgical textiles constituted this transformation of the cleric into a body clothed in Christ.⁸⁶⁶ According to Roy R. Jeal, the specific rhetoric of being clothed with a person found in Pauline passages marks an important shift in biblical clothing rhetoric.⁸⁶⁷ In Gal:27 “for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”, the act of re-dressing is described as being clothed in another person, clothed in Christ.⁸⁶⁸ In the Swedish vestment prayers, this same rhetorical trope can be found. When the priest puts on the alb, he calls on God to ‘strip him of his old humanity’ and create him in the new image of God. This new person, described in the Swedish vestment prayers as “a new man clothed in God’s image”, becomes transformed by the clothes he puts on. The alb worked on different layers, as it simultaneously identified the re-dressed priest, reminded him of his spiritual purity and communicated this spiritual sacredness to others. Jeal argues that “the clothing itself is powerful, creating a new condition for the bodies that wear it and promoting conformity to it. The metaphorical transformation elicits a reconstruction of the mind and, with it, behaviour.”⁸⁶⁹ In the vesting prayers, the condition of this ‘reconstituted mind’ is described as pure speech, chastity, continence, vigilance, purity, charity, humility, love, remission of sins and subjection to God. Every new layer of clothing worked to instil these virtues. As priests dressed in preparation for Mass, they were reminded about these virtues and the spiritual and physical transformation initiated by layers of liturgical vestments. The clothing was the visual and sensory ‘marker’ of this transformation.⁸⁷⁰

Although the bodies of medieval priests were sanctified through consecration ceremonies and cleansing rituals, this sanctity was contested in ways which do not apply to the relics, altars or eucharistic matter discussed in the previous chapters. Despite this study’s argument that relics, altars and the Host acted as metaphorical bodies which were vested in layers of linen and ornate textiles to enhance their holiness, such controversies point to the

⁸⁶⁵ Durand employs the Latin term *vicarius Christi*, Vicar of Christ, to describe the priest: William Durand and Timothy M Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It. Rationale Book Four* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 447.

⁸⁶⁶ As seen in the previously discussed quote from the Swedish *Summula* fol. 39r. in Sundmark, *Teologi för praktiskt bruk*, 113. This trope is also found in Durand: “In effect the priest strips off the old man through his acts, and put on the new man, who has been created by God” in Durandus and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 132.

⁸⁶⁷ Roy R. Jeal, “Clothes Make the (Wo)Man,” *Scriptura* 90 (2005): 688.

⁸⁶⁸ Jeal, “Clothes Make the (Wo)Man,” 690.

⁸⁶⁹ Jeal, 687.

⁸⁷⁰ Jeal, 696.

difference between bodily metaphors and actual, human bodies. The social context of priests as essentially human is underlined by Robert Swanson:

Yet while ordination separated “priests” from “people,” priests always were people, both before and after ordination. Fundamentally, priesthood distinguished priests *within* human society; it did not extract or exclude them from it.⁸⁷¹

Parish priests lived among other people in their local community *in seculum*, as ‘secular clerics’.⁸⁷² In their every-day life these priests held secular responsibilities, they often maintained close family loyalties, and there are many reports of priests living with ‘wives’ and having children.⁸⁷³ Thus, an imperative function of the cleansing and vesting rituals discussed in this chapter was the transformative potential of ecclesiastical clothing to visually and symbolically present the celebrant as sacred and ‘reborn’; as God’s vicar with the power to perform the miracle of transubstantiation. As discussed in Chapter Two, priests wore muted cloaks as their everyday clothing. The vested priest as a rhetorical *occasion* was emphasised by the visual contrast between clerical streetwear and sacred vestments.

It was of great importance that the congregation believed in the priest’s ability to perform the holy sacraments independent of his moral or personal qualities. They needed to be persuaded that the priest acted *ex opere operato*— that God acted through him.⁸⁷⁴ To emphasise this important distinction between the priest as human and as Christ’s vicar, the ordination and vesting rituals were important as they ritually transformed the human into a sacred body. Vestments were essential to these rites, as they were visual and physical manifestations of this spiritual transformation. The chasuble described in the Lund ordination liturgy as “the vestment of priesthood” was an important embodiment of that distinction. Consequently, the act of vesting as the wrapping of priestly bodies with layer-upon-layer of sacred garments can be understood as a rhetoric of persuasion aiming to convince the laity of the celebrant’s moral and spiritual aptitude.

⁸⁷¹ Robert N. Swanson, “Apostolic Successors: Priests and Priesthood, Bishops, and Episcopacy in Medieval Western Europe” in *A Companion to Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*, eds. Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 14.

⁸⁷² Swanson, 21. Secular clergy was used for members of the clergy outside the monastic orders, while “regular priests” denote priests that were members of an order and lived by monastic rules.

⁸⁷³ Erik Gunnes argues that it was not uncommon for priests in medieval Norway to have mistresses (in familiar relationships) and children throughout the late-medieval period. Gunnes, “Prester og deier,” 43. Sources suggest that laypeople often tolerated concubinage among their priests. See Swanson, “Apostolic Successors,” 25.

⁸⁷⁴ In other words, as long as the priest was consecrated, he could effectively transform bread and wine despite lack of moral aptness. On sinful priests and ‘*ex opere operato*’ see Thomas M. Izbicki, *The Eucharist in Medieval Canon Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 66.

The fully-vested priest embodied a rhetoric of display directed towards the laity. As we have seen, textile display also entailed concealment.⁸⁷⁵ The layering of sacred clothing concealed the priest's human shape and represented him as a sacred body. In the previous chapter, textile concealment and veiling were discussed as a means of enhancing religious experience, emphasising the incomprehensible miracle of the eucharistic ritual. Priestly vestments played into this framework of veiling the sacred, as stated by Durand: "Through the vestments that we use in these sacred acts, we understand that not all of the sacraments must be openly revealed to the people."⁸⁷⁶ In other words, the layer upon layer of linen and ornate vestments clothing priestly bodies acted as rhetorical displays both in the sense that they "lay forth" or showed the priest's sacred position and because they simultaneously veiled and concealed the ceremonial actions unfolding at the altar. The veiling of the priest signified this sacred mystery.⁸⁷⁷

6.7 Performance and Occasion

Vestments discussed in this chapter were essential to 'the performance of Mass', as Laura Weigert defines as "any act of display by human being or groups".⁸⁷⁸ Furthermore, they are characterised by their performativity, a term understood as the production and interpretation of meaning "between an audience, an event, object or activity".⁸⁷⁹ The complex clothing system for vesting clerics provided a nonverbal means of communication, a visual rhetoric of display and of the body. Gestures, bodily movements and symbolic actions performed by vested clerical bodies reinforced the rhetorical potential of ecclesiastical textiles. The chasuble became a pictorial code for the sacrament and a visual focal point for the laity. In this context, the chasuble's dorsal crucifix orphrey was an especially impactful and prominent feature of the fully vested priest.

The priest's movements during Mass affected the design of priestly vestments, particularly the chasuble. Most medieval chasubles had embroidered orphreys only on the dorsal side, reflecting the importance of a visual focal point for the audience when the priest performed the eucharistic ritual with his back turned to the laity. Within the larger context of the art and architecture framing and intensifying the eucharistic ritual, there would have been

⁸⁷⁵ Lawrence J. Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 2.

⁸⁷⁶ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 132.

⁸⁷⁷ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 291.

⁸⁷⁸ Laura Weigert, "Performance," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 63.

⁸⁷⁹ Weigert, 63.

myriad of Crucifixion imagery: wall paintings, triumphal crosses, altarpieces, chalices, monstrances, altar textiles and liturgical books saturated the visual space with representations of Christ on the Cross. Even the wafer could have patterns of crosses to stand for the Crucifixion.⁸⁸⁰ According to Durand, this proliferation of Crucifixions “depicted in books and in churches” worked to enhance and intensify the memorial of Christ’s Passion as it was preached by the priest and tasted in the consecrated Host.⁸⁸¹ Similarly, images of Christ and related iconographies were used in chasubles as a means of more closely connecting the people in the church to the meaning of Mass.⁸⁸² This symbolism was underlined by the priest’s bodily movements during the service. Before the *Introitus*, the priest would gesture at the sign of the cross (Latin: *signum crucis*) as he stood facing the altar. Right before the consecration of bread and wine, the priest extended his arms so that he would mimic the shape of the crucifix. Through his bodily movements, the priest also animated the cross orphrey on the chasuble, becoming what Miri Rubin described as a “living cross”.⁸⁸³ This gesture was echoed in the shape and symbolic form of the cross orphrey on the back of his chasuble.⁸⁸⁴ As discussed in Chapter Two, the bodily dispositions of the priest can be understood as a way of engaging and disengaging during Mass in a discourse with the audience.⁸⁸⁵ During the eucharistic ritual, the priest faced the altar when performing the sacred mysteries which partially obscured them for the laity. In this mode of ‘disengagement’, the dorsal side of the priestly vestments became particularly important for engaging lay viewers. Chasuble orphreys as well as embellished apparels on the amice and the dorsal side of the alb were impactful visual features for the experience of Mass from a lay perspective. This importance is reflected in their materiality and iconography, which both underscored the eucharistic miracle.

Returning to the Bremnes Orphrey, we can examine how the vestment it once adorned might have interacted with the wearer’s body. The details and varied material surfaces of the Bremnes Orphrey can be seen in context with the visual environment surrounding the vestment and its wearer. There was a distinct visual interplay between the ‘smallness’ and minute

⁸⁸⁰ Host presses are preserved in Scandinavian collections like The Linkopings Castle- and Cathedral Museum in Sweden and the National Museum of Iceland. For a discussion of host presses with cross or Crucifixion motifs see Aden Kumler, “The Multiplication of the Species: Eucharistic Morphology in the Middle Ages,” *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 59–60 (2011): 186.

⁸⁸¹ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It*, 380.

⁸⁸² Wetter, *Mittelalterliche Textilien*, 300.

⁸⁸³ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 96.

⁸⁸⁴ I have also discussed this correlation between crucifix orphreys and the priest’s bodily position in Nødseth, “Corals, Blood and Precious Pearls,” 183.

⁸⁸⁵ Pamela C. Graves, “Social Space in the English Medieval Parish Church,” *Economy and Society* 18, no. 3 (1989): 306.

detailing of the embroidered crucifix and the monumental crucifix commonly found above the rood screen.⁸⁸⁶ Carruthers has shown how minifcence or “making small” was often played against its stylistic opposite of magnifcence or “making great”, reflecting a “pronounced fascination with miniaturization and magnification” in medieval aesthetics.⁸⁸⁷ This principle is also found in the medieval micro-architecture characteristic of the Decorated Style, where Binski has noted how the fascination for the “aesthetics of the very small” was intrinsically connected to the aesthetics of magnification.⁸⁸⁸ According to Binski, this inversion of size created delight: “in small things we may perceive astonishing difficulty, something deadly serious as well as pleasing.”⁸⁸⁹ Medieval embroidery similarly played with conceptions of scale, not only in the architectural framing of saints in cope and chasuble orphreys, but also in the minutely embroidered orphrey crucifixes. As such, this visual and material interplay between minifcence and magnifcence, between the complex embroidered surfaces and their immediate visual and physical milieu, enhanced the aesthetic experience of the Bremnes Orphrey.⁸⁹⁰ The proliferation of Crucifixion imagery was not only found in the visual culture of Mass, but also in the its performance. Movements animated the imagery embroidered on chasuble orphreys. The padded body of Christ on the Bremnes Orphrey would have been emphasised as the priest kneeled and stood up or lifted and extended his arms, causing the background fabric to move. Movement would also create a flickering from the candle-lit room that would animate the gold, silks, precious stones and pearls embellishing the orphrey embroidery, underlining the interplay between materials, movement and the textile performance of the Mass.

The fully-vested priest embodied occasion. As discussed in Chapter Two, liturgical vestments could establish occasion through human actions such as veiling and unveiling, as well as through surface, colour and ornament. Priestly vestments embodied occasion through performance, rituals and beliefs; these garments constituted priests as sacred through their prominent position in Ordination rituals as well as the daily vesting ritual. The transformative role of liturgical garments sought to persuade both the cleric and the laity of the sacred position

⁸⁸⁶ By the fifteenth century, the presence of a monumental Crucifixion group above rood screens or in the choir opening was common in Scandinavia. For the development of such Crucifixion groups, see subsection of Chapter 2 titled “*In medio Ecclesiae: The Bivalent Body of Christ*” in Jacqueline E. Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture, and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany, Ca.1200-1400* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 46 – 53.

⁸⁸⁷ Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, 173

⁸⁸⁸ Paul Binski, *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style 1290-1350*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 144.

⁸⁸⁹ Binski, *Gothic Wonder*, 144.

⁸⁹⁰ I have presented this argument in an earlier article on the Bremnes Orphrey, see Nødseth, “Corals, Blood and Precious Pearls,” 183 – 184.

of their wearers, and thus the priest's ability to transform bread and wine. Vestments played an important role in the performance of Mass, and their visual appearance was tailored to enhance the religious experience. Occasion was not only established through these actions, but in the interplay between linen and ornate surfaces displayed on the vested priest. As discussed above, the principle of playing linen and ornate surfaces against each other can be seen as a 'material trope' in the medieval practice of clothing the sacred. This rhetorical display of *cleneness* and sumptuousness reflected both the purity of the priest and the magnificence of Mass. Moreover, the multifocal perspective created by *varietas*, mixture, minificence and the multicoloured and shimmering surfaces provided an aesthetic experience that was tailored towards the laity, enhancing the religious experience of a medieval Mass.

6.8 Conclusion

The medieval vesting of clerical bodies was essentially an act of wrapping in sacred textiles, imbued with a plurality of meanings. In order to activate these multi-layered meanings, this chapter has examined textile performance through liturgies found in vesting and ordination rituals. Visual and material evidence has shown that the wrapping of clerical bodies operated within the same textile dialogue between linen and ornate vestments established in previous chapters. Yet, there is an important difference between inanimate objects and living, human bodies, so in this chapter I have argued that the corpus of liturgical clothing introduces a new embodied perspective to the discussion of clothing the sacred. Because the sacredness of priestly bodies was challenged and contested, the textile performativity and display as an act of persuasion were especially important for communicating the priest as re-dressed and sacred. Unwrapping the layers that clothed clerical bodies in late-medieval churches, we can understand how clerics were transformed from "an old human" to new men, as Christ's intercessors within the church. Clerical bodies were dressed in layers of ornate clothing that served on the one hand to increase the clerics' spiritual awareness, and on the other hand to communicate the transformed, re-dressed and sacred position of the celebrant to the laity.

This chapter has focused on the action of clothing, the ritual of re-dressing performed daily through vesting and praying. Ordination rituals, where each vestment constitutes the social and religious position of the newly ordained cleric, provide another example of ecclesiastical clothing 'in action'. Since most of these vestments are displayed in museums and treasuries, or more commonly locked away in storage, they appear as flat and disembodied items. The context of use and wear is lost to us, both because they are no longer worn and

because the significance of clothing within the medieval church is so fundamentally different to vesting practices in Lutheran churches across Scandinavia today. By re-framing these textiles in their original context, this chapter has argued for a re-contextualisation of medieval vestments as embodied vehicles of visual display.

As this study interrogates the purpose and ‘work’ vestments were doing in their original context, the embodiment of vestments – particularly liturgical clothing – has emerged as a central issue. The vestments discussed in this chapter were always experienced in the immediate context of priestly bodies. Moreover, they participated in the performance of Mass as visual and performative focal points in the liturgy. I have argued that the importance of the dorsal side of chasubles with the crucifix orphrey in a prominent position was emphasised by the priest’s bodily movements as well as the proliferation of Crucifixion imagery in the larger installation of the church. The embroideries’ splendid minificence was contrasted with the magnificent rood crucifixes. Minutely embroidered orphreys engaged the viewers through varied and polyfocal surfaces when the celebrant himself was turned away from the laity, the garment thus obscuring their view of the ritual unfolding on the altar table while also visually defining the significance of the occluded eucharistic ceremony. In other words, the priest established occasion through movement and performance as well as the layer upon layer of vestments displaying shining surfaces, variegated colours and pictorial embroideries.



Figure 6-1: The vested priest. Illustrations on the left show a priest vesting with amice, alb, cincture, stole, maniple and chasuble. The figure is from Carmody, Fr. Charles J. *Learning to Serve A Guide for Altar Boys* (Fort Collins, CO: Roman Catholic Books, 1961). Although the illustration was made for modern vesting practice, it nevertheless closely resembles the medieval vesting ritual. The series of photos on the right show how the amice is arranged during the vesting ritual, and are scanned from Joseph Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1912), 87.



Figure 6-2: Ornate liturgical comb from Herøy Church, Northern Norway, medieval period, carved bone, 9 cm, Trondheim: NTNU (inv.no. T18233b). Photo © NTNU

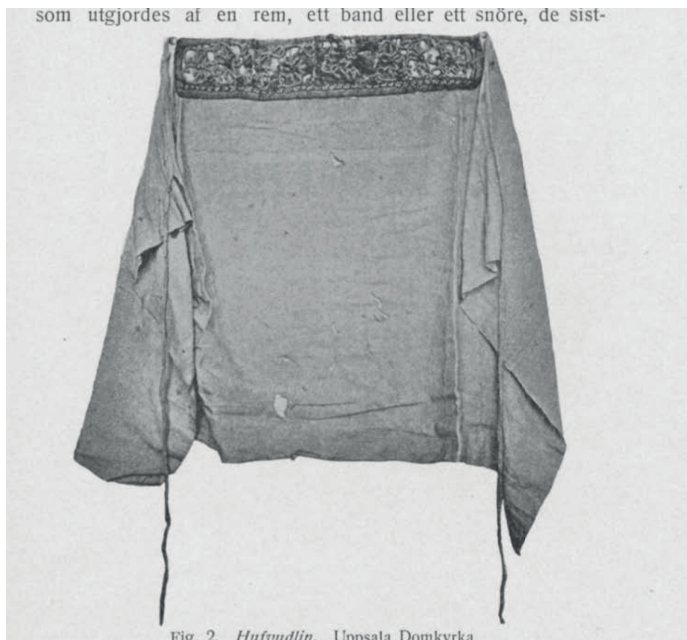


Figure 6-3: *The Uppsala Amice* with embroidered apparels, linen with silk, metal and pearl embroideries, h. 56 cm, w. 100 cm, Uppsala Cathedral Museum, cat.no. 19. Photo Agnes Branting, “Några Meddelanden Om Svenska Mässkläder,” *Fornvännen* (1910): 171.



