

MALGORZATA GRUPA

LITURGICAL VESTMENTS FROM EXCAVATIONS IN CHURCHES IN WARSAW AND KOŃSKOWOLA

In 1996-2000 Maria Dąbrowska¹ supervised archeological works in St. Catherine church in Służewiec in Warsaw. Foundations originating from different church phases as well as earthen graves and a big quantity of single bones were located under the floor.

During the works in the nave under northern heating canal a collection of yellow-tea color textiles was excavated. At present it is impossible to define what the colors of particular fabrics were, because plant dye decomposed completely (Fig. 1).

The base of a chasuble, so called „mask” was trick silk upholstery fabric while outer layer was made of satin². All elements were joined by the means of tack stitch, therefore we can state for sure, that they belonged to elements of a grave gown. Analysis of all fragments indicated, that it is a front of fiddleback chasuble³ of Roman type with cross orphreys separated from the vestment base with silk band. The chasuble edges were rimmed with narrow fringed band.

Outer layer was made of silk satin in weave 7:1 (Fig. 2), density per 1 cm: 140 threads of warp, 40 threads of weft. Silk thread was not twisted.

The chasuble mask was manufactured of thick silk double-weft textile with geometrical-plant pattern (Fig. 3). The base in weave 4:1, density per 1 cm: 72 threads of warp, 15 threads of weft.

Outer layer was separated from the vestment mask with silk weaved band of geometrical-rhomb pattern (Fig. 4, 5). The band edges with picots. The chasuble rims were also lined with silk haberdashery of 2,2 cm wide, with fringes

from outside (Fig. 6, 7). The masks had 28 cm of width, outer part – 27 cm. It was sewn on to the mask unsymmetrically, on one side 7,7 cm wide, on the other – 5,2 cm. The mask was sewn from many textile pieces.

During cleaning works in 2010 in so called central crypt in Końskowola parish church one of the coffins revealed liturgical vestment. Complete decomposition of bone material made it impossible to obtain any information on the buried person. However, preservation state of silk textiles enabled establishing some facts concerning gowns, the dead had been dressed in. The excavated chasuble can be classified as a fiddleback one with a pillar (back and front) made of damask with floral pattern (Fig. 8, 9). Textile density: 100 threads of warp with delicate twist S, 70 not twisted threads of weft per 1 cm. The edge of width 0,8 cm (0,15 cm – 4 thick threads of warp in weave 1:1, 0,65 mm in weave 3:1). Weave of the base 2:1, and in ornament – satin weave with predominance of 4:1. Neck hole finished with the same fabric.

The mask was made of textile which geometrical-plant ornament composes stripes, and was obtained by introducing additional warp in other colors. Despite pigment loss in the textile, warps creating the ornament differ in shade from the base color (Fig. 10, 11). General base weave 2:1, density: 66 threads of warp, 33 threads of weft per 1 cm, non twisted thread. The edge of 2 mm wide, 8 threads of warp, thicker than the basic one in weave. The ornament is shaped by additional warp in satin weave, most frequently 4:1.

Orphreys were separated from mask with 1,7 cm wide lace made of silk thread with metal wrap. Originally the wrap had been yellow (golden), but destructive processes deprived it of its color and at present we find only greenish spots on silk thread, which are the remains of copper oxides being components of the used metal alloy (Fig. 12). All chasuble edges and seams joining orphreys and mask and also neck hole were lined with haberdashery. The vestment sizes: front length – 82 cm, back – 125 cm, front mask width – 23,5 cm, back – 21 cm, orphreys width – 20,5 cm, width of aperture for the neck – 8 cm. The chasuble was lined inside with textile of plant fibres (flax fabric most presumably) with weave 1:1. Maniple and stole were also made of the same silk as the mask. They also had probably the same kind of lining as the basic liturgical vestment. Stole

¹ From Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.

² Pillar or cross orphreys – is an ornamental part of fiddleback and Gothic chasuble, separated from masks by haberdashery, in Gothic and Renaissance very richly embroidered with Biblical scenes, saints' image or ornamentation not connected with the Church liturgy.

³ Fiddleback chasuble – until liturgical reform in 1968 a chasuble was the most often a liturgical vestment with shoulders width in shape of two lengthened parts joined together on shoulders with a head hole, cut away completely at sides for free movements of hands. It was usually made of precious textiles – damask, satin, brocade, velvet, cloth of gold, braided with haberdashery or decorated with embroideries. Fiddleback Roman type has pillar orphreys at the back and cross one (T letter shape) at the front.



