

# **Textiles in European Archaeology**

**Report from the 6<sup>th</sup> NESAT Symposium,  
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Cover: Cloth for Queen Margrethe's Golden Gown reconstructed 1993 at Väfskolan, the  
University College of Borås. Photo: Nino Monastra.

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# Textiles from the 16th-18th Century from the Benedictine Monastery in Lubiń, Leszno Voivodeship

## Malgorzata Grupa

During excavations in Lubiń near Kościan (Leszno Voivodeship) work on the cemetery at St. Leonard's Church and the monastery church was carried out<sup>1</sup>. A number of bodies buried in various robes were found in a crypt of the Benedictine monastery church. One body was dressed in *liturgical robes and two others in secular garments*. Other bodies only had traces of material, which at this stage of research are hard to interpret and it is difficult to identify them as particular items of clothing.

The secular garments were identified as 'żupans' (Turnau 1991), a bottom doublet in male national costume (fig. 1, 2) made of smooth silk satin<sup>2</sup>, and fastened to the belt by the means of the buttons of a jacket, called 'knaffles'. The 'żupans' were lined with delicate silk fabrics in tabby weave. After detailed analysis we were able to identify traces of fraying on the collar and wristbands, which suggests that the individuals were buried in the same clothes they used to wear in their daily life.

The liturgical robes are the clothes of bishop Jan Trach Gniński, who was buried in 1736 in the monastery church crypt. By means of written and iconographic sources we are able to identify only the bishop mentioned above. Very little is known about the other burials except that they were abbots of the monastery and its contributors.

The bishop's garments are composed of a chasuble, stole, maniple, alb, mitre, liturgical gloves and a portion of coffin pillow (fig. 3, 4). The

chasuble, stole and maniple were made of beautifully patterned velvet, in which the plant ornamentation was achieved by drawing the warp loops above the surface of the fabric and cutting only a part of them<sup>3</sup>. The garments were pieced together from many fragments of fabric joined by tacking stitches and the dress folds were barely pressed. *Silk fabrics made in a similar technique were woven*

*in Italy in the 16th century (Nahlík, 1971). A detailed analysis of the pattern may indicate where the fabric was manufactured, in Italy or France. Patterned silk fabrics excavated in Poland are known only from Elbląg (Maik 1994). Comparing the period when the fabric was made and the date of bishop Jan Trach Gniński's burial and taking into account the quality of the chasuble-making, we are able to state that we are dealing with funeral clothes most probably made from the remains of an old garment.*

The alb, mitre and pillow fragments were made of very delicate silk fabrics in tabby weave<sup>4</sup>. Similar fabrics have been identified in Elbląg, Lübeck and other parts of Europe. However, in this case the possibility of local production cannot be excluded.

The only item of the bishop's clothing which was well made is a pair of five-fingered liturgical gloves made of silk of one colour, knitted smoothly without any patterning and with obliquely lengthened wristbands. There is a monogram - IHS - on the top of the hand - embroidered with silk and gold thread (fig 5). The high technical quality

of the gloves, the careful embroidery and their shape date them to the 16th - 17th century. At the time the usage of knitted gloves spread out all around the countries which were under the influence of West-European textile manufacturing (Turnau 1979). The shape of the gloves from Lubin and the way they were ornamented indicates their Italian origin.

The funeral clothes of the bishop as well as the 'żupans' were excavated from the crypt in a very bad condition, therefore they were immediately sent for conservation.

Fabrics have little resistance to the impact of outside factors including changes of humidity, micro-organisms or chemical substances. In addition, contact with decomposing bodies causes irreversible structural changes. Despite the very bad state of the objects 'dry cleaning' was abandoned, because every action inflicted new damage. The fabrics were gradually moistened and then their flexibility was increased by bathing in a

water solution of PEG - 200. The bathing loosened the stains, which enabled their systematic removal layer by layer. This process was repeated several times. Then the object was disinfected in PCMC (pentachlorometacresol) and impregnated. The composition was based on PEG-300 and Paraloid B-72 and it was carefully added to the textile and afterwards dried gradually.