Figure 6-4: Details of the embroidered *apparels* from the *Uppsala Amice*, c. 1430. This close-up photo shows the metal plates with relief “tendrils” covered in freshwater pearls and with precious stones, and the loop braided and woven gold ribbons framing the embroidery. Materials: gilded metal plates, linen, freshwater pearls, precious stones and gold embroidery, measures 8 x 39 cm, Uppsala Cathedral Museum. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 6-5: *The Lund Alb*, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, h. 169cm, w. 350 cm (width at the lower hem), cat.no. 20. Photo: © LCM



Figure 6-6: *The Forsby Alb*, 1400 – 1450, white linen (disintegrated), from Forsby Church, Sweden: SHM (inv. no.: 34883). Photo © SHM.

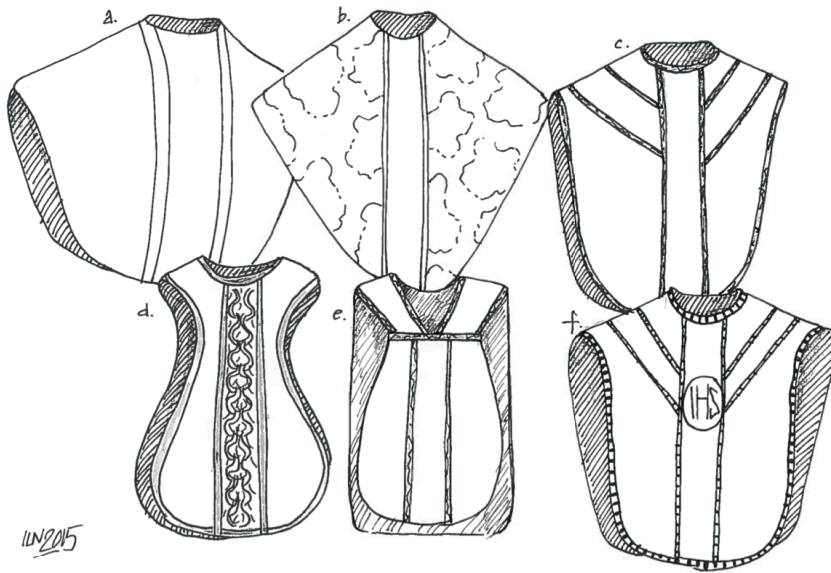


Figure 6-7: The development of the shape of chasubles from full-sized casula (a) to a bell shape (b) and a narrower shape (c). In post-medieval times the shape was even narrower with the fiddle-shape (d) or type e, while modern chasubles often has a slightly wider shape again (f). Figure by Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 6-8: *The Bremnes Chasuble*, orphrey c. 1450, orphrey with silk and gold embroideries with corals, beads, pearls and precious stones on a seventeenth century silk damask chasuble, orphrey h. 126 cm, w. 46 cm, cat.no. 21. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

Figure 6-9: (below) Details of *Bremnes Orphrey*, the left cross arm with Christ's wound and a large coral placed above. Multicolored silks, gold threads, corals, green and blue glass beads. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth





Figure 6-10: Detail of the *Bremnes Orphrey* showing Christ on the Cross. Christ's body is padded linen covered with tiny white silk stitches (mostly worn off). Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 6-11: *The Marian Uppsala Chasuble*, 1450 – 1470, h. 134 cm, w. 102 cm, cat.no. 22. Photo: Anders Tukler
© UCM



Figure 6-12: Detail of the Uppsala Chasuble showing the Virgin and Child in crescent moon surrounded by rays. Relief embroidery adds structure to the draped cloak, her hair, crown and dress. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 6-13: Iranian (probably Tabriz) velvet with gold disks in offset rows, late 13th -14th c., velvet of silk and metal threads, details from fragment measuring 26.7 x 30.5 cm, New York: MET (inv.no. 2002.494.11a, b). Photo © MET



Figure 6-14: *The Århus Chasuble*, silk fabric c.1300, Orphrey and remodeling c. 1500, Islamic silks, embroidered cross orphrey with silks, corals, beads and pearls on blue velvet, h. 128 cm, w. 83 cm, cat.no. 23. Photo: © NMD



Figure 6-15: Detail of the striped gold brocade with animal motifs and inscriptions reading “al (s)ultan (a)l-a(lim)”, c. 1300. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 6-16: Details of the relief embroidery with relief embroideries in silks, pearls, corals, metal embellishments, glass beads and gilded beads, dated around 1500. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 6-17: Cross orphrey of the *Arhus Chasuble*, with coral and glass beads, metal embellishments . Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth.



7 Adorning the Bishop

When he is about to celebrate Mass, the bishop or presbyter adorns himself with the clothes appropriate to his order, and the vestments of the worship service, and whatever furnishings are available.⁸⁹¹

William Durand of Mende

Visual representations of fully vested bishops often depict the standing cleric robed in a splendid ornamented cope, layered in vestments, crowned with a precious mitre, and holding a crosier in his gloved hands (figs. 7.1 and 7.2). That is to say, richly adorned episcopal bodies were wrapped in layers of textiles and thereby were clothed in sanctity. In the above quote from William Durand's exposition of the 'Garments and Equipment of the Mass', the bishop is described as *adorned* using the Latin term *exorno*, from *ornare*.⁸⁹² As Mary Carruthers observed in *The Craft of Thought*, the medieval Latin *ornare* is difficult to translate into English because of the modern separation between decoration and function.⁸⁹³ *Ornare* could mean both to "furnish, equip" and to "decorate, adorn or embellish with".⁸⁹⁴ In modern Scandinavian languages as well as in German, variations of the word 'ornat' are used to denominate clerical vestments or paraments, underscoring the close connections between the root word from the Latin *ornare* and the articles of clothing used to dress the clergy.⁸⁹⁵ Adorning the bishop then implies dressing him in his episcopal ornaments, his 'ornat': textiles that had a multi-level meaning as both physical ornaments and visual and symbolic embellishments communicating his sacred and elevated position within the church.

← Enamel, detail from the Linköping Mitre as presented in fig. 7.9

⁸⁹¹ William Durand, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments: A New Translation of Books 2-3 of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (Scranton, Pa: Scranton university press, 2010), 136.

⁸⁹² "episcopus, aut presbyter, indumentis suo ordini congruentibus se exornat" in William Durand, *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, ed. A. Davril and Timothy M. Thibodeau (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 180.

⁸⁹³ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 205. Latin *ornare* is form the root of the word ornament. On the function of ornament, see Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 117.

⁸⁹⁴ D. P. Simpson (ed.), *Casell's Latin Dictionary: Latin – English, English – Latin* (London: Casell, 1977) 657.

⁸⁹⁵ For German «ornat» see <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Ornat>. The etymology is the Latin *ornatus* from Latin *ornare*. (ibid). The term "ornat" is used in both Swedish, Danish and Norwegian, while Icelandic language use the term "skrud" similar to the Norse term used to describe ecclesiastical ornaments.

Comprehensive vesting with as many as sixteen different layers of textiles enclosed and transformed episcopal bodies.⁸⁹⁶ Through these extensive textile layers, the bishop was distinguished from other clerics within the major orders, generally defined as sub-deacons, deacons and priests.⁸⁹⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter, the act of dressing in ecclesiastical vestments transformed the priest into a ‘new man’ worthy of administering the sacraments. This chapter continues this argument by focusing on the social context of the vested bishop. As such, the interplay between his body within and the layers upon him will be discussed as a social skin, emphasising the intimate and embodied relation between corporeality and textiles. After a survey of the different episcopal vestments, three garments will be discussed in depth: the cope, mitre and sudary mantle. As ornate ‘top layers’ of the multi-layered vestments enshrining the bishop, these textiles also worked as rhetorical displays unfolding the prelate’s sacred position within the late-medieval church.

7.1 Layered Vestments: Dressing a Bishop

Since the bishop was distinguished from the other major orders as a religious leader, he wore a greater number of vestments. Beyond the general priestly garb, Durand lists nine episcopal vestments including stockings, shoes, an over-tunic, belt, gloves, mitre, ring, crosier, sudary (for the crosier) and pallium (fig. 7.3).⁸⁹⁸ In addition, most visual depictions of bishops show them wearing a magnificent cope over these layers.

The vesting of a bishop started with his feet. Vesting of a bishop’s feet underscored his elevated position and protected against what Durand describes as “the dust of worldly or temporal things” a metaphor for the secular world that could stain the sacred body of the bishop.⁸⁹⁹ Episcopal knee-length ornamental stockings (*caligae*) and shoes (*sandalia*) were often made as matching sets.⁹⁰⁰ Episcopal stockings rarely survive, but fragments of an

⁸⁹⁶ As discussed in the following section, written sources rarely mention episcopal stockings (*caligae*) and the tunic (*tunicella*) with its additional girdle, so these three vestments may not have been used consistently in late-medieval Scandinavia. Furthermore, the pallium was reserved for archbishops. Still, the remaining eleven vestments including the sandalia, amice, alb, girdle, dalmatic, stole, maniple, chasuble, gloves, cope and mitre occur in most sources on vesting bishops and can be found in many visual depictions of bishops across fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scandinavia.

⁸⁹⁷ Maureen Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, C. 800-1200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 67.

⁸⁹⁸ Six vestments were shared by bishops and priests, as discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, Durand describes “nine ornaments that are specifically for pontiffs”: Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 136.

⁸⁹⁹ Durand and Thibodeau, 168.

⁹⁰⁰ Episcopal stockings are often referred to as “buskins” in literature. Note that despite the Latin term “*sandalia*” the appearance of these shoes resembles slippers, not sandals. Roger Reynolds E., “VI. Clerical

embroidered pair from an episcopal tomb in Trondheim reveal that such garments were in use from the late twelfth century.⁹⁰¹ The *sandalia*, which resembled slippers rather than sandals, are more frequently mentioned in late-medieval sources, and two pairs are preserved in the Cathedral of Strängnes, Sweden (fig. 7.4).⁹⁰² Both have cork heels and leather insoles and are made of high-quality materials: one in yellow atlas silk with woven bands in red and silver and the other pair in finely woven linen-wool fabric with green patterning. The silk and costly woven fabrics emphasised that these shoes were part of the bishop's liturgical attire and not meant for every-day use.⁹⁰³

Bishops were dressed in the *amice* and alb, discussed in the previous chapter as priestly vestments. On top of these garments, they wore the dalmatic associated with deacons.⁹⁰⁴ The dalmatic (*dalmatica*) was a short over-tunic extending to right below the knees, with wide arms and open splits in the sides.⁹⁰⁵ Late-medieval dalmatics were often made in the same fabric as chasubles; inventories list matching sets of chasubles and dalmatics for the priest and deacons.⁹⁰⁶ The garment was decorated with narrow embroidered or woven bands (*clavi*) running vertically from each shoulder on the front and back. One dalmatic from the treasury of

Liturgical Vestments and Liturgical Colors in the Middle Ages," in *Clerics in the Early Middle Ages. Hierarchy and Image.*, ed. Roger Reynolds E., Variorum Collected Studies Series 669 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 8. For Braun's discussion of late-medieval episcopal footwear, see Joseph Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient: Nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1907), 410 – 419.

⁹⁰¹ The stockings are from the late twelfth century, but they were found in a grave from the fourteenth century. Bishops were buried fully vested but was not unusual to be buried in 'old' vestments. See Agnes Geijer and Anne Marie Franzén, «Textila Gravfynd Fran Trondheims Domkyrka,» *Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum. Årbok*, (Trondheim: F. Bruns Bokhandels Forlag, 1956), 10 – 11.

⁹⁰² Both shoes are exhibited in Strängnes cathedral, Sweden. See plate 219, catalogue text page XXI and discussion in Agnes Branting and Andreas Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader Och Broderier i Sverige (Faksimileupplag)*, 2 vols (Lund: Bokförlaget Signum, 1997), 102. Another pair of liturgical shoes are preserved from the Cistercian monastery of Sorø, Denmark, now in the National Museum of Denmark, inv. no. 9076.

⁹⁰³ Vivi Lena Andersen's examination of secular footwear from Copenhagen 1300 – 1800 show that shoes of silks, embroidery and fine textiles were used by the medieval elite. Vivi Lena Andersen, «Mellem brosten, knyst, skolæst og mode. Sko fra 1300-1800 fra arkæologiske udgravninger i København» (PhD diss, University of Copenhagen, 2016), 70. However, Andersen points out that these shoes were reserved for special occasions, and that they would have had fine leather shoes for every day-use. Andersen, 246. Studies of Norwegian medieval shoe-wear has shown that leather shoes with silk embroideries were used by people of lower classes as well, suggesting that silk embroidery shoe decoration was not reserved for the elites. Gitte Hansen, "Luxury for Everyone? Embroideries on Leather Shoes and the Consumption of Silk Yarn in 11th - 13th Century Northern Europe," in *Textiles and the Medieval Economy: Production, Trade, and Consumption of Textiles, 8th-16th Centuries*, ed. Angela Ling Huang and Carsten Jahnke (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 86.

⁹⁰⁴ In the Lund Pontifical, the dalmatic had a prominent position in the ordination ritual for deacons, see Bengt Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin i Lund och Roskilde under medeltiden* (Lund: Gleerup, 1955), 252.

⁹⁰⁵ Reynolds, "Clerical Liturgical Vestments and Liturgical Colors in the Middle Ages," 4-5. For the late-medieval dalmatic, see Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 270.

⁹⁰⁶ Matching sets of vestment, the dalmatic and chasuble as a "chapel" is discussed by Barbara M. Eggert, "Edification with Thread and Needle: On the Uses and Functions of Architectonic Elements on Medieval Liturgical Vestments and Their Representation in Contemporary Paintings of the Mass of St Gregory (13th-16th C.)," in *Clothing the Sacred: Medieval Textiles as Fabric, Form, and Metaphor*, eds. Kapustka Mateusz, and Warren T. Woodfin (Berlin: Imorde, 2015), 55.

Linköping Cathedral demonstrates the design and visual impact of these vestments (fig. 7.5). The dalmatic's main body is of brownish-purple velvet with pomegranates and lobed leaves supporting scattered lily ornaments embroidered in gold and multicoloured silks. Both the dorsal and frontal sides of the garment have vertical *clavi* of tablet-woven bands in green, blue, red and gold. The frontal side also has a gold brocade *parura* on the bottom part of the garment.⁹⁰⁷ After the Reformation, dalmatics were often re-made into chasubles. The embroidered bands of the black velvet chasuble from Larvik Church, Norway, are designed as vertical *clavi* joined by a horizontal band, suggesting an original usage as dalmatic orphreys.⁹⁰⁸ On top of the dalmatic, bishops could wear a tunicle (*tunica, tunicella*), an over-garment similar to the dalmatic but with narrower cuffed sleeves.⁹⁰⁹ If they did, it was fastened with a girdle in a similar fashion to the alb and *cingulum* worn as the primary layer.⁹¹⁰ Over the dalmatic, and in some cases the tunicle, bishops wore the remaining priestly vestments, the stole, maniple and chasuble.⁹¹¹

Sculptures and visual depictions of bishops almost always show the cleric with hands covered by liturgical gloves (*chirothecae, manicae*).⁹¹² According to Durand, the wearing of gloves should remind the bishop to avoid vainglory.⁹¹³ Silk was the most common material for late-medieval episcopal gloves, which were either finely knitted or sewn.⁹¹⁴ Figure 4.7 shows the hands of the bishops in the Hólar Frontal covered in white gloves embellished with a red diamond-shaped object. Both visual depictions and the few preserved examples suggest that episcopal gloves had embellished embroidery on the dorsal (back) side, occasionally

⁹⁰⁷ The dalmatic and a matching chasuble are attributed to the Vadstena workshop in the second half of the fifteenth century. Inger Estham, "Domkirkans textilier från medeltid till tidlig nutid" in Inger Estham and Åke Nisbeth eds., *Linköpings Domkyrka III. Inledning Och Inventarier* (Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien, 2001), 116 – 117. See also Inger Estham, *Birgittinska Textilier, Bridgettine Textiles* (Stockholm: The Museum of National Antiques, 1991), 34 – 35 and Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier*, 102.

⁹⁰⁸ Larvik chasuble inv. no. C 2736. See Helen Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud: middelalderseke paramenter i Norge* (Oslo: Cammermeyers boghandel, 1941), 131 (cat.no. 17).

⁹⁰⁹ Pauline Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church: The Place of Church Vestments in the History of Art from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2013), 12. According to Johnstone, the liturgical tunic was often replaced with a dalmatic in Northern Europe.

⁹¹⁰ On the girdle for the episcopal tunicle, see Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 173.

⁹¹¹ Durand and Thibodeau, 133

⁹¹² Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 358. Since there are no preserved examples from medieval Scandinavia, we have to rely on visual depictions, written sources and comparisons to the small corpus of fifteenth – sixteenth century preserved gloves on the continent and in England.

⁹¹³ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 133. See also Durand's discussion of gloves, pp. 185 – 186.

⁹¹⁴ Joseph Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1912), 178. See also Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church*, 15 – 16.

supplemented with pearls, precious stones, or enamelled metal plates.⁹¹⁵ Episcopal rings were worn on gloved fingers as a symbol of their religious “marriage” to the church.⁹¹⁶

Archbishops were further distinguished by the wearing of a pallium for special occasions such as solemn feast days.⁹¹⁷ This white woollen and scarf-like vestment instituted the archbishop to his office, to the extent that he could not perform his duties as the leader of an archiepiscopal see before he was granted his pallium from the pope.⁹¹⁸ Since the pallium was personal to the bishop he was buried with the vestment, and most survivals consequently are from archaeological excavations. One such example was found in an archbishop’s grave in Trondheim. The wool has completely disintegrated, but the silk crosses and the gilded copper needles used to fasten the pallium to the underlying vestments are preserved.⁹¹⁹ The usage of white wool for the pallium breaks with the ornate vestments favouring gold, silks and velvets. The white wool used for pallia came from lambs blessed in the basilica of the Convent of St Agnes outside Rome on the Saint’s feast day.⁹²⁰ According to Durand, the material significance of wool for the pallium was precisely its more worldly and understated character:

It is made of cheap material, namely, wool, so that it will not have any value in and of itself but only from that which it signifies, so that it is not esteemed to be looked at with the eyes but with the mind; not for how it looks when it is worn but that it be understood for what it signifies.⁹²¹

In other words, the pallium – unlike the other episcopal vestments – should be perceived by the mind rather than the eyes in order to truly appreciate its symbolic importance as the ultimate sign of the archbishop as an ‘imitator of Christ’.⁹²² The use of the term ‘the mind’s eye’ or similar references to the eyes of the soul or the eyes of the heart have a long history within the

⁹¹⁵ According to Pauline Johnstone, the most common motif was a circle on the back of the hand with an image of the cross, the Lamb of God, or the ‘IHS’ monogram. In addition to embroidery, this ornament could be made of an enamel plaque, pearls or precious stones. Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church*, 16.

⁹¹⁶ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 133. Several episcopal rings are preserved from late medieval Scandinavia, but this topic is beyond the scope of this study.