Fig. 1 Fragments of a chasuble before conservation – Warsaw

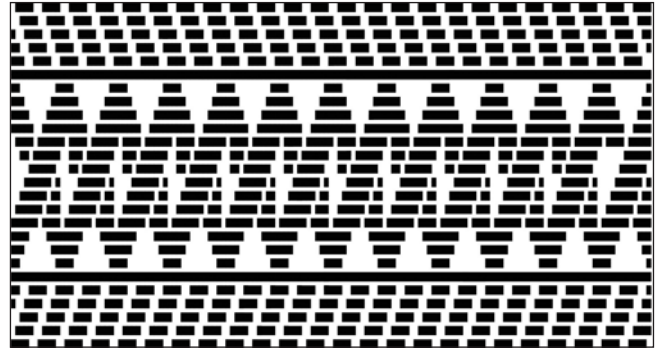


Fig. 4 Pattern from haberdashery separating outer layer from mask – Warsaw



Fig. 2 Satin outer layer lined with silk haberdashery – Warsaw



Fig. 5 Fragment of haberdashery under microscope, magnified 10x – Warsaw



Fig. 3 Scheme of textile report from chasuble mask – Warsaw

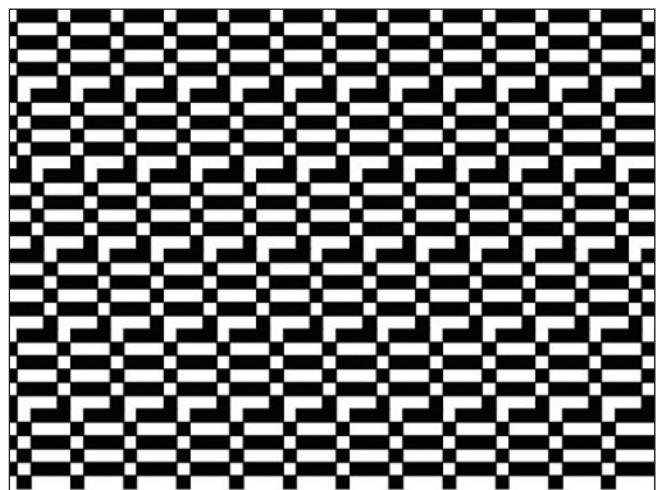


Fig. 6 Pattern of haberdashery lining the chasuble edges – Warsaw

and maniple were decorated with cross signs made of silk haberdashery with edges wavy rimmed by different sizes of picots (Fig. 13). Its background (weft) was weaved with a thread of metal wrap, presumably gold (at present gray, what indicates substantial silver admixture). In case of Końskowola chasuble it is difficult to define if it had been

specially prepared for the grave or had liturgical purpose. Comparing to other gowns the vestment's silk is very well preserved. The seams have not remained, therefore it is difficult to state if it was tack stitch or back stitch.

The chasuble excavated in St Catherine church in Służewiec is a typical grave gown and it consists of only



Fig. 7 Fragment of haberdashery with fringes on the right, magnified 10x – Warsaw

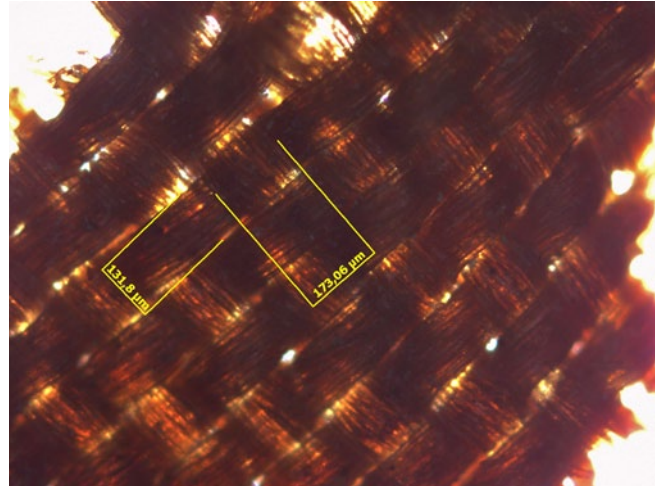


Fig. 9 Measures of thread thickness of weft and warp in damask under microscope in μm – Końskowola



Fig. 8 Fragment of damask outer layer – Końskowola



Fig. 10 Fragment of chasuble mask – Końskowola

front part sewn for the needs of a funeral⁴. The masks were sewn together of many fragments originating probably of a garment worn earlier. The outer layer is deprived of any embroidery. The mask ornament has no connections with Church symbols and any parallels to liturgical dresses. The Końskowola chasuble does not possess any church symbols, either. Church or liturgical textiles are the ones used as material for liturgical dresses. In accordance with

⁴ M. Grupa, *Ubiór mieszczan i szlachty z XVI-XVIII wieku z kościoła p.w. Wniebowzięcia Najświętszej Marii Panny w Toruniu*, Toruń 2005, pp. 68-71.