The last stage of conservation was making reconstructions of the garments. Because of the bad condition of the textiles, the process of sewing the remains on a base layer was abandoned. Instead they were strengthened by sticking the fragments on a backing material. By preparing the textiles in this way the original appearance of the two 'żupans' was reconstructed.

Analysis of the clothing is not complete because each item has problems relating to its construction. A detailed study of textile production is required as well as research into the fashions of the period.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The archaeological survey in the Benedictine monastery and the parish cemetery was carried out in 1978-1994 by Professor Zofia Kurnatowska.

<sup>2</sup> The textile is a regular satin weave.

<sup>3</sup> The binding warp has five thread satin weave (4/1) the pile warp is used double. The proportion of binding warp to pile warp is 6:1 (the double pile warp thread should be taken as one). The density of binding warp is about 96-100 threads per cm, the density of pile warp 16-17 double threads per cm, the density of the weft 35 threads per cm. The threads of the warp (binding and pile) are about 0,1-0,2 mm thick, they are not twisted at all or very slightly S (left). The weft threads about 0,2-0,3 mm thick are not twisted or very slightly Z (right). The analysis was carried out by Dr Jerzy Maik from the Archaeological and Ethnological PAN Institute in Łódź.

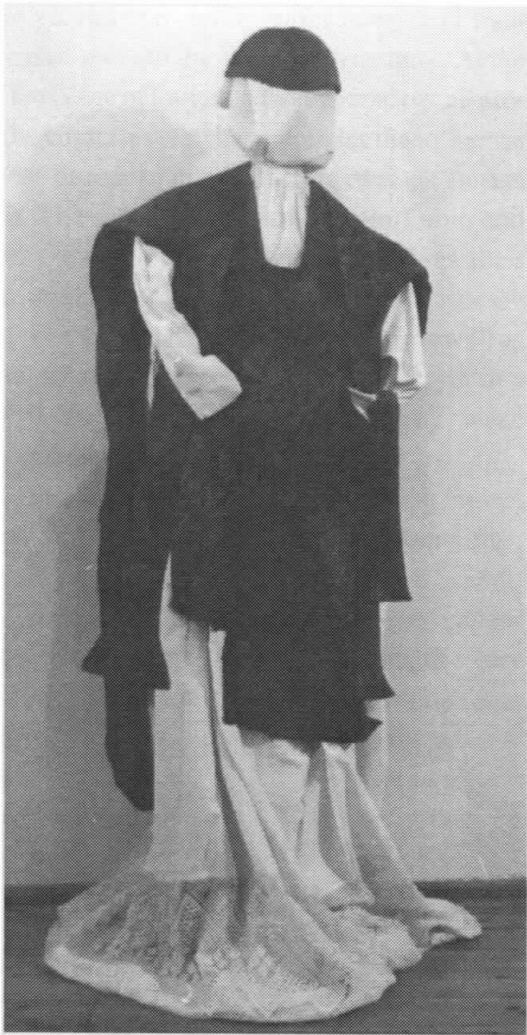
<sup>4</sup> Tabby weave 1:1, the density of warp 75 - 80 threads per cm, weft 27 threads per cm, the thickness of the warp thread about 0,1-0,2 mm, the weft 0,2-0,3 mm, no twist both in warp and weft. The analysis was carried out by Dr Jerzy Maik from the Archaeological and Ethnological PAN Institute in Łódź.



*Fig. 1. The „župan” after reconstruction -  
duplicate - the front side*



*Fig. 2. The „župan” after reconstruction -  
duplicate - the back side*



*Fig. 3. The funeral liturgical robe of bishop Jan Trach Gniński after reconstruction - the front side*



*Fig. 4. The funeral liturgical robe of bishop Jan Trach Gniński after reconstruction - the back side*



*Fig. 5. The knitted liturgical gloves*

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