⁹¹⁷ Reynolds, “Clerical Liturgical Vestments,” 7-8. For the usage of pallium, see Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 211.

⁹¹⁸ Durand and Thibodeau, 209.

⁹¹⁹ The fragments are now displayed in the Archbishop’s Palace Museum in Trondheim.

⁹²⁰ Reynolds, “Clerical Liturgical Vestments,” 8. The making of pallia with lamb fleece from the Blessed Saint Agnes lambs is still ongoing today. The specific mentioning of wool from Saint Agnes convent is also repeated in the Icelandic Expositions of the Mass: Kristin Norseth, ed., *Messuskýringar: Norrøne Messeforklaringer i Norsk Oversettelse: Festskrift Til Førsteamanuensis Jan H. Schumacher*, trans. Elise Kleivane (Oslo: St. Olav forlag, 2014), 152.

⁹²¹ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 206.

⁹²² On the pallium as a symbol of the archbishop as *vicarius Christi*, see Durand and Thibodeau, 133.

Christian tradition.⁹²³ In this specific context, Durand draws a parallel between pared back visual appearance and spiritual perception. Relinquishing the ornate and costly materiality characteristic of late-medieval vestments, the pallium communicated value through the use of white and ‘humble’ wool. However, the Icelandic Exposition of the Mass (*Messuskyringar*) describes how the pallium is made in white ‘*purpur*’, denoting exceptionally finely woven wool fabric.⁹²⁴ Thus, while the pallium’s white and plain woollen surfaces were significantly different from ornate vestments, the material held high religious significance and the weave represented the highest quality of woollen cloths. Still, Durand’s instruction of using the ‘mind’s eyes’ implies that ornate vestments could distract the viewer and make him focus on the garment’s material value or how it looked when it was worn, instead of truly appreciating and understanding the religious significance of a vested cleric.

This brief survey has accounted for the many underlayers of vestments worn by a late-medieval bishop. On top of these, he was crowned with a mitre, and wore a cope draped over his shoulders.

7.2 The Mitre

The most distinguished and visually recognisable vestment marking a medieval bishop was the mitre (*mitra, infula*).⁹²⁵ For Durand, the mitre was a both an “eternal crown” and a “helmet of protection and salvation” adorning the bishop’s face.⁹²⁶ The bestowal of this tall triangular folding cap was a prominent part of the ordination liturgy, as it conferred the ordinand with episcopal authority. At the end of the ordination ritual in the early-sixteenth-century Roskilde Pontifical, the mitre is placed on the newly consecrated bishop’s head as the consecrating

⁹²³ As pointed out by Eric Leland Saak: “The eyes were used to refer to the ‘windows of the soul’ by Gregory the Great, as the organs of spiritual vision by Ambrose, and, as the inner eyes of the mind or soul, were equated with the intellect by Augustine, and with Scientia by Hildegard of Bingen” in Eric Leland Saak, *High Way to Heaven: The Augustinian Platform Between Reform and Reformation, 1292-1524* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 491.

⁹²⁴ Norseth, *Messuskyringar*, 152. As discussed in Chapter Three, *purpur* could denote finely woven fabrics such as luxurious wools and silks rather than being a colour-term in the Middle Ages.

⁹²⁵ One illustration of this, is the fact that the mitre and crosier were the most common symbols used in episcopal and abbatial arms employed in ecclesiastical heraldry in the Middle Ages. Colum Hourihane, ed. *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 312.

⁹²⁶ “Lord, we place on the head of this your bishop and champion the helmet of protection and salvation, so that with face adorned and head armed with the horns of both testaments, he may appear fearsome to the adversaries of truth and, by the bounty of your grace, may he be their mighty enemy. You who endowed the face of Moses your servant, adorned from the fellowship of your discourse, with the brightest horns of your splendor and truth, commanded a crown to be placed upon the head of your high priest Aron.” Translated from Michel Andrieu, ed., *Le Pontifical Romain Au Moyen-Age. Vol. 3, Le Pontifical de Guillaume Durand.*, vol. 3 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1939), I. XIV. 56. Durand also describes the mitre as an “eternal crown”, see Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 133.

official recites a benediction describing the vestment as the sign of episcopal office (*signum pastoralis officii*).⁹²⁷ A sixteenth-century panel painting depicting the consecration of St Augustine now in the Museu Nacional d'Arte de Catalunya illustrates the culmination of the ordination ritual when the mitre as the 'eternal crown' is placed on Augustine's head (fig. 7.6).⁹²⁸ The painting also shows the abundance of luxurious textiles dressing episcopal bodies at this great occasion, from the costly velvets and embroidered saints ornamenting the copes to the gloved hands with bejewelled fingers.

The shape and form of medieval mitres varied over time, but by the fifteenth century the design of the headpieces was relatively standardised. Most resembled the example in the St Augustine panel, with a lower band around the base and a vertical band down the middle.⁹²⁹ Two bands, or lappets (*fasciae, vittae, pendula, fanones, infulae*), hung down from the back of the mitre, made either of the same material as the mitre or woven in silk. In many cases, the bottoms of the bands were further embellished with fringes, tassels or bells.⁹³⁰ The mitre was supported by parchment or layers of stiff linen. One such parchment lining was found by Árni Magnússon in 1703 inside a mitre from Skálholt Cathedral.⁹³¹ The silk was almost completely disintegrated, but two leaves from a thirteenth-century Norwegian manuscript were found inside. Although the headpiece is now lost, the double parchment leaves are studded with holes suggesting the work was embroidered with rose patterns (fig. 7.8). The design resembles another Icelandic mitre now in the National Museum of Copenhagen with large roses embroidered on blue silk in the areas between the vertical stripe and lower borders (fig. 7.7).⁹³²

A handful of mitres are preserved from Scandinavian collections, but the extant material is too scant to say anything conclusive about their design and iconography. Both the mitre found in a bishop's grave in Ribe Cathedral, Denmark, and the mitre of Bishop Kettil Karlsson from Linköping in Sweden have depictions of the Annunciation on the front.⁹³³ There are also many

⁹²⁷ Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin*, 294. The Roskilde pontifical is preserved in manuscript no. 43 in Lund University Library, Sweden.

⁹²⁸ The panel measures 250 x 193 x 9.5 cm and has been in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) in Barcelona since 1927.

⁹²⁹ For an overview of the evolution of miters in the late-medieval period see Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 474 – 482.

⁹³⁰ Rather confusingly, both the headpiece and the lappets could be described as *infulae* in Latin. Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church*, 17. For a longer discussion of the lappets, see Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 459 – 460.

⁹³¹ AM 666 b 4to. Since the manuscript was probably written in Trondheim, this suggests that the mitre was made in Norway, possible in relation to one of the Icelandic bishops being consecrated in Nidaros cathedral around 1500.

⁹³² NMD: inv.no. 909

⁹³³ The Ribe mitra is very worn, parts of the Mary figure is now lost. The mitre was discovered during excavations in 1894 and may have belonged to the grave of Bishop Peter Nielsen († 1483) or Bishop Ivar Munk

examples of Annunciation mitres in European collections, which may suggest that this iconography was seen as especially suitable for the bishop's 'crown'.⁹³⁴ Another type of late-medieval mitre was embroidered with flowers and other vegetal motifs, as emblematised by the Icelandic mitre in Copenhagen mentioned above. A mitre from Västerås Cathedral is typical for the Birgittine work at Vadstena, with floral embroidery displaying extensive use of freshwater pearls, metal embellishments and small silk stitches in prism-like patterns. Such decorations on the object recalls the surfaces of the Linköping Reliquary box discussed in Chapter Three.

7.2.1 A Precious Mitre from Linköping Cathedral

The so-called 'Linköping Mitre' is unusually well preserved and employs significant quantities of precious material (fig. 7.9; cat.no. 23). One of the mitre's lappets bears the personal coat of arms of Bishop Kettil Karlsson (Vasa) of Linköping, suggesting that the headpiece was made for his episcopacy (1459 – 1465).⁹³⁵ The mitre's linen ground is entirely covered with silk, gold and pearl embroidery and applied ornament in the form of cloisonné enamels, precious stones and metal detailing. Much of the front features an image of the Annunciation with the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin surrounded by lilies covered in seed pearls. The inscription on the left scroll reads "Ave Maria," echoing Gabriel's famous salutation. On the right, above the Virgin Mary, the inscription reads "Ecce Ancilla," which might allude to the Angelus prayer.⁹³⁶ The reverse side displays Saints Peter and Paul embroidered in silks, gold and seed pearls. In the frontal Annunciation, the Archangel is clothed in a white foot-length garment resembling an alb covered in white seed-pearls, underscoring the importance of the alb as an

(† 1539). Now in the National Museum in Copenhagen, inv. no. D 3645. See Elna Møller and E. Nyborg, *Danmarks Kirker: Hefte. Ribe Domkirke: Inventar*, (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseets Forlag, 1979), 538. The Linköping Mitre is now in the History Museum in Stockholm, inv. no.: 3920:1.

⁹³⁴ Such as the early fifteenth-century mitre from Minden Cathedral, Germany. Inv. no. K 6156, Kunstgewerbe Museum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.

⁹³⁵ This attribution is based on the presence of his personal coat of arms on one of the lappets, with the coat of arms of Linköping Cathedral on the other one, see Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth, "The Linköping Mitre. Ecclesiastical Textiles and Episcopal Identity," in *Charismatic Objects: From Roman Times to the Middle Ages*, ed. Marianne Vedeler et al. (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2018), 211.

⁹³⁶ From the fourteenth century, this prayer became part of everyday life with the ringing of the angelus bell at 6 am, noon and 6 pm. The Angelus prayer opens with the words "*Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae, et concepit de Spiritu Sancto.*" – "The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived of the Holy Spirit." This text reflects the iconography of the embroidery well and includes the words "Ecce ancilla Domini" – "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord". The Vadstena Bridgettine nuns – the proposed makers of this liturgical headpiece – would have been accustomed to praying the Angelus prayer three times a day.

angelic vestment.⁹³⁷ The predominance of shimmering pearls on the front contrasts strikingly with the golden background surface. Since the golden background is now quite faded, the interplay between the white pearls and the gold and red threads is less conspicuous today than it would have been some five hundred years ago.

Rather than the embroidered figurative imagery, the most arresting feature of the Linköping Mitre is the cloisonné enamels applied in bands on the headpiece (the *tituli* and *circuli*) and down both lappets. The Linköping Mitre is one of very few remaining vestments with applied enamels, although other surviving examples and documentary evidence suggest such employment of enamel was a relatively traditional feature of ecclesiastical clothing.⁹³⁸ The eighty-seven enamel plaques on the Linköping Mitre have been much discussed in scholarship on the textile.⁹³⁹ It is likely that they date from the first half of the thirteenth century, but a mixture of Byzantine and western European elements, such as the combination of Latin and Greek lettering, makes it difficult to determine their original place of production (fig. 7.10).⁹⁴⁰ However, the following discussion is not focused on provenance, but asks the question of why sets of enamels that were already two centuries old were reused in the Linköping Mitre, and how the enamels contributed to the aesthetic effect of the episcopal headpiece.

The luxurious materiality of the enamel-studded headpiece is characteristic of *mitre pretiosa* or the precious mitre. By the fifteenth century, a hierarchy of mitres was established based on the materials employed and was described in sources like the official ‘*Caeremoniale*

⁹³⁷ As discussed in x, clerics wore albs so that they could “imitate the angels”, see Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 141. On angels wearing albs in Annunciations scenes, see Maurice B. McNamee, *Vested Angels: Eucharistic Allusions in Early Netherlandish Paintings* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).

⁹³⁸ The loss of Byzantine enamel is substantial, according to Paul Hetherington’s calculations only 2% (or even less) of enamel plaques produced by Byzantine artists survive today. Paul Hetherington, “Byzantine Cloisonné Enamel: Production, Survival and Loss,” *Byzantion* 76 (2006): 213.

⁹³⁹ Several enamels are now lost, and originally there were probably one hundred and sixteen such plaques. This includes the larger roundels that go down the front and along the bottom of the front and reverse side of the mitre, the smaller roundels that run down each of the lappets, and the small triangular shaped enamels with vegetative motifs that frame the larger roundels. In terms of provenance, Venice has been the prevailing view, but Paul Hetherington recently attributed them to a workshop in Constantinople under Latin rule after 1204. This would explain the mix of Latin and Greek lettering and the distinctive Byzantine character of the works. Hetherington also argues that the presence of a Latin episcopacy after 1204 brought on a demand for new liturgical vestments. It is not unlikely that skilled goldsmiths in Constantinople continued their work after the occupation for their new Latin patrons. After the fall of the Latin Empire in 1261, we can assume that these vestments became obsolete and found their way to central Europe. See Paul Hetherington, “The Enamels on a Mitre from Linköping Cathedral, and Art in Thirteenth Century Constantinople,” in *Enamels, Crowns, Relics and Icons*, ed. Paul Hetherington (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2008), 12-14. From this point on, however, their history is unknown until they appear in the Vadstena/ Linköping some 200 years later. However, textiles and textile materials travelled widely and without great difficulties. Trade connections between Sweden and continental Europe were well established, and we also know that Bishop Kettil himself was at the papal curia for a longer period of time on two occasions. Since he was elected bishop at a young age, he needed a papal dispensation in order to become an ordained Bishop of Linköping.

⁹⁴⁰ Hetherington, “The Enamels on a Mitre from Linköping Cathedral,” 14.

Romanum’.⁹⁴¹ The simplest mitres, *mitra simplex*, were made of undecorated white silk or linen and used for funerals, Good Friday and for the blessing of candles on Candlemas. The second and most common category of mitres was the *auriphrygiata* embroidered with silks, gold, silver and pearls. These mitres were worn during Lent, feast days and penitential processions. The third and most valuable was the precious mitre, *mitra pretiosa*. In addition to silk, gold and pearl embroideries, these vestments were distinguished by the use of jewels and gilded metal plates. This most precious episcopal headpiece was reserved for services where the *Te Deum* was sung. It is important to note that the liturgical commentaries to the Roman rite do not mention the iconography of the mitres, defining their place in the hierarchy solely by the use of different materials.⁹⁴²

I have argued elsewhere that this material hierarchy established by the use of plain fabric, embroidery, jewels and ornate metal plates could be used for ascertaining authority as a means of episcopal self-fashioning.⁹⁴³ Headwear was the most important social distinction in medieval times. Thus, the mitre was not only the “eternal crown” of a bishop, signalling his episcopal dignity and sacred position, but also a means for the bishop to display his social position as the religious leader of the diocese. One example of this is how the wearing of specific types of mitres was governed by the wearer’s position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the religious occasion. At provincial councils, only the archbishop was allowed to wear a *mitra pretiosa* while the other bishops wore *mitra auriphrygiata* and any mitred abbots wore *mitra simplex*.⁹⁴⁴ In the Notke panel painting of the *Mass of St Gregory* from Århus Cathedral (fig. 1.1), the presence of the Pope St Gregory requires the attending bishops to wear a mitre simplex, seen in the white and undecorated mitre of the bishop at the back of the painting. Parallels can be drawn to the secular aristocracy, where sumptuary laws were introduced in an attempt to regulate secular dress according to social position.⁹⁴⁵ Jewels, for instance, were potent markers of social rank, and thus reserved for knights and clergy with a substantial income. Returning to the Linköping Mitre, the extensive use of enamel plaques and semi-precious stones qualified the headpiece to be valued as a *mitra pretiosa*. As mentioned above, the personal coat of arms of Bishop Kettil together with the coat of arms of Linköping Cathedral

⁹⁴¹ According to Braun, the concept of this trident hierarchy of episcopal headwear was established by the fourteenth century. See Braun, *Handbuch der Paramentik*, 187.

⁹⁴² Braun, 187 – 188.

⁹⁴³ Nødseth, “The Linköping Mitre,” 210.

⁹⁴⁴ Braun, *Handbuch Der Paramentik*, 187.

⁹⁴⁵ Eva Andersson, “Foreign Seductions. Sumptuary Laws, Consumption and National Identity in Early Modern Sweden,” in *Fashionable Encounters. Perspectives and Trends in Textile and Dress in the Early Modern Nordic World*, ed. Kirsten Toftegaard et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 16.

suggest that the mitre was made for his episcopacy, possibly for his inauguration in 1460. The intentional re-use or spoliation of thirteenth-century enamels may have reflected Bishop Kettil's desire to own a *mitre pretiosa*, since applied metal plates were a prerequisite for making this most precious headpiece. However, inconsistencies in the iconography suggest that the material value of the enamels was more important than their iconographical meaning.

7.3 The Material Significance of Enamels

Enamels were highly sought after for the embellishment of liturgical art. The material significance of enamels can be understood through the symbolic meaning of the two precious materials, glass and gilded metal, that are burned and melted to make the colourful composites. As Hahn has pointed out, this complex process of production conjured "virtuous associations" of being purified in fire.⁹⁴⁶ Moreover, the 'meaning' of medieval enamels and their allure and popularity for liturgical objects, reliquaries and vestments can also be discussed in the context of their artistic setting. The making of enamels required an extremely technical and specialised skillset; a level of craftsmanship that was valued and admired in medieval times.⁹⁴⁷ In the Linköping enamels, two different techniques of *cloisonné* enamel, so-called *senksmelz* and *vollsmelz*, created a mixed-media surface with coloured, glowing glass and gilded metalwork. The polished enamel and gold gave them an aesthetic value that is perhaps hard to appreciate today since they are now quite faded and partly damaged. The combination of embroideries in freshwater pearls, gold and silk together with precious stones and the shimmering enamels made a three-dimensional and tactile surface that would have shimmered as the bishop walked through a dimly lit church. This aesthetic effect was important for their value and re-use. In other words, the aesthetic and material value and the rare and splendid craftsmanship of these metalworks were integral to their re-use in the Linköping Mitre.

The roundels of the lappets all display male, nimbed and bust-length portraits with no identifying names or titles. It is unusual that there are a total of fourteen apostles present, with duplicates of St John and St Matthew. Furthermore, there is only one archangel and no images of the Virgin that one might expect in a program like this.⁹⁴⁸ The enamels show signs of having been reused at least in one other textile before they were applied to the Linköping Mitre.

⁹⁴⁶ Cynthia Hahn, "Production, Prestige, and Patronage of Medieval Enamels," in *From Minor to Major. The Minor Arts in Medieval Art History*, ed. Colun Hourihane (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 155.

⁹⁴⁷ Hahn, "Production, Prestige, and Patronage," 156 – 157.

⁹⁴⁸ Hetherington, "The Enamels on a Mitre from Linköping Cathedral," 5.