Church rules they should be silk. Vestments found in Warsaw, Końskowola, Lubiń⁵ or Lublin⁶ were made of silk. Next information indicating the textile as a piece of liturgical

⁵ M. Grupa, *Textiles from the 16th-18th century from the benedictine in Lubiń, Leszno voivodeship*, [in:] *Textiles in European Archaeology, Report from the 6th NESAT Symposium, 7-11th May 1996 in Borås*, ed. L. Bender Jørgensen, Ch. Rinaldo, Gotar Series A, Vol. 1, Göteborg 1998, pp. 277-281.

⁶ A. Drażkowska, M. Grupa, *Dokumentacja konserwatorska prac przeprowadzonych na odzieży grobowej biskupa Michała de la Mars*, manuscript in Institute of Archaeology of Nicolai Copernicus University in Toruń, 2002.

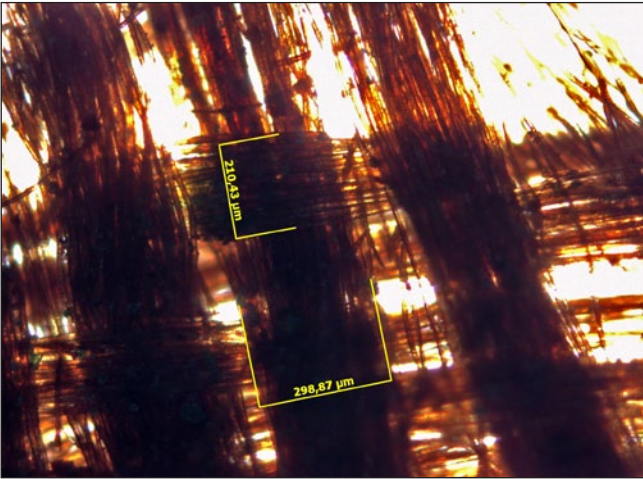


Fig. 11 Measures of thread thickness of weft and warp from the mask – Końskowola



Fig. 12 Chasuble lace – Końskowola

vestment could be the chasuble color, which should be in white, red, green, violet, pink or black. However, plant pigment decay during depositing, deprived us also of that detail. What is more, during modern times, this detail was not strictly obeyed to. Therefore Longin Żarnowiecki reminded us about symbolism of those six colors and their meaning in religious cult⁷. During Middle Ages silks available on the market were used for the purpose, but their additional ornamentation, e.g. scenes from the Bible, image of Saint or symbolic decorations showed directly the gown character. During the Renaissance we observe common depletion of Church embroidery or its complete disappearance. Even the most expensive gowns, without any symbolical Church ornaments were deprived of liturgical dresses' features⁸, but on the other hand they had very rich pattern program – bushy flowers, shrubs, arabesques, acanthus leaves and other flo-

ral – geometrical compositions and architectonic elements. The chasuble of Bishop Jan Trach Gniński buried in 1636 in Lubią⁹ did not bear any embroidery trace on the outer layer. It was manufactured of beautiful patterned velvet, where the ornaments were obtained by pulling over the textile surface loops of warp hair and cutting a part of them (Fig. 14). The whole garment was made of many velvet fragments, tacked and tucks on rims were only pressed. There were no lining traces. It was regarded as grave gown specially made for the funeral. But for the other grave equipment, particularly five-finger liturgical gloves made of plain silk without any patterns and only with slanted lengthened wristbands and the cipher IHS embroidered on the upper part, it would have been difficult to state in the initial stage of the works, that it had been a burial of ecclesiastic. The velvet used for making the chasuble, stole and maniple did not have any features of liturgical textile. During Baroque this type of material was used in upholstery or for garment sewing. Priests Bock and later Żarnowiecki indicated that frequently the same textiles and patterns were met in the evenings at concerts and balls and in the morning they were seen at the altars¹⁰. Despite great luxury in every day life liturgical grave gowns were rather modest, although it is difficult to confirm in case of excavated silks. In case of liturgical vestments excavated in Poland no embroideries were registered. Very often the garments' backs were sewn of many small pieces (chasuble from Lubią). Those gowns did not have any lining, with the exception of Końskowola case (we can suppose that at least for short it had been used during the priest's life). Until now only in one instance liturgical grave gown has possessed solely the upper part – the vestment from Warsaw.

Comparing all chasubles known to me from archaeological studies we can observe that they were fiddleback types. The back was always longer than the front. The masks were made of different fabrics than the upper part and neck holes. They differed with pattern and color. Despite the fact that all textiles had colors close to brownish-yellow, differences were to be noticed. Outer layers were brighter, masks darker. Main additional ornaments consisted of haberdashery and laces lining the gowns' edges or partings between outer layer, mask and neck holes. The same band served for rimming the maniple and the stole.