Moreover, the varying sizes of the figurative enamels led Paul Hetherington to argue that there was at least one other intermediate user for these enamels, and that they originally came from at least two different sets of vestments.⁹⁴⁹ In other words, the Linköping enamels were probably acquired as two or more incomplete sets. This would explain the eclectic iconographical program, the varying sizes and the traces of having been sewn onto previous textiles. The Byzantine character of the enamels may have contributed to their value as examples of intricately worked objects from a distant place of origin. For a young and ambitious bishop, the acquisition of a precious mitre embroidered with his personal coat of arms was an act of self-fashioning.

7.4 The Cope

The cope (*cappa, pluviale*) was a semi-circular cloak draped over the shoulders and fastened in the front with a metal clasp (called a morse) or an embroidered band (fig. 7.11).⁹⁵⁰ Copes were originally used as a hooded over-garment protecting against weather and providing warmth in cold monasteries, churches and cathedrals.⁹⁵¹ By the thirteenth century, the cape hood had become a flat and ornamental shield, known as a *clipeus*, suitable for a larger embroidered scene.⁹⁵² The most well-known examples preserved in museums today, such as the magnificent Opus Anglicanum copes covered in intricate silk and gold embroideries, were for festive or celebratory occasions. More muted and simple copes in dark silks or other fabrics used for ferial days and by low-ranking clerics or cantors are seldom preserved, but were commonly used in cathedrals, abbeys and churches.⁹⁵³ When inventories mention copes without any further descriptions of materials or motifs, it is difficult to know whether the garment was a ceremonial or ferial cope. By the fifteenth century, festive copes were made of luxurious velvets with embroideries focused in orphrey bands running the length of the semicircle and on the *clipeus*.

⁹⁴⁹ Also, the size of these larger roundels varies from forty-two to fifty millimetres in diameter. For example, the roundel of Saint John shown here is seven millimetres smaller than the roundel of Saint John from the previous slide. To complicate matters further, the enamels are made in two different techniques of *cloisonné* enamel, so called *senksmelz* and *vollsmelz*. It is likely that the ornamental plaques were produced later to enhance the roundels with figurative content. Their original usage may very well have been on mitres similar to this, but they could also have been used in ecclesiastical gloves or other high-status vestments. Hetherington, 12.

⁹⁵⁰ Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 306. Reynolds, "Clerical Liturgical Vestments," 5.

⁹⁵¹ The cope was also known as *pluviale* from their original function of protecting clerical bodies against the weather (from Latin *pluvia*, rain). Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 309.

⁹⁵² The cope *clipeus*'s development is discussed in Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church*, 11 – 12.

⁹⁵³ Christine Linnell, "Opus Anglicanum with Particular Reference to Copes as Liturgical Show-Pieces, Ecclesiastical Exemplars and Eucharistic References" (PhD diss, University of St Andrews, 1995), 29.

Cope orphreys were often somewhat wider than chasuble orphreys and their main iconographies were columns of saints framed in architectural niches.⁹⁵⁴

A small number of late-medieval ecclesiastical copes are preserved in Scandinavian collections, including complete copes and fragments. The majority of extant examples are from Sweden, where these garments continued to be used after the Reformation.⁹⁵⁵ In the treasury of Uppsala Cathedral, a collection of copes illustrates the stylistic changes these textiles underwent from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. A late-thirteenth-century cope of red silk with gold embroidered roundels known as the Martyr Cope is a striking example of a large-scale embroidered pictorial programme similar to the *Opus Anglicanum* copes.⁹⁵⁶ Probably made in Paris ca. 1260 – 1280, this cope shows twenty-six martyrs surrounding Christ crowning the Virgin in the main top roundel at the back.⁹⁵⁷ The clever roundel design allows the figures to be positioned so that they appear to be vertically aligned when worn on a human body, making the narrative more easily recognisable. The orphrey – the band lining the opening at the front of the cope – is not embroidered but made of a gold patterned ribbon weave. Two embroidered angels with censers are displayed on the small ornamental hood, the *clipeus*. By the fifteenth century, cope design had shifted significantly. The embroideries are now focused on the wider orphreys and the much larger *clipeus*, and the main body was often made of precious silks or velvets, as seen on a late-fifteenth-century cope in the same collection.⁹⁵⁸ In this cope, the main body is made of a patterned white silk damask with pomegranates and small crowns, suggesting a Florentine origin.⁹⁵⁹ The orphreys and *clipeus* were probably made in Cologne or the Low Countries, and are embroidered in silks and gold membrane thread.⁹⁶⁰ As the main motif in the *clipeus*, we see the Betrothal of Mary and Joseph. The edges of the *clipeus* and the lower hem of the cope are lined with red silk fringes.

Festive or celebratory copes such as the examples from Uppsala were garments of great visual splendour. In her dissertation on *Opus Anglicanum* copes, Christine Linnell describes ecclesiastical copes as liturgical show-pieces.⁹⁶¹ As discussed in the previous chapter, there is bias of preservation on medieval copes; only the most splendid and ornate examples have

⁹⁵⁴ Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church*, 14.

⁹⁵⁵ Bengt Stolt, "Korkåpans användning efter Reformationen," *Formvännen* 58 (1963): 125.

⁹⁵⁶ The cope is now in the Uppsala Cathedral Museum.

⁹⁵⁷ Inger Estham, "Textilsamlingen från 1300-Talet till 1860-talet," in *Uppsala Domkyrka, V. Inredning och inventarier.*, ed. Herman Bengtsson (Växjö: Upplandsmuseet, 2010), 241.

⁹⁵⁸ The cope is now in the Uppsala Cathedral Museum.

⁹⁵⁹ Estham, «Textilsamlingen Från 1300-Talet till 1860-Talet,» 284.

⁹⁶⁰ Estham, 284.

⁹⁶¹ Linnell, "Opus Anglicanum with Particular Reference to Copes," 44.

survived. These costly and festive copes were worn by bishops as a distinctive marker of office akin to the mitre, regardless of its potential use by other ranks.⁹⁶² Most medieval depictions of bishops show the prelate wearing a magnificent cope on top of his other vestments (figs. 7.1 and 7.2). Bishops and priests could wear copes for the Pre-Mass liturgy, the Divine Office (the recitation of psalms, reading and prayers), sacramental rituals such as marriage and baptism, processions in and outside the church and for burials.⁹⁶³ Moreover, bishops could wear festive copes for the pontifical Mass, great feast days, special events such as coronations, investitures and ordinations, and processions and civic occasions. Copes for cantors and members of the choir are often referred to as ‘choir copes’ (No. “korkåpe”/ Sv. “korkåpa”/ D. “Korkåbe”/ Is. Kórkápu or Kantarakápa) similar to the German *Chormantel*.⁹⁶⁴ Celebratory copes were reserved for the greatest feast days and distinguished from ferial copes not only through their extensive embroideries in gold and silks, but through the use of colour. The Nidaros Ordinal states that for the most significant ecclesiastical feast days, four cantors dressed in coloured copes should lead the choir song.⁹⁶⁵ For lesser feast days the choir was led by only one cantor, and the ordinal does not mention specific colours for the cope. We can assume that this was a ferial and more muted dark-coloured cope.⁹⁶⁶ Thus, the use of festive copes established occasion within the cathedral.

While copes were not reserved for episcopal use, there are sources indicating that the garment was intentionally used to establish and display the bishop’s authority and position within the cathedral in late-medieval Scandinavia. The Roskilde Pontifical states that when a bishop is ordained, assisting priests should wear their chasubles while attending bishops could wear festive copes.⁹⁶⁷ This prescription is interesting because chasubles, as seen in the previous chapter, were generally reserved for the eucharistic celebration. However, the Roskilde passage suggests that since chasubles were regarded as symbols of priestly status, they were worn by priests at ordinations to separate them from higher-ranking clerics like bishops. Bishops probably wore the most ornate copes available in the cathedral’s collection and could chose

⁹⁶² Although copes were not strictly an episcopal vestment, as they could be worn by any high-ranking member of the clergy, most depictions of medieval bishops show the prelate wearing a magnificent cope on top of his other vestments, and the cope is thus included in this chapter as a significant ‘top layer’ for the vested bishop.

⁹⁶³ Nigel Morgan, “Embroidered Textiles in the Service of the Church,” in *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus Anglicanum*, ed. Clare Browne et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 26; and Reynolds, “Clerical Liturgical Vestments,” 5.

⁹⁶⁴ For the etymology of German *chormantel* as well as *cappa* and *pluviale*, see Braun, *Die Liturgische Gewandung im Occident*, 306 – 308.

⁹⁶⁵ “Quatuor cantores cappis induti cum coloribus tenent chorum” in Lilli Gjerløw, ed., *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae (orðubók)* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1968), 415.

⁹⁶⁶ Gjerløw, *Ordo Nidrosiensis*, 417.

⁹⁶⁷ Strömberg, *Den pontifikala liturgin*, 283.

festive copes that were suitable for the occasion. While many clerics present at a pontifical Mass could vest themselves with copes, the bishop was distinguished by wearing the most splendid examples. It was customary for bishops to commission a splendid cope to be used at great feasts and visitations around the diocese.⁹⁶⁸ As will be discussed towards the end of this chapter, these garments were regarded as the bishop's personal property.

One such example is the magnificent cope listed among the possessions Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson brought with him when he fled from Trondheim in 1537.⁹⁶⁹ This ornate cope was made of silver brocade with a precious golden morse and an embroidered *clipeus* with the image of St Olav holding a gilded axe. Since the year 1513 was embroidered on the *clipeus*, this cope was most likely commissioned by, or gifted to, Archbishop Erik Walkendorf (1510 – 1522). Archbishop Walkendorf, as Øystein Ekroll has shown, promoted a renewed interest for St Olav's cult and relics, including the reliquary of Olav's axe held by the Trondheim Cathedral.⁹⁷⁰ This example shows how the commissioning and design of splendid copes were important for episcopal self-fashioning and the public image of the prelate.

Copes have traditionally been regarded as a non-liturgical vestment and are not discussed at any length in the various medieval expositions of the Mass. In Durand's discussion of "Garments and Equipment" he notes that the cope signifies "perseverance right to the end" and has an open front because "eternal life is open to those who live in holiness, or whose life ought to be made well known as an example to others."⁹⁷¹ Even though Durand presents this short interpretation of the virtues that the cope could instil in its wearers, this garment was not included in ceremonies of ordination or in the vesting prayers of priests. Thus, it has been interpreted primarily as a garment of prestige and distinction, exemplifying what Maureen Miller described as a shared language of power and holiness in clerical hierarchies.⁹⁷² Linnell has, however, challenged this view and argued that celebratory copes held a "sacred liturgical function" as well as an "important public nature and powerful secular potential".⁹⁷³ Linnell has noted a significant connection between the wearing of festive copes and the singing of the

⁹⁶⁸ Stolt, «Korkåpans Användning,» 126.

⁹⁶⁹ "Item een koerkap wesende een zilueren stuck mi teen costelicke vergulde span mit die wapenen van Denemarcken mi teen lap achter daerop hangende mit sanct Oleff, hebbende in zyn handt eyn vergulden byll van dan. 1513. mit een vergulden knoep daer aen hangende.» in Audun Dybdahl (ed.), *Nidaros Domkirkes og geistlighets kostbarheter: belyst ved 17 skriflige kilder 1307-1577 med oversettelser og kommentarer* (Trondheim: Tapir, 2002), 126 and 162 (translation). DNV nr 1118 (dated 1548).

⁹⁷⁰ Øystein Ekroll, "The Octogonal Shrine Chapel of Saint Olav at Nidaros Cathedral" (PhD diss, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2015), 371 – 372.

⁹⁷¹ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and their Vestments*, 140.

⁹⁷² Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 182.

⁹⁷³ Linnell, "Opus Anglicanum with Particular Reference to Copes," 245.

angelic Sanctus prayer in the pre-Mass liturgy.⁹⁷⁴ This moment, right before the eucharistic celebration, was when the celebrant (when wearing a cope) would remove the vestment to don the chasuble. Bishops and other high-ranking clerics present would wear their copes during this ritual. Embroidered images of angels on copes, some of whom hold musical instruments or are depicted with their mouths open as if they are singing, could work as visual manifestations of the invisible presence, establishing a “visual counterpart to the earthly ceremony – itself a counterpart to the celestial liturgy” according to Linnell.⁹⁷⁵ Such musical or singing angels are frequently found not only on earlier English copes, but also in fifteenth and early-sixteenth-century Scandinavian copes and cope fragments.⁹⁷⁶

A small number of such late-medieval ecclesiastical copes and cope fragments are preserved in Scandinavian collections, predominantly in Sweden. Figure 7.12 depicts the late-fifteenth-century Fogdö Cope with a body of crimson velvet studded with applied motifs including angels standing on wheels, fleur-de-lys and other flowers embroidered with coloured silks and silver-gilt threads (cat.no. 24).⁹⁷⁷ While the angels are not vested in robes or holding musical instruments, the four seraphs framing the central motif evoke the angelic associations of festive copes as discussed above. At the centre of the dorsal side, just below the clipeus, is an eagle on a barrel. The motif read as a rebus for Cardinal John Morton (c. 1420 – 1500), combining the depiction of his namesake and patron St John the Evangelist with the barrel (tun) alluding to the second part of the cardinal’s last name. Cardinal Morton’s crest is prominently displayed on the back of the cope, further emphasized by the surrounding angels standing on wheels. As Clare Browne and Michaela Zöschg pointed out, this may suggest a commemorative function as a vestment commissioned to ensure the Cardinal’s remembrance.⁹⁷⁸ John the Evangelist also appears in the clipeus embroideries together with the Virgin Mary, an iconography that reoccurs in a similar cope bearing the personal badge of Cardinal Morton now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.⁹⁷⁹ Since the Fogdö Cope is a spoil of war from

⁹⁷⁴ Linnell, 234.

⁹⁷⁵ Linnell, 244 – 245.

⁹⁷⁶ Copos with angels influenced by English late medieval embroidery include a cope fragment from Stavanger Cathedral in Norway, cat.no. 28 in Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*. 74 and 137. Moreover, two copes in Sweden, the Fogdö Cope, discussed further below, and a cope from St Olai Church in Norrköping, now displayed in Linköping Cathedral Museum. See Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier*, 85 – 86.

⁹⁷⁷ Now in SHM, inv. no. 23128:15. See Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier*, 85 – 86.

⁹⁷⁸ Clare Browne et al., eds., *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus Anglicanum* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 263; cat.no. 77.

⁹⁷⁹ Two similar copes bearing the personal badge of cardinal Morton are preserved in England, preserved in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and in St Mary’s College, Oscott (near Birmingham). For a discussion of the V&A cope, see Browne et al., p. 263; cat.no. 77.

the Polish–Swedish War (1621–1625), this vestment was not in use in Sweden during the medieval period. Still, other examples of late-fifteenth-century copes with English embroidery testify to the presence of similar vestments in late-medieval Scandinavia.⁹⁸⁰

A somewhat earlier example of a cope designed to commemorate a bishop is the so-called Bishop Thomas’s cope from Strängnäs Cathedral in Sweden (fig. 7.13; cat.no. 25). The main body is of crimson velvet brocade, and the orphreys and clipeus are made of a (now) pale brownish silk with applied figures. Embroideries in multi-coloured silks and gilded threads are framed with dark brown wool. The clipeus shows the standing Virgin with Child framed by embroidered leaves. A gilded silver ball-shaped bell is suspended at the tip of the clipeus, and decorated with two rows of roundels framing an inscription reading “*orate pro thoma ep(iscop)a strengensi*”; “pray for Thomas, bishop of Strängnäs” (fig. 7.14).⁹⁸¹ This miniscule inscription was hardly readable for the laity, despite its prominent position on the dorsal side of the vestment. Still, the presence of the bishop’s own ‘voice’ in this small but luxurious pendant suggests that the vestment was commissioned and worn by Bishop Thomas Simonsson of Strängnäs (1429 – 1443). Through the small jewellery inscription, the cope became a vehicle for prayer for the Strängnäs bishop, a physical reminder on a vestment worn for centuries after his death. Maureen Miller points to similar vestment inscriptions as tools of commemoration, encouraging prayers and remembrance of priests and bishops in the afterlife.⁹⁸² By commissioning copes with commemorative functions, late-medieval bishops and cardinals fashioned their public personae, established their role in the clerical hierarchy, and encouraged intercessory prayers for their souls.⁹⁸³

⁹⁸⁰ Examples of vestments with English embroideries include a cope from Norrköping (the Saint Olai cope, now in Linköping Cath. Museum), a chasuble from Hedrum Church in Norway (c. 1400, UiO: imv.no. Ok-03699), a chasuble from Kvelle Church, (inv. no. Ok 02079 NMN), a chasuble Sønedeled Church (inv. no. OK 04576 NMN), a chasuble from Mandal Church, and fragments of a cope from the Stavanger Cathedral in Norway. For the Norwegian examples, see Engelstad, *Messeklær og alterskrud*, 72 – 74.

⁹⁸¹ Branting and Lindblom, *Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier*, 126, see also plates 104 and 105, and cat. text page XXIII.

⁹⁸² Miller lists stoles from the tenth to thirteenth century with inscriptions in this manner, such as an eleventh- or twelfth-century stole from Andechs with the inscription “in nomine D Nora pro me”. Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 160, including fn. 54.

⁹⁸³ On the importance of prayers for the dead, see for example Anu Lahtinen and Mia Korpiola, eds., *Dying Prepared in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). See esp. Chapter 3: Cindy Wood, ‘William Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester (1366 - 1404) and His Preparations for Death’, in *Dying Prepared in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe*, ed. Anu Lahtinen and Mia Korpiola, The Northern World (Brill, 2017), 44–64.

7.5 The Sudary Mantle

The crosier – a crook-shaped pastoral staff – was an important part of a bishop’s insignia.⁹⁸⁴ This symbolic pastoral staff was also vested with a white linen cloth described as a *sudarium*, referencing the facecloth covering Christ’s head at the Entombment.⁹⁸⁵ Figure 7.1 and 7.2 shows two bishops from medieval painted altar panels, with crosiers vested in white linen sudaries.⁹⁸⁶ The crosier sudary or ‘crosier mantle’ was a triangular linen veil attached to the crosier, allowing assisting clerics to handle the staff without directly touching it.⁹⁸⁷ Wrapping the crosier with a linen vestment served to elevate the pastoral staff, employing textile rhetoric to communicate the sacred status of the object within as partly hidden and partly visible. Textile wrappings added ceremony and conferred extra dignity and sacredness on those allowed to touch what is inside. Durand describes the sudary as a cloth for wiping off the bishop’s sweat, aligning its meaning and symbolism with that of the maniple.⁹⁸⁸ However, much like the maniple, the crosier sudary lost its practical function and became an ornamented and ceremonial vestment by the late Middle Ages. This is evident in one of the preserved sudaries from Sweden now on display in the Uppsala Cathedral treasury (fig. 7.15; cat.no. 26).⁹⁸⁹

This linen sudary with embroidered bands and a triangular silk heading was probably made by Vadstena nuns in the 1420s.⁹⁹⁰ Three white tabby linen cloths are joined with loop-braided open work borders in silk and gold threads, and the linen is further embellished with borders of embroidered tendrils with acorns and flowers (fig. 7.17). Embroidered monograms in red silk (now faded and partly lost) on top of blue linen tabby cover the triangular sudary heading (fig. 7.16). “IHS” is embroidered in silver and freshwater pearls on one side, and a Marian monogram and the emblem of the Vadstena clergy are sewn on the other. Lattices of woven and loop-braided ribbons in red and green, further decorated with embroidered red and gold roundels and tassels, cover the linen. These red and gold roundels evoke Christ’s wounds,

⁹⁸⁴ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 197.

⁹⁸⁵ In medieval Latin, *sudarium* could mean both sweat-cloth, napkin, burial shroud and wrappings for sacred relics, see: Jan Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 1002.

⁹⁸⁶ Kulturhistorisk museum i Oslo acc.nr. C3215.

⁹⁸⁷ Nigel Morgan and Pauline Johnstone (2003), “Vestments, ecclesiastical” in *Grove Art Online*. Retrieved 30 June. 2020, from <<https://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oa0-9781884446054-e-7000089129>>

⁹⁸⁸ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*. 201.

⁹⁸⁹ In addition to the Uppsala Sudary, one complete example and one fragment is preserved in the History Museum in Stockholm, both fifteenth century. Inv. nos. 23022:6 and 4110:2. The Ylmheim inventory mentions “two old sudaria” suggesting that in the early fourteenth century these vestments had been in use for some time by Scandinavian bishops: “Item ij. gaumolsudaria” DN XXXX.

⁹⁹⁰ Estham, «Textilsamlingen Från 1300-Talet till 1860-Talet,» 261. See also Agnes Branting, ‘Några Meddelanden Om Svenska Mässkläder’, *Fornvännen* (1910): 172.

underscoring the sudary's corporeality as Christ's facecloth.⁹⁹¹ In English medieval plays, sudaries could be described as spotted with blood and used as a "prompt to mediate on Christ's wounds".⁹⁹² The religious significance of sudary cloths and the idea of the linen cloth scattered with Christ's blood were familiar to Vadstena nuns if not the Uppsala laity. In the revelations of Birgitta, Mary appears in a vision describing how she wiped dry the wounds and limbs of her son with a white linen cloth before the entombment.⁹⁹³ In this context, the Uppsala Sudary was a ceremonial and elaborate vestment for the bishop's staff, evoking the blood-stained veil wrapping Christ after the Crucifixion.

7.6 The Vested Bishop: Wrapped in Sanctity

A fifteenth-century bishop like Kettel Karlsson of Linköping would have been vested in a multitude of garments for liturgical celebrations such as pontifical masses or processions. Written documents, visual depictions and preserved textiles testify to the extensive clothing system reserved for bishops in late-medieval Scandinavia. Durand explains that wearing all of the vestments showed how the bishops "possess perfectly all of those orders, as the one who bestows them on others."⁹⁹⁴ Since the bishop wore the vestments that constituted the major orders – the dalmatic, maniple, stole and chasuble – this layered clothing communicated the bishop's authority as the one who conferred these orders upon clerics in his diocese. In other words, the fully vested bishop embodied all of the sacred orders through his extensive textile layering.

Other layers were specifically reserved for the bishop. Among the nine episcopal vestments and insignia discussed in this chapter, the mitre, crosier and ring, were the most recognisable and important markers of episcopal status and served to further elevate and distinguish the bishop's body. Durand explains that compared to the priest, the bishop "more explicitly bears a likeness to the Saviour" and thus, more ornaments had to be used in adorning the bishop.⁹⁹⁵ This textile strategy of clothing the bishop in more layers than any other members

⁹⁹¹ The roundels also echo the roundels of Bridgettine nun's crowns, which also references Christ's five wounds. Estham, "Textilsamlingen Från 1300-Talet till 1860-Talet," 263.

⁹⁹² Sarah Brazil, *The Corporeality of Clothing in Medieval Literature, Early Drama, Art, and Music* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 80 -81. Brazil discuss sudaries described as "cloth droppid blud"/ "this cloth with blude þat is so stayned")

⁹⁹³ Birgitta of Sweden, *Liber caelestis. The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden: Volume 1, Books I-III*, trans. Denis Searby. Introduction and notes by Bridget Morris. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 74 (Ch 10:35).

⁹⁹⁴ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 180

⁹⁹⁵ Durand and Thibodeau, 180.

of the clergy as a way of communicating his elevated position concurs with the wrapping principle discussed throughout this study. Wrapping with textile layers defined and bestowed sacredness and meaning on objects, spaces and clerics within the church, making them into *sacred bodies*. The affluence of vestments clothing and enclosing the bishop's body not only marked him as sacred but distinguished him from other clerics within the major orders as *more sacred*, with a stronger resemblance to Christ.⁹⁹⁶ In episcopal ordination rituals, the prelate's elevated position was confirmed with the donning of a precious mitre as the foremost symbol of his episcopal office.

To reiterate, I position clerical vesting within the context of the 'reliquary effect' as the layering of precious materials to amplify the sanctity of bones or bodies. In her discussion of nested reliquaries Cynthia Hahn describes the application of layers upon layers of precious materials as the "Christian strategy of presentation and display".⁹⁹⁷ Like the reliquary, episcopal vestments enclose the earthly and mortal – the bishop's body – within something heavenly. Obviously, the bishop cannot be directly compared to a relic. However, vesting practices mirror relics' strategies for conveying something inherently worldly or human as sacred by nesting and wrapping with layers of rich materials. Hahn's concept of the reliquary effect can thus be broadened to encompass the wrapping with sacred textiles found in the vesting of priestly and episcopal bodies. The vesting of a bishop then can be seen as an enshrinement practice where "each successive layer of material, especially if precious or aesthetically value-added, seems to have increased potential"⁹⁹⁸ Following this line of thought, it is clear that the top layers of the fully vested bishop – most prominently the mitre and cope - were made of the finest materials available. For instance, great effort was put into the making of the Linköping Mitre, employing precious stones, pearls, silks, metalwork and the reused Byzantine enamels. Thus, this *mitre pretiosa* enshrined the bishop in material splendour and gave honour and value to the bishop wearing it. Such textiles worked in similar ways as the reliquaries and relic wrappings discussed in Chapter Three, establishing their contents as "unique, authentic, powerful and effective."⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁶ For Durand on the bishop as *vicarius Christi*, see Durand and Thibodeau, 133.

⁹⁹⁷ Cynthia Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 60.

⁹⁹⁸ Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect*, 58.

⁹⁹⁹ Hahn, 7.

7.7 Divesting the Bishop

Understanding the vesting of bishops as an act of wrapping also entails the potential to unwrap, uncovering the mortal body enshrined in symbolic vestments. Actions of wrapping and unwrapping are central to this study because they unveil the symbolic potential of textile layers to communicate the sacred. While the vesting ritual was explored as an action of symbolically wrapping the priest as a sacred body in the previous chapter, there are fewer descriptions of the divesting of clerical bodies in liturgical texts. However, the early sixteenth-century Swedish rhyme chronicle *Sturekrönikan* describes the public undressing or divesting of a late-medieval bishop:

In Linköping I laid down my episcopal vestments and took up both shield and spear
And equipped myself as a warrior who can break lances in combat.¹⁰⁰⁰

This text provides a fascinating glimpse of how the ritual removal of episcopal vestments could be used strategically to manage the conflicting roles of late-medieval bishops.¹⁰⁰¹ It was generally accepted that bishops held secular responsibilities that sometimes required them to act as military and political leaders, although the Church officially condemned clerical participation in wars.¹⁰⁰² Bishop Kettil is not unique among late-medieval bishops in Scandinavia, as there are numerous examples of “warrior bishops” having to juggle their conflicting roles.¹⁰⁰³ Among the possessions of Archbishop Aslak Bolt (1429) of Trondheim were pieces of steel mail armour, plate armour and an ornamented helmet.¹⁰⁰⁴ The last Archbishop of Trondheim, Olav Engelbrektsson (1523 – 1537), built a fortress on a small island

¹⁰⁰⁰ “I lynköping nederlagde iag myn biscopsskrud. Och tog ighen bade skiöll och spiwt/ Och redde mig wth som en örligx man som glaffwen I striid well brytha kan.” in G. E. Klemming, *Svenska medeltidens rim-krönikor* 3: *Nye krönikans fortsätningar, eller Sture-krönikorna* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1867), 152. I would like to thank professor Ivar Berg (NTNU) for help with the translation.

¹⁰⁰¹ The events from Bishop Kettil Karlssons life is from the last chronicle in the Swedish Rhyme Chronicle (*Sturekrönikan*) covering the period 1452 – 1478: *Sturekrönikan*, in G. E. Klemming, *Svenska medeltidens rim-krönikor*. The rhyme chronicle was written for bishop Kettil’s opponent Karl Knutsson’s successor (Sten Sture). It was written shortly after the fact, and as such, suggesting that it is reliable in its account of events. On the other hand, it might be coloured by the motivations of Karl Knutsson’s milieu, meaning that its authors did not favour bishop Kettil and his uncle Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson (Oxenstierna). Anna Wasko has analysed the chronicle carefully and points out that despite the hostile attitude towards both bishops, Kettil is actually described as an accomplished military leader who participated in battles, and he became a symbol of Swedish resistance against Danish kings. Anna Wasko, “‘Freedom is the Greatest Thing:’ Bishops as Fighters for Freedom in Fifteenth-Century Sweden,” in *Between Sword and Prayer: Warfare and Medieval Clergy in Cultural Perspective*, eds. Radoslaw Kotecki, Jacek Maciejewski, and John Ott (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 480.

¹⁰⁰² Anna Wasko argues that “the military activity of the prelates who belonged to the political and social elites of the kingdom and who engaged in the conflicts of factions, families, and dynasties, was considered a completely natural and justified thing.” See: Wasko, “‘Freedom Is the Greatest Thing,’” 457. For ecclesiastical attitudes to ‘warrior bishops’ see p. 476.

¹⁰⁰³ Wasko, 484.

¹⁰⁰⁴ “*Item vijnstaalpanzare. ocij lyre oc j blank platae Item j pækillhufua*”: DN V nr. 586.

in the fjord outside of the town that acted as his stronghold against growing Lutheran opponents and the Danish king.¹⁰⁰⁵ In the case of Bishop Kettil Karlsson and the *Sturekrönikan*, the symbolic act of removing his vestments and taking up a sword signified the separation of the two roles. When in a position of political and military conflict, he publicly stripped himself of his episcopal vestment in the Cathedral of Linköping to re-dress in his military armour. The rhyme chronicle describes (in his voice) how the re-dressed bishop could fight with lance and spear as well as any other warrior.¹⁰⁰⁶ Through the ritual of publicly re-dressing, Bishop Kettil transformed his public persona from a vested sacred body to a military leader.

This public ritual of divesting his episcopal garments to don military armour demonstrates the importance of textiles in establishing occasion. I have argued elsewhere that ecclesiastical vestments can be understood as a ‘social skin’, an integral part of the cleric’s religious and public persona.¹⁰⁰⁷ A broad reading of clothing that includes jewellery, hair and bodily adornments allows for a more nuanced understanding of how humans present themselves with a second or social skin.¹⁰⁰⁸ E. Jane Burns has used this concept in her discussion of gendered clothing in medieval French ballads and romances to show how clothes and fabrics interact in a more complex manner than the “familiar paradigm of clothes covering a body beneath”.¹⁰⁰⁹ In her discussion of the Prose Lancelot, Burns points out that a knight undressed of his armour is “stripped bare” although he was fully clothed. Losing parts of his armour in battle was associated with a shameful “nakedness” among knights, underscoring the importance of armour as their social skin. Ecclesiastical vestments were the ‘armour’ of clerics. In fact, Durand likens the vesting of a cleric to dressing with armour, describing the fully vested bishop “wearing sacred vestments as if he is armed with weapons”.¹⁰¹⁰ Each vestment could be understood as a weapon of faith: the amice is a helmet, the alb a breastplate, the stole a lance, the chasuble a shield, and the Gospel book the priest’s sword.¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰⁰⁵ Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson’s castle was a modern fortress defended with cannons, and when finished in the 1520s, it represented the only fortress in Norway outside the Danish king’s control. See Louis Sicking, “New Light on the Flight of Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson: A Watershed in Norwegian History,” in *Dutch Light in the ‘Norwegian Night’: Maritime Relations and Migration Across the North Sea in Early Modern Times*, eds. Louis Sicking, Harry de Bles, and Erlend des Bouvrie (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2004), 20.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Klemming, *Svenska medeltidens rim-krönikor*, 152.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Nødseth, “The Linköping Mitre,” 208 – 209. This concept was introduced by anthropologist Terrence Turner in his studies of the Amazonian Kayapo tribe, where he observed that hair, bodypaint and items of clothing worked together to form a social space beyond the body. Terrence Turner, “The Social Skin.” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 2 (2012): 486–504.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Nødseth, “The Linköping Mitre,” Page 200.

¹⁰⁰⁹ E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 12.

¹⁰¹⁰ Durand and Thibodeau, *On the Clergy and Their Vestments*, 134.

¹⁰¹¹ Durand and Thibodeau, 134 – 136.

However, vestments alone did not constitute the bishop's social or religious skin. His body was made sacred through ordination rituals; through the anointing of hands he became a priest and through the anointing of his head he was ordained a bishop. Hair, skin, clothing and jewellery worked together to construct, perform and display episcopal identity. Terrence Turner argues that the adornment and public presentation of the body is a serious matter; he describes this social skin as a cultural medium that shaped and communicated personal and social identity.¹⁰¹² When discussing the clothing and identity of medieval bishops, it is important to note that the concept of 'identity' was less personal and more about public and social roles than our modern understanding. As Miriam Bedos-Rezak has shown, the term can be understood as a "logic of sameness" describing "the person as a psychosomatic whole, a social agent".¹⁰¹³ In other words, the adornment of the bishop – his anointed skin, tonsured hair, layered vestments, crozier and ring – was a highly ritualised and regulated process that transformed his physical body and influenced his spiritual devotion.

While Bishop Kettil's public undressing was a strategic act of self-fashioning, another far more violent and degrading ritual illustrates the symbolic importance of priestly undressing as well as the merging of vestments and body, namely the removal of a cleric's sacrality known today as 'defrocking'. In order to make disgraced clerics liable for secular penalties (including the death penalty), their social skin had to be broken. This grim practice was probably modelled after military demotions and took the form of a public ritual in the church.¹⁰¹⁴ As Dyan Elliot has shown, by the High Middle Ages the liturgies of ordination and degradation were complementary rites: "the act of dressing the priest now clearly anticipates the possibility of degradation, the undressing of the priest."¹⁰¹⁵ As seen in the previous chapter, textiles were instrumental in the ordination ritual, as they invested the cleric with spiritual and priestly authority and sacredness.¹⁰¹⁶ Similarly, degradation liturgies included symbolic undressing in church as the bishop removed each layer of clothing. One example from a fourteenth-century Inquisitor's manual describes the bishop's words when removing the chasuble: "we take away

¹⁰¹² Turner, "The Social Skin," 486.

¹⁰¹³ Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, "Medieval Identity: A Sign and a Concept," *The American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 1492.

¹⁰¹⁴ Dyan Elliot, "Dressing and Undressing the Clergy: Rites of Ordination and Degradation.," in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. E. Jane Burns (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), 61.

¹⁰¹⁵ Elliot, "Dressing and Undressing the Clergy," 69.

¹⁰¹⁶ As discussed in Chapter Six of this dissertation.

your sacerdotal vestment and deprive you of sacerdotal honour.”¹⁰¹⁷ A cleric’s social skin was not only constituted by clothing but by his skin, hair, jewellery and adornments. In rituals of degradation, the undressed cleric was not only ritually stripped of his vestments but physically violated as a means of erasing any mark of his former, sacred position. Durand recommended shaving off the tonsure and scraping the holy unction off his skin with a sharp object like a knife or piece of glass.¹⁰¹⁸ In rituals of defrocking, a priest ‘stripped bare’ was not only undressed, but physically harmed in order to reverse and destroy his social skin. After the ritual was completed, he was dressed in lay clothing in order to signal his transformed and dishonoured position. This lay clothing was described as a shameful nakedness, indicating that his social skin was forever lost.¹⁰¹⁹

7.8 Episcopal Vestments and Episcopal Self-fashioning

These discussions of the vesting and divesting of late-medieval bishops demonstrate the impact of vestments for episcopal self-fashioning. The most precious ‘top-layers’ such as the mitre and festive cope could be closely connected to the public persona of the bishop as a religious leader and sacred body. I have discussed vestments as a ‘social skin’ to emphasise the close and intimate relationship between episcopal vestments and the bishop’s social and visual appearance, his ‘identity’ as a powerful and sacred leader of his province. As previously mentioned, bishops frequently commissioned their own vestments such as a festive cope for feast days and visitations in the diocese. Moreover, the discussion of preserved vestments such as the Strängnäs Cope and the Linköping mitre showed how bishops manifested their presence on the garments through inscriptions and personal coats of arms. Therefore, it can be argued that episcopal vestments were perceived as personal possessions of the bishop or archbishop to a greater extent than the priestly vestments discussed in the previous chapter.

Issues of production and commission have not been a main concern for this study, which focused instead on the experience and effect of liturgical textiles. However, each of the previous chapters touched upon the question of how a church or cathedral acquired its vestments. In Chapter Three, we saw how wealthy and influential patrons commissioned an embroidered tomb cover as an important initial step in the elevation and promotion of Katarina of Vadstena’s

¹⁰¹⁷ Elliot, “Dressing and Undressing the Clergy,” 66. This rite is from the Inquisitor Manual *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis* by Bernard Gui also known as Bernardo Gui or Bernardus Guidonis, a Dominican friar, Bishop of Lodève, and a papal inquisitor (d. 1331).

¹⁰¹⁸ Andrieu, *Le Pontifical Romain Au Moyen-Age*, 608.