In case of burials of bishops Jan Trach Gniński and Michael de la Mars there were no problems with textile dating because we knew their dates of death. However, in instances from Warsaw and Końskowola we do not have such information. Silk from Warsaw was thick with rich ornamentation (Fig. 3), while the textile from Końskowola was very thin and delicate. It was stripe repeating pattern (Fig. 10). In spite of those differences the textiles originate

⁷ L. Żarnowiecki, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

⁹ M. Grupa, *Textiles from the 16th-18th century...*, p. 277.

¹⁰ L. Żarnowiecki, *op. cit.*, p. 127.



Fig. 13 Cross sewn on the maniple – Końskowola

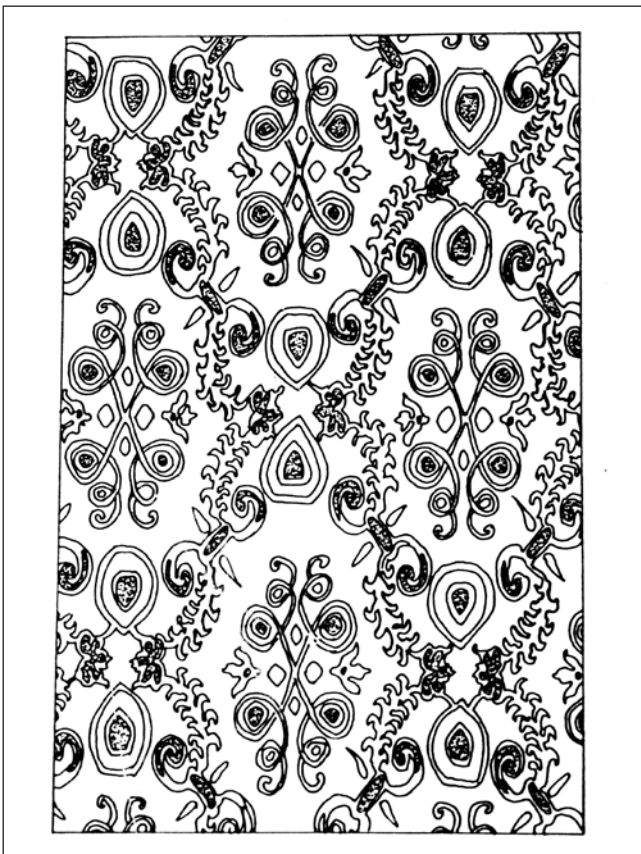


Fig. 14 Scheme of thread report on satin from burial of Jan Trach Gniński – Lubin

from more or less the same period, i.e. the turn of 16/18 c or 1st half of 18th c.

Textile fragments found in earthen graves and crypts indicate great degree of destruction¹¹. They underwent various

factors causing damages during wearing those garments, when living people had been using them as well as damages made during textile depositing in graves and crypts. General fibres' weakening takes place during textile using and influence of so called aging changes. They include, among others: rubbings, bulging. The others are destructions caused by mechanical factors – cuts, piercing, tearing, cracks, folds, completed by accumulation of impurities, UV ray activity. Next destruction takes place after depositing to the grave. Textiles are characterized by numerous spots and deposits on the surface being a result of microbiological attack – bacteria, fungi and impurities made by wax fat replacement of the dead body. Next damages are caused by worms and tachnid flies preying. They are insects preying in coffin wood, directly on textiles or decomposed bodies. Aging processes taking place under the ground cause textile stiffening and dye decomposition. Conservation laboratory obtains textiles with strong impurities, the most often over-dried. Their fibres are fragile and with a little degree of flexibility. First stage of conservation work is to make drawing, photo and descriptive documentation. Textiles are cleaned mechanically and chemically and next fibres undergo flexibility process. The following treatment consists of: ripping off all elements and clearing seams. Conservation Laboratory of the Archaeological Institute in Toruń applies for those treatments – PEG 300, paraloid B-72 in toluene and methanol. After completing impregnation technological textile analyses are executed. Doubling is also made if possible. Synthetic glue Akrylkleber 360, which as a means of cementing archaeological textile with the new doubling one turns out to be a safe preparate, is applied. The final stage of conservation treatment is to sew together particular elements for complete reconstruction of particular garments.

¹¹ M. Grupa, *Konserwacja jedwabnych tkanin i rekonstrukcja szat*, „Prace i Materiały Muzeum Archeologicznego

i Etnograficznego w Łodzi”, seria numizmatyczna i konserwatorska, No. 13: 2007, pp. 207-218.

Streszczenie