¹⁰¹⁹ On degradation as a “shameful nakedness” see Elliot, “Dressing and Undressing the Clergy,” 63.

saintly status. A letter from a cleric in Linköping Cathedral discussing the commission of dalmatics and textiles for the cathedral's main altar was discussed in Chapters Four and Six. While these commissions pertained to costly textiles and wealthy donors, Chapter Five discussed lay donations of personal textiles such as handkerchiefs and items of clothing to be remade and used for liturgical vestments. In the case of episcopal vestments, however, sources indicate that vestments were regarded as the bishop's personal property and that the bishop himself was expected to pay for them. Evidence for this is found well before the late-medieval period. In a 1239 letter to the Archbishop of Trondheim, Bishop Bótólfur of Hólar, Iceland, complains about the lack of recognition of his episcopal position, because his episcopal dignity could not be seen on his hand or finger, indicating that he lacked both a mitre and an episcopal ring.¹⁰²⁰ Archbishop Sigurd of Trondheim replies that while it is his responsibility to ordain bishops in his province, bishops were responsible for equipping themselves with the gold (ring) and the mitre.¹⁰²¹ Two centuries later, Aslak Bolt's inventories demonstrate the extensive personal wealth and private possessions of a late-medieval archbishop in Scandinavia. Bolt arrived in Trondheim in 1429 with two ships loaded with household goods, wall-hangings, panel lengths of fabrics, armour and furniture. Among his personal property was a range of liturgical textiles, books and objects such as sculptures, crucifixes, crosiers and vessels for use in the service. The vestments listed include chasubles, mitres, episcopal shoes, episcopal gloves and finger rings as well as altar textiles, corporal cloths and corporal burses.¹⁰²² The importance of liturgical vestments for a bishop's religious and public persona is also emphasised by the fact that bishops were buried fully vested, in their episcopal stockings, mitre and stole.¹⁰²³ In other words, the life of a late-medieval bishop – from his ordination to his burial – was intrinsically bound to his episcopal vestments.

7.9 Aesthetic Effects and Experience

Having surveyed preserved vestments and written documents, this chapter has shown how a late-medieval bishop vested for service was adorned in layer upon layer of precious garments communicating his elevated and sacred position. Witnessing a pontifical mass or a procession led by the bishop was a magnificent display of costly textiles. The bishop embodied splendour,

¹⁰²⁰ RN 1: no 692

¹⁰²¹ RN 1: no 709

¹⁰²² DN V: nr. 586.

¹⁰²³ Geijer and Franzén, "Textila gravfynd från Trondheims domkyrka," 16.

both through his own dress and through that of his large clerical entourage. Ecclesiastical ceremonies requiring more elaborate liturgies further heightened the effect of their arrayed vestments. As discussed in Chapter Two, when the Archbishop of Trondheim celebrated Mass, he was escorted by fourteen deacons and sub-deacons as well as ten acolytes.¹⁰²⁴ The acolyte carried candles and censers so that the prelate was surrounded by the smell of incense and illuminated by light. The archbishop was easily recognised by his tall mitre and ornate cope. A precious mitre such as that from Linköping displayed splendid surfaces in gold, enamels and pearls reflecting the light and adorning the bishop's face. The small copper bells suspended from each lappet might have chimed subtly, following the bishop movements.

Episcopal copes were liturgical 'show-pieces' that publicly displayed the bishop's splendour. As mentioned in the previous chapter, sources indicate that most Swedish parish churches owned at least one cope the priest could wear for processions and feast days. Thus, even in a smaller parish such as Endre Church, people could habitually encounter a festive cope. In the context of cathedrals, copes were used by priests, bishops and cantors. For larger feast days or civic events, people could encounter celebratory copes as the clerical entourage passed through crowds of people both within and outside the church. While the chasuble was primarily worn for the eucharistic celebration and could thus be viewed only in the context of high or low Masses, copes had a more prolonged exposure as they were worn for processions, pre-Mass liturgies, readings, and other religious rituals and celebrations. Thus, the laity had more opportunities to view these splendid vestments up close. Despite the increased visibility of the vestments, the copes shifted as the clerics moved through the space, which did not facilitate a close 'reading' of complex iconographical programmes. One can imagine that isolated images such as singing angels scattered over the velvet ground or a saint framed in an architectural niche were perceived and recognised in this animated viewing context. In other words, copes were perceived partially and fragmentarily as moving objects. The most important visual focal point of festive copes was the embroidered clipeus positioned on the upper middle part of the dorsal side of the vestment. This flat 'hood' was stiffened and did not drape and fold as the rest of the garment did, and it was often covered in large embroidered scenes of saints, the Virgin or Christ. In the cope of Thomas of Strängnäs, a small bell suspended from the cope hood enhanced the bishop's movements.

¹⁰²⁴ Oluf Kolsrud, «Korsongen i Nidarosdomen,» in *Festskrift til O. M. Sandvik: 70-års dagen 1875 - 9. mai - 1945* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1945), 86 – 87.

The material significance of costly silks and velvets, white linen, pearls and enamels, as discussed in the previous chapters, all came into effect in the rhetorical display of a fully vested bishop. Ornate surfaces, rich colours, intricate ornaments and embroidered imagery established the vested bishop as occasion. Moreover, occasion was created through human actions: the movements of human bodies always conditioned the experience of late-medieval episcopal vestments. When experiencing these ornate copes and mitres in museum displays and archives today, we lose the effects they would have had when worn on episcopal bodies; the cope would have been draped over the bishop's shoulders and the heavy folds would have enhanced some parts but occluded others. The mitre likewise was animated by the bishop's movements, and the headpiece was enhanced by how it reflected light, the shine of gold, pearls and enamels, and the subtle chiming of bells.

7.10 Conclusions

This chapter has emphasised how the multi-layered vesting of episcopal bodies functioned in a manner akin to the reliquary effect, enshrining the bishop in precious materials. The mitre and cope were discussed at greater length since those vestments took centre stage as the most visible and elaborate 'top layers' of a fully vested bishop. Material splendour and iconography worked together to convey the preciousness of the body inside, the most sacred amongst the major orders. In addition, episcopal bodies were more comprehensively wrapped than priestly ones, with as many as ten additional layers including the stockings, shoes, an over-tunic, belt, gloves, mitre, ring, crosier, sudary (for the crosier) and pallium. Ornate surfaces, colour and ornamentation worked with the bishop's movement and gestures to establish occasion in the cathedral or church. The bishop was *adorned* in a broad sense of the word, evoking the Latin origin of the term denoting decoration and embellishment. From the perspective of the laity, encountering and looking at a fully vested bishop passing by in a procession or participating in the Mass liturgy would have been an *occasion*, which was established through episcopal vestments in interplay with the richer liturgy, use of incense and movements. I have argued that the rhetorical potential and aesthetic effects of the bishop's garments should be considered in relation to how ornate surfaces reflected light, how they were draped over moving bodies, and how glimpses of embroidered imagery could be gleaned from a distance.

The event recorded in the *Sturekrönikan* testifies to the performative potential of dressing and undressing with episcopal vestments. Since late-medieval bishops had separate and sometimes conflicting roles as church and secular leaders, clothing in its broadest sense

provided a powerful tool for fashioning a bishop's appearance according to the occasion. I have argued that the prelate's garments can be understood as a social skin, where layered ceremonial clothing merged with the bishop's appearance and presence. The public undressing and re-dressing with episcopal vestments allowed an ambitious bishop like Kettil of Linköping to manage conflicting roles in an increasingly unstable political and religious arena. Since the laity would know their bishop both as a knight and a clergyman, the visual display of the vested bishop enshrined in multi-layered ornate textiles was an effective strategy for displaying his body as appropriately sacred and dignified within the context of his churches and cathedrals.



Figure 7-1: (above, left) Painted panel from the *Horg Altarpiece* with St Erasmus of Formia as vested bishop, c. 1470, h. 88 cm, Trondheim: NTNU (inv no T4648). Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

Figure 7-2: (above right) Painted panel from *Kvæffjord 1 Altarpiece* with vested bishop, C. 1520, h. 113 cm, Oslo: KHM (inv no 3215). Photo: © KHM

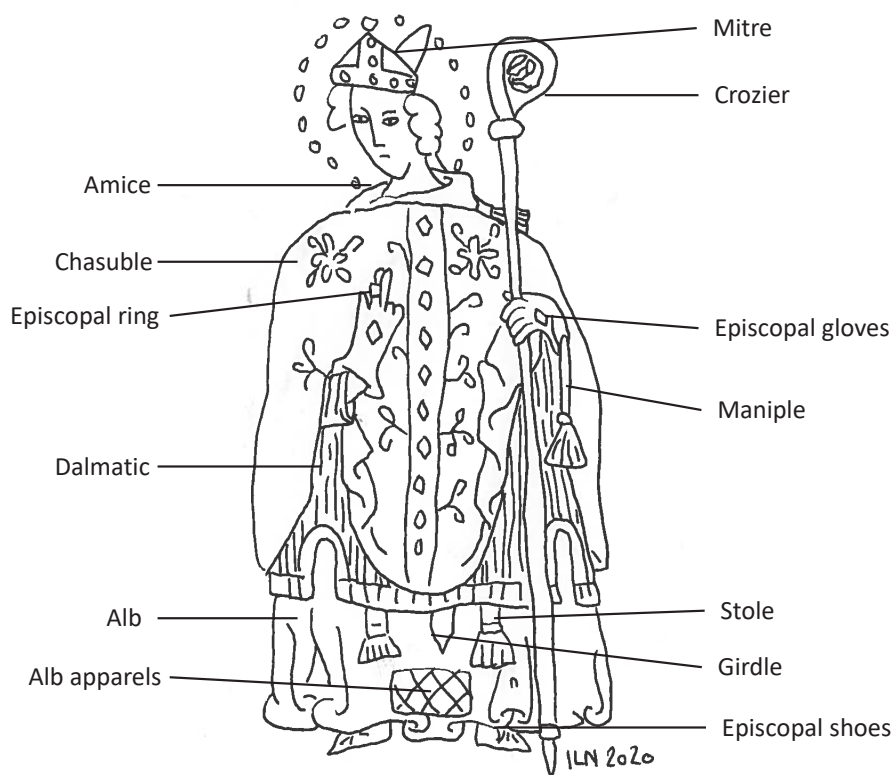


Figure 7-3: Drawing of a bishop vested for Mass, after the depiction of Bishop Þorlákur as depicted in the Hólar altar frontal. The bishop is depicted in his Mass vestment, the chasuble, rather than a cope, and his episcopal status is shown by him wearing the mitre, crozier, episcopal ring, gloves and episcopal shoes. Drawing © Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 7-4: Two pairs of medieval, episcopal shoes displayed in a cabinet in Strängnäs Cathedral, Sweden. *Upper shelf:* side laced boots, l. 29,5 cm, h. 14,5 cm, b. 9 cm, now green atlas silk with red bands with silver ornaments. *Lower shelf:* side laced boots, l. 29,5 cm, h. 13 cm, b. 10 cm, fabric very damaged, but remains of green wool geometric patterns on white linen. Photo: open domain.



Figure 7-5: Dalmatic from Linköping cathedral, fifteenth century, red, large patterned velvet with applied embroideries in gold and many colored silks, woven apparels and tablet woven bands in many colors (*clavi*), l. 126 cm, w. 139 cm LCM. Photo: © LCM



Figure 7-6: Painted panel depicting the consecration of St Augustine, c. 1463-1470/1475, tempera, stucco reliefs and gold leaf on wood, measures 250 x 193 centimeters, Barcelona: MNAC (inventory number 024140-000). Photo: © MNAC



Figure 7-7: (above, left) Mitre with roses from Skálholt cathedral, early sixteenth century, gold embroideries and gold brocade on blue velvet, Copenhagen: NMD (Inv.no. 909). Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

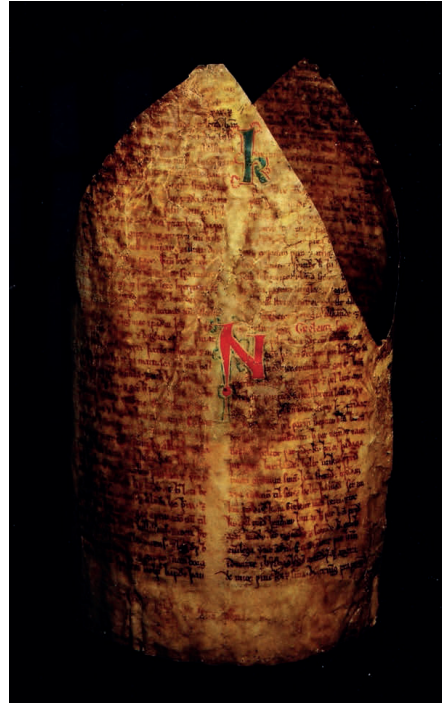


Figure 7-8: (above, right) Four fragment leaves cut for use as lining in a bishop's mitre, manuscript dated c. 1270, remodelled c. 1500, parchment, maximum measurements 28,6 x 20 cm, Copenhagen: DAS (AM 666 b 4 to). Photo: © DAS



Figure 7-9: (right) *The Linköping Mitre*, c. 1460, embroideries in silks, gilded threads, pearls, glass beads, precious stones, metalwork and enamels, measures, h. 80 cm, cat.no. 24. Photo: © SHM



Figure 7-10: Details from the *Linköping Mitre* showing unidentified male saint with book, possibly St Mathew, enamel measuring c. 4,8 centimetres, cloisonné enamel lined with frame of relief embroidery of gilded threads and covered with pearls (some are lost, exposing the white linen “padding”), metal case for a precious stone (now lost) above the enamel, Stockholm: SHM. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth



Figure 7-11: Cope morse, c. 1400, gilded copper, measurements, Christ enthroned flanked by St Paul and St Peter and musical angels, Copenhagen: NMD. Photo: © NMD.



Figure 7-12: *The Fogdö Cope*, from Fogdö church in Sweden (seventeenth century spoil of war), c. 1493, *clipeus* with the Virgin and St John, h. 143 cm, w. 290 cm, cat.no. 25. Photo: © SHM



Figure 7-13: *The Strängnäs Cope*, , 1429 - 1443, crimson velvet brocade patterned with large thistles, *clipeus* with silk and gold embroideries, h. 130 cm, w. 303 cm, cat.no. 26. Photo: Margareta Pihlgren



Figure 7-14: The crimson velvet of the Strängnäs Cope. Photo: Margareta Pihlgren



Figure 7-15: *Strängnäs Cope Clipeus* with the Virgin and Child framed by leaves. Photo: Margareta Pihlgren



Figure 7-16: Silver gilt cope *clipeus* pendant from the *Strängnäs Cope* with silk tassel. Inscription reading “orate pro thoma ep(isop)a strengensi”. Photo: Margareta Pihlgren



Figure 7-17: (left) Sudary Mantle from Uppsala Cathedral, c. 1420-1430, white linen, silks, gold threads, blue linen tabby, silver threads, freshwater pearls, length of sudary cloth is 110 cm, cat.no. 27. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

Figure 7-18: (left, below) Sudary mantle heading, blue tabby linen with silk embroideries, l. 10 cm. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth

Figure 7-19: (below, right) Detail of silk and linen embroideries and open work on the linen sudary. Photo: Ingrid Lunnan Nødseth





8 Concluding Discussion

This study has explored how liturgical vestments shaped the experience of sacred bodies and spaces in churches and cathedrals across late-medieval Scandinavia. In surveying an exceptionally rich and diverse corpus of material ranging from small textile fragments to large and intricate episcopal copes, I have shown how textiles were omnipresent in late-medieval holy spaces. The comprehensive corpus of textiles examined throughout the chapters of this study include vestments for a range of liturgical usages that closely reflect the broader European vestimentary tradition. While there remains little textual evidence of the perception, description, and experience of the vested church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this study has used the preserved vestments as compelling evidence for their integrated aims. Each chapter focused on what vestments could accomplish in the church—that is, how layers of fabric worked to communicate sanctity to their wearers and beholders. Therefore, questions of usage and experience have been central throughout the text, and selected case studies have demonstrated the breadth of textiles that both veiled and vested the sacred. Furthermore, this study has focused on how these soft surfaces contributed to the perception of experience of entering and perceiving medieval ecclesiastical spaces. In addition to the surviving material evidence, this study also traced experience and usage through priest's books, pontificals, missals, letters, testaments and other documents.

This study considered how vestments across functional categories shaped experience in the medieval church by exploring how cloth's potential to cover, drape, and unveil established ceremony, created occasion, and was understood as a form of medieval rhetoric. As I have argued, a vestment's textile aesthetics and materiality were central participants in the shaping of sacred spaces and bodies in late-medieval churches across Scandinavia. It is the hope that these perspectives on medieval textile art can shine new light on this hitherto underdeveloped area of study and demonstrate the broader relevance of textiles to medieval religious culture.

← *Medieval vestments displayed at the Linköping Castle and Cathedral Museum.*
Photo: Laura Tillery.

A main argument of this study is that ecclesiastical textiles can be understood as a rhetoric of display built on the dichotomy of concealment and revelation. Rhetorical display involves both exhibiting or putting forth and the equally important corollary of concealment: restricting physical and visual access to the sacred. Each chapter has shown how textiles such as relic wrappings, reliquaries, altar vestments, textiles for the Host and ceremonial liturgical garments worked simultaneously to conceal and reveal what was hidden beneath (*or underneath, inside*) layers of precious cloth. As such, ecclesiastical textiles shaped religious experience by completely or partially occluding visual access. Through partial or fragmentary looking, viewers could catch a glimpse of the Host, the relic or the liturgical performance taking place at the altar. In many cases, however, looking at the sacred meant looking at textiles; relic wrappings encased in a rock crystal container or the wrapped Host encapsulated in the bursa. I have argued that chasuble orphreys operated in similar ways, providing a substitute for the priest as he turned his back away from the laity to administer the Eucharistic ritual. The Eucharistic symbolism of chasuble orphreys was established through an interplay between materiality and iconography, with silk and pearl crucifixes being animated by the priest's bodily movements and gestures. This study has shown that the medieval vestimentary system employed textile strategies that can be discerned across functional categories. The vesting of relics, altars, the host and clerical bodies can all be understood as a way of simultaneously enshrining and displaying the sacred hidden underneath layers of textiles.

As I have argued, it was through this system of covering and uncovering—or veiling/unveiling and revealing/concealing—that textiles crafted the sacred. Each chapter has examined the ways in which the historically separate textile categories of relic wrappings, altar vestments and priestly garments in fact operated similarly. Relic wrappings concealed their sacred content as an important final step in the process of relic-making. Altar vestments clothed the newly consecrated *tabula* towards the end of the consecration ceremony. Priestly vestments constituted ecclesiastical orders. The bestowal of garments associated with a specific major order – such as the chasuble for priests – took centre stage in ordination rituals. Furthermore, these garments played a critical role in vesting rituals, as they were imbued with meaning intended to improve clerical spirituality and carried the potential to persuade lay audiences of the priest's sacred position. These ceremonial occasions mobilised textiles to enhance the sacred position of that which was covered, concealed and clothed in fabrics. The liturgical importance of altar cloths and the corporal cannot be understated, as Mass could not be celebrated without them. Since liturgical vestments were blessed by the bishop and considered *ars sacra*, they held a special position as cloths fitted to enclose the most sacred bodies in the

church. However, these textiles did not sanctify in and of themselves; rather, it was through human actions, ideas and imaginations that fabrics received and performed sacred functions. This distinction was recognised by medieval liturgists like Durand, who underlined that although sacred cloths instil greater reverence, they were not animated objects.¹⁰²⁵ I argue that the flexible and performative qualities of textiles – which could easily be changed, unfolded or covered with yet more layers of cloth - made these soft surfaces especially suitable for religious occasions.

While the rituals, beliefs and actions of veiling and displaying the sacred were instrumental to religious experience, these perspectives do not account for why medieval vestments came to look the way they did. To return to my research question of how ecclesiastical vestments in late-medieval Scandinavia shaped experience, this study demonstrated how the visual and material appearance of textile surfaces worked to engage audiences. Textile materiality is coloured by ideas of craft, manufacture, tradition and histories, as well as the aesthetic experience produced by surface effects. As discussed in each chapter, the strategic interplay between white linen, ornate silks and velvets was central for understanding the textile effects of medieval vestments. Such material relationships conjure up, for instance, religious associations of linen with Christ and the angels, as well as ideas of purity, chastity and innocence. The association of purity and the *cleness* of linen made it especially suitable as an initial layer veiling sacred objects and bodies in the system of vesting. This study has shown how altars, the Host, clerical bodies and many relics were wrapped in initial layers of white linen. In addition to the material symbolism of linen, it was sought after for its ability to produce brilliantly white surfaces: bleached and finely woven linen cloths were highly valued textiles that differed significantly from the brownish-grey and coarser linen used for everyday garments. However, the material and aesthetic significance became intertwined. The laborious process of making luxurious linen cloths influenced their material understandings; the threshing of flax was compared with Christ's sufferings. The material significance of linen was instrumental to its use in establishing and communicating the sacred in medieval churches, but the altar was not sanctified by the material. Rather, the sacred status of the consecrated altar was enhanced by the aesthetic qualities and cultural associations that came into play when white linen was made into, and ceremonially used as, an altar cloth.

¹⁰²⁵ This quote from Durand is discussed in Chapter 5. Durand stressed that textiles were blessed not because they were perceived as animate objects, but in order to instil a greater reverence for them, as grace was known through them. See Durandus and Thibodeau, Timothy M., *The Rationale Divinorum Officiorum of William Durand of Mende*, 99.

Ornate vestments established a striking contrast to the *cleneness* of white linen. The material interplay between linen and ornate vestments are found across the textile categories discussed in this study, in wrapping relics (Chapter Three), dressing the altar (Chapter Four), veiling the host (Chapter Five) and vesting clerical bodies (Chapters Six and Seven). While linen constituted the initial layers, ornate vestments were powerful ‘top layers’. Each chapter has shined a spotlight on specific materials characteristic of ornate textile surfaces, such as silks in Chapter Three, pearls in Chapter Five, ‘heathen cloths’ in Chapter Six and enamels in Chapter Seven, to demonstrate how their material value and cultural context influenced how the textiles may have been perceived by medieval viewers. In addition to cultural and religious associations, ornate materials were sought after because of their high monetary value and the intricate craftsmanship required for their incorporation into three-dimensional and complex textile surfaces. This material splendour was central to aesthetic experience; the polyfocal effect created through ornate and mixed-media surfaces sought to engage and persuade wearers and viewers of the sacred content of what was contained within. I have argued that layers upon layers of ornate textiles worked in ways similar to the reliquary effect defined by Cynthia Hahn as a means of establishing its content as “*unique, authentic, powerful and effective*”.¹⁰²⁶ Ornate textile surfaces could create brilliance and sparkle as light was reflected in gold, silks, pearls or precious stones. Ornament, three-dimensional surfaces and a mixture of materials are common to textile reliquaries, altar frontals and frontlets, bursae and containers for the Host and liturgical garments for the priest and bishop.

Another main argument of this study is that textiles fundamentally contributed to the medieval religious experience. It should be noted, however, that vestments did not achieve this alone, but worked together with architecture, screens, sculptures, altarpieces, music, incense, holy water and liturgy to establish and communicate the sacred. A holistic study of how textiles worked with art, architecture and human performance to create and communicate sacrality was beyond the scope of this present study, but I have pointed to examples of textiles interacting with their spatial and visual environment, including the minifigures of chasuble embroideries in contrast to the magnificence of large rood screen crucifixes and the proliferation of Crucifixion imagery on wafers, chalices, liturgical books, altarpieces, painted glass and architectural sculpture. The remarkable eye-witness account of Katarina’s 1489 elevation

¹⁰²⁶ The relevance of Cynthia Hahn’s concept of the Reliquary Effects for our understanding of layered textiles in processes of veiling/ unveiling and textile enshrinement is discussed in multiple chapters, first in Chapter Three. See Cynthia Hahn, *The Reliquary Effect: Enshrining the Sacred Object* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016): 12.

ceremony at Vadstena offers insight into how architecture, lighting, music, artworks and performance were combined to create an extraordinary occasion and could present a fruitful avenue for further research into this topic. The source's description of choristers singing behind a beautiful wall hanging in the brethren's choir demonstrates the fundamental interrelationship between performance, space and the appearance, perception and experience of textiles in the medieval church environment.¹⁰²⁷

Limitations in preserved material and existing research have informed the methodological approach of the current study. Some of the analysed vestments have not been previously published, so the only available documentation was hand-written notes from technical conservators in museum archives; in these cases, in depth discussions of materials and textile techniques proved difficult. Moreover, many textiles were challenging to access as they are more or less permanently stored or displayed behind glass. Additionally, there is still a lack of comprehensive conservation and documentation of preserved ecclesiastical textiles across Scandinavia. Despite a clear technical focus in earlier research, as discussed in the Introduction, a systematic survey of technical aspects such as textile techniques, analysis of fibres and dyes, or carbon dating, does not exist. This lack of previous research has made it challenging to properly identify materials and techniques. I hope that this study will encourage future synthetic and systematic research on medieval Scandinavian textiles akin to the comprehensive survey of medieval painted altar frontals of Norway.

Since there is a paucity of written sources including ekphrases of liturgical textiles or describing how the laity perceived late medieval vestments, I have turned to the material itself as the main source of information for understanding aesthetic encounters in the context of experience and occasion. Surface, especially the complex structures created by inter-media mixtures of metal, fibres, pearls and stones, was central to the visual appearance and experience of medieval vestments. Only a few extant documents tell us anything about the medieval perception of textile surfaces in churches and cathedrals. However, I have argued that these rare sources demonstrate that the vestment's ability to shine, catch and reflect the light, was instrumental to how textiles 'worked'. A rare letter of commission discussed in several chapters, the Hilleshög letter, further supports this argument.¹⁰²⁸

¹⁰²⁷ Lars Elfving and Brigitta Friz, *Den Stora Kyrkofesten För Sankta Katarina i Vadstena År 1489: Samtida Texter Med Översättning Och Kommentar* (Kungl. Samfundet för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 2004): 34.

¹⁰²⁸ The 'Hilleshög letter, a commission of textiles written by the Swedish cleric Peter Johannes (c. 1490), is discussed in Chapters Three and Five.

This study is the first art historical analysis that surveys vestments from late-medieval Scandinavia across textile categories and national borders. Previous literature has focused on selected works or groups of vestments delineated by workshops, geography or types of textiles. As discussed in the Introduction, existing scholarship is mainly concerned with technical questions of provenance, textile techniques and manufacture. Moreover, the pejorative status of textiles in the field of medieval art history has led to a dramatic undervaluation of their medieval importance. The marginalization of textiles and textile scholarship has resulted in limited interest in the rich corpus of medieval vestments preserved in Scandinavian museum collections and cathedral treasuries. Because of the prior lack of studies investigating the centrality of liturgical textiles in the perception and experience of church space, this dissertation presents novel material and conclusions pertinent to many medieval disciplines. By re-clothing ecclesiastical spaces and bodies, I have argued that textiles should be considered coeval to other media of ‘high’ medieval art such as painting, sculpture and architecture.

Despite its seemingly remote location on the northern border of western Christianity, vestments made, commissioned and used in medieval Scandinavia were aligned with developments in continental Europe. The Scandinavian material, including the extraordinarily rich Swedish collections associated with Vadstena Abbey and the unique Icelandic embroidered frontals, therefore provides *comparanda* for a wider European context and substantial *corpora* for a field hindered by both the natural degradation of textiles and the intentional (and, in some cases, liturgically mandated) destruction of vestments. Thus, the evidence and arguments presented in this study are relevant and important for broader research on the role and significance of textiles in medieval Europe.

There are many instances where textiles and other medieval artworks intersect, and my hope is that this study will lead future scholars to consider the connections between vestments and other medieval media within their research. Iconographies found on altar frontals, chasubles and copes are similar to those found in contemporary painted and sculpted work. Moreover, there are distinctive sculptural qualities to the embroidered tomb covers discussed in Chapter Three, suggesting that a further investigation into the relationship between embroidered and carved funerary monuments may prove fruitful. As I also argued, textiles were so fundamental to the wrapping, enshrining, and display of medieval relics that they should be included within relic studies that have heretofore focused on materials like precious metals, enamels, and crystal.

The research presented in this dissertation contributes to a range of current topics in medieval art history, including the global Middle Ages, digital art history and the multisensory

experience of medieval art. Textiles highlighted within the chapters include vestments like the Århus Chasuble or the Linköping Mitre made of treasured material with complicated biographies. Textiles are soft, foldable, and could easily travel over great distances, and their value led them to be combined and recombined in new vestimentary ensembles. For the Århus Chasuble, Mongolian silks travelled to Gdansk through the Hansa network, were made into vestments that ended up in Denmark, and were subsequently altered in accordance with later medieval fashions and expectations. Moreover, while most Danish chasubles and copes were lost after the Reformation, this garment survived and ended up in a museum vitrine in Copenhagen. The use of such silks testifies to a cross-cultural appreciation of and desire for precious materials, and corroborates written descriptions of cloth made prestigious by both foreignness and facture. It is difficult to think of a material more appropriate for the study of the Global Middle Ages.

The growing field of digital art history can also make major contributions to the study of ecclesiastical textiles and thereby to our study of the medieval ecclesiastical experience. I have argued that textiles are flattened in the museum, devoid of their original experience as worn on human bodies, draped over an altar or wrapped inside a reliquary. Digital technology can help us reimagine how these textiles were seen and understood. While innovative museum displays have found new ways of exhibiting copes and chasubles, such as the padded mannequins that were used for the Victoria and Albert exhibition on English Embroideries, copes can never be folded and draped as they would have been arranged originally due to the tear and stress this would cause these fragile garments. Digital media can allow us to see how such vestments looked when layered and worn in processions by a cleric moving through the church. Furthermore, digital reconstructions can suggest how textile objects might have looked like when new and how different textile effects worked as a whole.¹⁰²⁹ One such digital recreation was made on the basis of new research on the Linköping Reliquary, which captures the material splendour of gold, silks and enamel before they were faded and damaged (fig. 3.21).

The last decades have seen a wave of scholarship addressing how medieval artworks and architecture contributed to the fashioning and experience of sacred space and sacred bodies. The Introduction demonstrated how previous studies of art and sacred space focused on the role of liturgy, music, architecture, altars, altarpieces, sculpture and relics but largely neglected the

¹⁰²⁹ One example is the digital reconstruction of the now fragmented and worn ‘Steeple Aston Cope’ dated to the 1330s and preserved in the collections of Victoria and Albert Museum, London: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-steeple-aston-cope>, accessed June 29, 2020.

role of textiles. This study argues that textiles were essential for understanding how sacred space and bodies were created, communicated and perceived in the medieval church. Likewise, recent scholarship has introduced a new focus on the perception of medieval art and the significance of sounds, tactile surfaces, scents and embodied experience. This is another disciplinary specialisation where textiles should be included to expand our understanding of the multisensory aspects of late medieval churches. While laypeople were restricted from touching ecclesiastical textiles, their lush and tactile surfaces were instrumental to the church's visual and sensory environment. This is most strikingly apparent in the Lenten church, where unbleached and matte linen surfaces covered and enclosed the space to create a monotone and pared-back church emphasizing the concept of fasting and penance.

Above all, this study has demonstrated that textiles occupied a fundamentally different role in medieval culture compared to our society today. Precious cloths imbued with meaning were instrumental to framing and transforming bodies and occasions in the church environment. The value of textiles can also be measured by the high regard for the medieval craft of embroidery and the longevity of medieval objects. Churches in the Lutheran North were poor, and many vestments were carefully cared for, repaired and used in the centuries after the Reformation. This was the case with the embroidered tomb cover of St Katarina discussed in Chapter Three. While the main image is lost and is only known through a written account, the embroidered lettering of the frame was cut out and applied to a seventeenth century velvet altar frontal in a parish church north of Stockholm. The Bremnes Orphrey was likewise removed from its original medieval vestment, perhaps because the chasuble was badly worn, and reused on an eighteenth-century silk damask for the small church of Bremnes in Western Norway. The 'mild reformation' in the North preserved many medieval artworks, including textiles.¹⁰³⁰ The Swedish Protestant (Lutheran) Church was particularly indulgent towards the Catholic liturgy, with continued usage of copes, chasubles, altar frontals and liturgical processions. This might help to explain the relatively high number of medieval vestments preserved in Sweden in

¹⁰³⁰ Justin Kroesen has argued that the Lutheran church in Scandinavia and Germany generally took a much milder stance towards its religious past and accepted more of its medieval church furnishings and artworks, coining the term "conservative reformation". See for example: Kroesen, Justin E. A. "Tussen Bugenhagen en Borromaeus. De paradox van de conserverende Reformatie", *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift*, 59 (2005): 89–105. Kroesen, Justin. "Mellom Bergen og Bergamo. Lutherdommens bevarende makt", *Fra avlats- handel til folkekirke. Reformasjonen gjennom 500 år*, ed. Eldbjørg Haug, 209–235. Oslo: Spartacus forlag/SAP, 2017. Kroesen, Justin; "The Survival of Medieval Furnishings in Lutheran Churches Notes towards a Comparison between Germany and Scandinavia" in 2019, ICO Iconographisk post. Nordic Review of Iconography 3-4, pages 4 – 39.

comparison to the Lutheran churches of Denmark and Norway.¹⁰³¹ The afterlife of medieval vestments can often be traced for centuries in churches and cathedrals, before the process of collecting and preserving vestments in museums began in the nineteenth century.

The disparity between the role and status of textiles in the late-medieval period and our society today is striking. Medieval inventories and other written sources reveal an astonishing breadth of specialized terminology used to describe specific weave structures, colour-dyes and types of wool or silk fabrics, many of which are hard for us to properly identify today. In other words, medieval people possessed a high textile knowledge reflecting the value of cloths. Today, textile production and consumption are increasing by the year; yet our textile knowledge dwindles. Traditional textile crafts such as spinning wool, weaving, knitting, sewing and mending clothes are increasingly unfamiliar to many of us. Moreover, the comprehensive vesting of medieval church interiors and clerical bodies might be further estranged from our modern society due to the lack of soft textile furnishings and the Lutheran vestimentary culture reflected in our churches today. I have argued that medieval church interiors, especially the altar and its environment, as they appear today would have appeared naked or undressed by medieval standards. It is the hope that a renewed focus on textiles as artworks in the medieval period can show how fabrics were intimately interwoven with the experience of entering a church, attending Mass and participating in liturgical rituals and ceremonies. This study has aimed to re-clothe sacred space and bodies in order to unveil the many layers of potential textile effects. I argued that textiles engaged the medieval imagination. It is the hope that the rich material of ecclesiastical textiles preserved in Scandinavian collections can also spark our imagination and encourage us to envision the medieval church as a textile space.

¹⁰³¹ Agnes Geijer, *Medieval Textiles in the Cathedral of Uppsala, Sweden* (London: Read Books Limited, 2011). Unpaginated.

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Table 1. Catalogue: Main Textiles Discussed in this Study

No:	Object Title/ Image:	Object Information: <i>Inv. no.; original location; provenance & dating; measurements; brief object description</i>	Previous Research:
1	<p>Katarina's Tomb Cover (fragments)</p> 	<p>ÖLM: inv.no.: OLM - 3070 Originally Vadstena Sweden, 1470 – 1489 h 110,5 cm; w. 239 cm. Fragments of a tomb cover, mounted on a new, rectangular shaped fabric during conservation. Bands of red pomegranate velvet embroidered with gold and silver threads and coloured silk in underside couching; some surface couching and split stich, with raised work on linen. Letters and heraldic shields worked separately then applied.</p>	<p>Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997); Franzén: «Ytterligare ett medeltida gravtäck» (1963)</p>
2	<p>Holmger Knutsson's Tomb Cover</p> 	<p>SHM: inv.no. 350 Originally Sko Abbey Church Sweden, late 15th c. h. 250 cm; w. 117 cm. The tomb cover is made of green silk taffeta supported by blue tabby weave. Embroideries in gold, silk and silk applique. The main figure is worked separately and then applied.</p>	<p>Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997); Svanberg, <i>Furstebilder</i> (1987); Källström, «Holmger Knutsson – En langlivad lokal Helgonkult» (2012)</p>
3	<p>Vadstena Reliquary Bursa</p> 	<p>SHM: inv.no. 281 Originally Vadstena Sweden, late 13th c. h. 19 cm. Bursa: brown velvet bursa with golden bands, silks and metal embellishments. Relic bundle: blue silk taffeta with parchment strip and a number of smaller relic bundles and parchment strips.</p>	<p>Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997); Braun, <i>Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes</i> (1940)</p>
4	<p>Turku Silk Skull Relic</p> 	<p>Turku Cathedral: inv.no. n/a Originally Turku Cathedral Mid-14th century, with c. 1500 alterations h. 12 cm; w. 14.1 cm; l. 19,2 cm Bone fragments wrapped in linen pouches, sewn together and encapsulated in a linen cover with two layers of silk on top. The outermost layer is a Chinese silk with embroidered motifs in front, and traces after pearl or bead embroidery. Green silk ribbons (made after 1395) applied later, possibly as part of a display arrangement.</p>	<p>Geijer, «Textilierna i Sankt Eriks Skrin» (1954); Arponen, «The Medieval Skull Relic» (2015); Arponen, Immonen and Maijanen, «From Bones to Sacred Artefact» (2018); Lahti, «Silver Arms and Silk Heads» (2019)</p>
5		<p>Vadstena Abbey Church: inv.no. n/a Originally Vadstena Abbey Late fourteenth century, refurbished for St Katarina's translation in 1489. h. 69,5 cm; w. 38 – 39 cm; l. 114 – 117 cm. Wooden shrine covered with velvet, silk and metal spangles in different designs and materials, including silver-gilt, enamel, precious stones, and embroideries with silk, gold thread and pearls. The shrine is lined with a tick atlas silk, originally in bright red, with sixty-six gold and silk embroideries applied.</p>	<p>Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997); Lindblom, <i>Birgittas gyllene skrin</i> (1963)</p>

6	<p>Linköping Reliquary</p> 	<p>SHM: inv.no. Originally Vadstena Abbey Mid-fifteenth century, possibly made for St Katarina's translation in 1489. h. 39 cm; w. 23,5 cm. The reliquary box is completely covered in embroidered silks, including the foot, base and lid. Embroidered in split stich, couched work, contour stiches in multicoloured silks, gold and silver threads and embellished with pearls, gilded metal décor and possibly enamels, and with woven bands.</p>	<p>Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997); Sandgren and Wahlberg, "The embroidered reliquary in Linköping" (2018); Sandgren, "Ett väl utsmückt skrin» (2019)</p>
7	<p>Kálfafell Cloth Fragments</p> 	<p>NMI: inv.no. 10885 Originally Kálfafell Church Iceland, medieval period h. 14,5 cm. Embroidered fragment with pattern darning in linen on linen. One of thirty-eight repair patches removed from the back of a textile altar frontal from Kálfafell Church (same inv.no.) and may be reused from worn out altar cloths in the church.</p>	<p>Gudjónsson, <i>Traditional Icelandic embroidery</i> (2006)</p>
8	<p>Skara Frontal</p> 	<p>VGM: inv.no. 1559 Frontal: Reuse of medieval vestments, suggested provenance Vadstena Abbey Frontlet: From Skara Cathedral, Vadstena work. h. 80 cm; w. 125,8 cm. Brownish red velvet with embroidered stars in golds and silver applied, and with a 15th c frontlet sewn on to the top part.</p>	<p>Estham, <i>Birgittinska Textilier</i> (1991)</p>
9	<p>Hólar Frontal</p> 	<p>NMI: inv.no. 4380 Originally Hólar Cathedral Iceland, early 16th c. h. 99 cm; w. 183 cm. Laid and couched work (<i>refilsaumur</i>) in wool, linen and metal threads on linen tabby. Void details on the bishop's ring and miters might suggest that the embroidery originally had semi-precious stones embellishing these garments.</p>	<p>Gudjónsson, "Traditional Icelandic Embroidery" (1968); Gudjónsson, <i>Traditional Icelandic embroidery</i> (2006)</p>
10	<p>Reíkir Frontal</p> 	<p>NMI: inv.no. 4797 Originally Reykír Church Iceland, early 16th c. h. 95 cm; w. 80 cm. (size of main panel) Applique work with added free embroidery in multi-colored wool, linen, silk and gilt leather on woolen cloth and linen tabby.</p>	<p>Gudjónsson, <i>Traditional Icelandic embroidery</i> (2006); Kristjánsdóttir, "Sjö A fyrir Ave-vers» (1992)</p>
11	<p>Reíkir Frontlet</p> 	<p>NMI: inv.no. 51 Originally Reykír Church Iceland, late 15th c. w. 111,5 cm. (but originally longer) Woven in wool and gilded threads with fringes.</p>	<p><i>No published literature available</i></p>

12	Skálholt Frontlet 	NMI: inv.no. 1145 Originally Skálholt Cathedral Iceland, 14 th c. h. 10 cm; w. 140 cm. (without fringes) Embroidery in multicoloured silks and gold threads, with applied gilded coins and red fringes. The central plaque of a pelican is an 18 th c. addition.	Gudjónsson, <i>Traditional Icelandic embroidery</i> (2006)
13	Gildeskål Frontlet 	Lost WW2 Originally Gildeskål Church Norway?, 15 th c h. 12 cm; w. 141,5 cm. (without fringes) Woven in many coloured wools with wool and fringes and woven bands.	Engelstad, <i>Messeklær og alterskrud</i> (1941)
14	Trondenes Frontlet 	Trondenes Church: inv.no. n/a Rhineland, 15 th c. h. 14 cm; w. 237 cm. (without fringes) Woven in many coloured wools and silks with wool and linen fringes.	Engelstad, <i>Messeklær og alterskrud</i> (1941)
15	Norrunda Frontlet 	SHM: inv.no. 13647 Norrunda Church (late 16 th c.) originally Vadstena Abbey Church Vadstena, c. 1500 h. 25 cm; w. 282 cm. Embroidered in silks, gilded threads, pearls, coral beads and metal embellishments in a variety of techniques on a red silk ground supported by linen tabby.	Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997); <i>Inger Estham, «Birgittinska broderier»</i> (1984)
16	The Nes Frontal 	KHM: inv.no. C2964 Nes Church, Norway Germany, c. 1400 – 1450 h. 91 – 92 cm, w. 139,5 cm Crucifix panel: h. 50 cm, w. 41 cm Altar frontal made of two pieces of coarse linen tabby, joined by a visible hem vertically arranged down the middle of the frontal. Printed and painted motifs.	Engelstad, <i>Messeklær og alterskrud</i> (1941); Kielland, Thor B. "Nogen trykte tøier fra middelalderen (1917); Henschen, <i>Tygtryck i Sverige</i> (1942)
17	Turku Capsis 	Turku Cathedral: inv.no. n/a Sweden, c. 1480 h. 6 cm; w. 23 cm; l. 22,5. Box clothes in linen tabby covered with gold and silk embroideries in split stiches, raised work and pearl embroidery (all of the pearls are now lost). The lid is fastened with metal closures.	Geijer, «En textil målning» (1947)
18	Skálholt Bursa 	NMI: inv.no. 421 Originally Skálholt Cathedral Iceland, c. 1500 h. 25,4 cm; w. 25,4 cm. Gold and silk embroideries applied to a velvet ground fabric, further embellished with gilded metal embellishments and freshwater pearls. Traces in the ground fabric indicate loss of pearls and metal embellishments.	Gudjónsson, <i>Traditional Icelandic embroidery</i> (2006)
19	Uppsala Amice 	UCM: inv.no. n/a Uppsala Cathedral	Branting, "Några Meddelanden om

		Sweden, c. 1430 h. 56 cm; w. 100 cm. Embroidered apparels: h. 8 cm; w. 39 cm Linen amice with apparels embroidered with silks, pearls, metal embellishments.	Svenska mässkläder» (1910); Estham, «Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-talet» (2010)
20	Lund Alb 	LCM: inv.no n/a Lund Cathedral Late 14 th or early 15 th c. h. 169 cm; w. 350 cm. Linen alb made in white linen constructed from several pieces with pleated gores under both arms giving ample volume to the garment, and blue linen apparels on lower front and dorsal sides, as well as on each cuff.	Emma Malmqvist, «Skjortan från Lunds Domkyrka» (2008); Nockert and Possnert, <i>Att Datera Textilier</i> (2002)
21	Bremnes Orphrey 	KHM: inv.no. C3719 Originally Bremnes Church, Norway c. 1450, possibly embroidered in Norway Orphrey: h. 126 cm; w. 46 cm. The 15 th c. orphrey is mounted on a 17 th c. vestment. Embroidered in silks, gold threads, and embellished with freshwater pearls, coral beads, blue and green glass beads, semi-precious stones, and metal embellishments.	Engelstad, <i>Messeklær og alterskrud</i> (1941); Nødseth, «Corals, Blood and Precious Pearls» (2017)
22	Marian Uppsala Chasuble 	UCM: inv.no. n/a Uppsala Cathedral Sweden, 1450 – 1470 Dorsal side: h. 134 cm; w. 102 cm. Covered in embroidery in golden threads, multicolored silks, and, originally, freshwater pearls in laid and couched work and relief work. Blue lining of 13 th -14 th c. Chinese silk, inserted in the 17 th c.	Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997); Geijer, <i>Medieval Textiles in the Cathedral of Uppsala</i> (2011); Estham, «Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-talet» (2010)
23	Århus Chasuble 	NMD: inv.no. C1999VI Århus Church of Our Lady Dorsal side: h. 128 cm; w. 83 cm. Cross orphrey: h. 123 cm; w. 80,5 cm. Orphrey bands: w. 7 – 8 cm. Chasuble made of c. 1300 Mongolian silks with woven inscriptions and animal motifs, so-called panni tarticini. Remodelled c. 1500 to a narrower shape, with new cross orphrey embroidered on blue silk in relief work with coral beads, glass beads, freshwater peals and silks.	Lindahl and P. J. Riis, «Messehagelen fra Vor Frue i Århus» (1949); Corinne Mühlemann, «Gold-Seide-Stoffe mit Streifendekor aus Zentralasien» (2018)
24	Linköping Mitre 	SHM: inv.no. Linköping Cathedral c. 1460, Vadstena work h. 80 cm, the headpiece 35 cm. Gold, silk and pearl embroideries with semi-precious stones and enamel plaques. Gilded metal lining on the headpiece, as well as small bells suspended from the lappets. Enamels dated to the early 13 th century, re-used from two or more sets or older vestments.	Estham, «Domkirkans textilier från medeltid til tidlig nutid» (2001); Hetherington, «The Enamels on a Mitre from Linköping Cathedral» (2008); Nødseth, «The Linköping Mitre» (2018)
25	Fogdö Cope 	SHM: Inv.no. 23128:15 Fogdåo Church, spoil of war from the Polish–Swedish War (1621–1625)	Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Vävnader och</i>




		<p>Originally England, c. 1500 h. 143 cm; w. 290 cm. Clipeus h. 38 cm. Cope body of crimson velvet studded with applied motifs embroidered in golds and silks with embroidered clipeus.</p>	<p><i>Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997)</p>
26	<p>Strängnäs Cope</p> 	<p>Strängnäs Cathedral inv.no. n/a Strängnäs Cathedral Sweden, early. 15th c. h. 103 cm; w. 303 cm. Cope body of crimson velvet brocade, with orphreys and <i>clipeus</i> in a (now) pale brownish silk with applied figures embroidered in gold and silks. <i>Clipeus</i> with Virgin and Child framed by embroidered leaves and a silver gilt ball-shaped bell suspended. The inscription reading “<i>orate pro thoma ep(iscop)a strengensi</i>”; “pray for Thomas, bishop of Strängnäs”</p>	<p>Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Våvnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997)</p>
27	<p>Uppsala Sudary Mantle</p> 	<p>UCM: inv.no. n/a Uppsala Cathedral Vadstena, c. 1420 h. 68 cm; w. 110 cm. Sudary heading h. 10 cm. White linen tabby with embroidery and countersunk open-work borders in loop-braiding. Overlaid are woven and loop-braided lattices with red roundels and tassels. Triangular silk sudary heading embroidered with ‘IHS’ and monogram of the Virgin Mary together with the emblem of the Vadstena Clergy.</p>	<p>Branting and Lindblom, <i>Medeltida Våvnader och Broderier</i> (facsimile ed. 1997); Branting, “Några Meddelanden om Svenska mässkläder” (1910); Estham, «Textilsamlingen från 1300-talet till 1860-talet» (2010)</p>

Table 2. Preserved Chasubles with Embroidered Orphreys c. 1400 – 1550

Museum	Inv.no.	Provenance	O.Shape	Iconography
DNM	15380	Unknown Church, I	Cross orphrey	Crucifix
DNM	9206	Nikolaj Church, Copenhagen, D	Cross orphrey	Cross w/ heraldic weapon and skull w/ bones by the cross foot
DNM	CXXXVII	Århus Abbey Churc, D	Cross orphrey	Cross w/ vines, leaves, lilies, roses
DNM	12155	St Knuds Church, Bornholm, D	Cross orphrey	St Catherine, St Bartholomew, St Barbara, St Gertrude, St Benedict of Nursia, John the Apostle, St Dorothea
In church	n/a	Brunkenberg Church, N	Cross orphrey	Crucifix, Virgin Mary w/ Child, St Olaf
In church	n/a	Helgen Church, N	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	The Resurrection, St Francis of Assisi, St Martin of Tours
In church	n/a	Berg Church, N	Cross orphrey	Crucifix, Virgin Mary and Child w/ St Anne
KHM	C 25040	Køllefjord Church, N	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary (Apocalyptic Virgin), St Barbara, St Christina of Bolsena, Female saints, St Dorothea, St Martina
KHM	C 9179	Løten Church, N	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Three of Jesse w/ Virgin Mary w/ Child in cross flower
KHM	OK-10409	Lunder Church, N	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Virgin Mary w/ Child, tendril with flowers
KHM	C 3719	Bremnes Church, N	Cross orphrey	Crucifix
LCCM	n/a	Linköping Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	St Anne w/ Virgin Mary and Child, God the Fater, Scenes from Virgin Mary's life
LCCM	n/a	Linköping Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Cross w/ Frech lilies
LCCM	n/a	Linköping Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Cross w/ vines, roses, clowes, lilies, heartshaped leaves
LCCM	n/a	Linköping Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary and St John, evangelist symbols, St Peter, St Paul
In church	n/a	Now: Mariefreds Church (Linköping Cathedral, S)	Cross orphrey	Nativity scene, Scenes from Virgin Mary's life
NFM	NF 1907-0345	Unknown Church, N	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary and St John, Mary Magdalene
NMN	OK-03699	Hedrum Church, N	Pilar orphrey	Saints in architectural niches
NMN	OK-dep-00138	Tyldal Church, N	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Annunciation, St Margaret, male saints
NMN	Ok 02079	Kvelle Chrch, N	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary, St Peter, St Dorothea, St John the Baptist, male saints
NMN	OK 04576	Søndeled Church, N	Cross orphrey	Crucifix, John the Apostle, male saints
NTNU	T4588	Horg Church, N	Pilar orphrey	St Olaf, St Sunniva, Marian minuscules
SHM	505	Visingsö Church, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary and St John, St Peter

SHM	4000	Umeå Church, S	Cross orphrey	St Joachim and St Anne in the cross flower flanked by various saints in cross arms and cross foot.
SHM	4173.6	Frötuna Church, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary and St John, Mary Magdalene, St Peter and St Paul (cross arms) and God the Father (cross top)
SHM	4841.2	Flisby Church, S	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary w/ Child and angels
SHM	5173.2	Lillkyrka Church, S	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary and Child w/ St Anne, scenes from Mary's life
SHM	5137	Häggeby Church, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifixion surrounded w/ heart-shaped leaves
SHM	8839.2	Tensta Church, S	Pilar orphrey	Virgin Mary, John the Baptist and St Olav
SHM	8839.3	Tensta Church, S	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Mary Magdalene, the Virgin enthroned w/ Child (cross top), John the Apostle and St Barbara
SHM	10051	Stigsjö Church, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary and St John, passion narrative
SHM	14061.3	Västra Eds Church, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary and St John
SHM	14061.4	Västra Eds Church, S	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary (Apocalyptic Virgin), St Mary, St Elizabeth, female saints
SHM	16091	Värmdö Boo Church, S	Cross orphrey	Coronation of the Virgin in cross flower, apostle figures
SHM	17888.1	Rö Church, S	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Male apostles
SHM	23005.6	Unknown Church, S	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Virgin Mary w/ Child
SHM	23005.22	Uppsala Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix
SHM	23005.21	Uppsala Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Nativity scene
SHM	23022.10	Stora Åby kyrka, S	Cross orphrey	Annunciation scene
SHM	23022.11	Unknown church, S	Cross orphrey	Assumption of Virgin Mary
SHM	23022:12	Unknown church, S	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary (the Apocalyptic Virgin)
SHM	26688	Tyresö Church, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix
SHM	31142	Hölö Church, S	Cross orphrey	Male saint (St Peter?)
SHM	31426.2	Strängnäs Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Apocalyptic Christ
SHM	33260	Torskinge Church, S	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	St Lucia martyrism
SHM	34349	Enåker Church, S	Cross orphrey	St Anna and St Jacob
SHM	23005.9	Mjölby Church, S	Cross orphrey	John the Baptist
SHM	23005.10	Mjölby Church, S	Cross orphrey	Nativity scene, Scenes from Virgin Mary's life
SM	L 1141	Sjösås Church, S	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary (in a cross-shaped three)
NMI	NMI. 3326	Vatnsfjörður Church, I	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary flanked by angels, saints
NMI	NMI. 3779	Einarsstaðir Church, I	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary, angels and saints
NMI	NMI. 1719	Pingeyra Church, I	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary w/ Child, saints

NMI	NMI. 11923	Skálholt Cathedral, I	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Crucifix, God father, Virgin Mary w/ Child, saints
NMI	NMI. 3039	Hítardalur Church, I	Cross orphrey	Crucifix, saints
NMI	NMI. 2458	Reykhólar Church, I	Cross orphrey	Crucifix
NMI	NMI. 5612	Brautarholt Church, I	Cross orphrey	Crucifix
NMI	NMI. 1719	Píngeyra Church, I	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary, saints
NMI	NMI. 10950	Hóladóm Church, I	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary w/ Child, scenes from Mary's life
NMI	NMI. 2666	Odda Church, I	Cross orphrey	Crucifix, saints
TM	TGM-SM.0296	Skjens Church, N	Cross orphrey	Crucifix , Virgin Mary w/ Child, St Olaf
UiT	lost WW2	Lebesby Church, N	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Crucifix, the Holy Trinity, St Sunniva, John the Apostle, Virgin and Child w/ St Anne, bishop, St Dorothea, St Catherine, female saints
UCM	D10393	Uppsala Cathedral, S	Large scale figural embroidery	Virgin Mary w/ Child
UCM	D10398	Uppsala Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifixion w/ Virgin Mary and St John, Mary Magdalen, angels
UCM	D10397	Uppsala Cathedral, S	Pilar orphrey	Virgin Mary and Child w/ St Anne, St Henry, St Birgitta, St Martin, St Sigfrid, Jakob Ulvsson (donator)
UCM	D10400	Uppsala Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ angels and Mary Magdalene
UCM	D10401	Uppsala Cathedral, S	Cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary and St John
UCM	D10392	Uppsala Cathedral, S	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Crucifix w/ Virgin Mary and St John
UiT	TS 1823	Kautokeino Church, N	Cross orphrey	Crucifix
UMB	Ma 133	Veøy Church, N	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Apostles in architectural niches
UMB	Ma 51	Hjørundsfjord Church, N	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Damian and Cosmas
UMB	MA 425, 426	Bygstad Church, N	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Virgin Mary, Sta Dorothea
VM	1M16 - 96021	Husaby	fragment	Virgin Mary
ÖLM	OLM-7832	Viby Church, S	Cross orphrey	Virgin Mary (Apocalyptic Virgin), St Catherine, St Barbara, St Dorothea, St Ursula, St Margaret
ÖLM	OLM-1137	Sköllersta Church, S	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Virgin Mary w/ Child, St Peter, female saint, St Paul, St Thomas, St Batholomew
ÖLM	OLM-3084	Lännäs Church, S	Fork-shaped cross orphrey	Martyrium of St John the Baptist

O.shape = orphrey shape

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