ESPACIO, TIEMPO Y FORMA 6

AÑO 2018
NUEVA ÉPOCA
ISSN 1130-4715
E-ISSN 2340-1478

SERIE VII HISTORIA DEL ARTE
REVISTA DE LA FACULTAD DE GEOGRAFÍA E HISTORIA

UNED

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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/etfvii.6.2018

UNED

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA

La revista *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma* (siglas recomendadas: ETF), de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia de la UNED, que inició su publicación el año 1988, está organizada de la siguiente forma:

SERIE I — Prehistoria y Arqueología
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Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie VII está registrada e indexada, entre otros, por los siguientes Repertorios Bibliográficos y Bases de Datos: ERIH PLUS, ISOC (CINDOC), DICE, FRANCIS, PIO, Ulrich's, SUDOC, ZDB, Bibliography of the History of Art, REDIB, RESH, IN-RECH, LATINDEX, MIAR, Dialnet, e-spacio UNED, CIRC 2.0 (2016), DULCINEA (VERDE), Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), CARHUS Plus + 2018 y Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). En octubre de 2015 ocupa el puesto 10 en el Google Scholar Metrics (revistas de Arte en España).

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA
Madrid, 2018

SERIE VII · HISTORIA DEL ARTE (NUEVA ÉPOCA) N.º 6, 2018

ISSN 1130-4715 · E-ISSN 2340-1478

DEPÓSITO LEGAL
M-21.037-1988

URL
ETF VII · HISTORIA DEL ARTE · *http://revistas.uned.es/index.php/ETFVII*

DISEÑO Y COMPOSICIÓN
Carmen Chincoa Gallardo · *http://www.laurisilva.net/cch*

Impreso en España · Printed in Spain

DOSSIER

WEARING IMAGES

Edited by Diane H. Bodart

IMÁGENES PORTADAS

Editado por Diane H. Bodart

THE FLOWERING FOOT OF FLORA. DETAIL OF SANDRO BOTTICELLI, ***PRIMAVERA***, LATE 1470S OR EARLY 1480S, TEMPERA ON PANEL, 202 X 314 CM, GALLERIA DEGLI UFFIZI, FLORENCE.

WEARING THE SACRED: IMAGES, SPACE, IDENTITY IN LITURGICAL VESTMENTS (13th TO 16th CENTURIES)

VISTIENDO LO SAGRADO: IMÁGENES, ESPACIO E IDENTIDAD DE LAS VESTIDURAS LITÚRGICAS (SIGLOS XIII AL XVI)

Cristina Borgioli[1]

Recibido: 25/01/2018 · Aceptado: 19/05/2018
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5944/etfvii.2018.21142

Abstract
The act of wearing sacred garments to celebrate religious rites is an important element of the liturgy. In the early centuries of Christianity, liturgical attire was not meant to be different from secular wear, and it was only in the eleventh century that the custom spread to Rome from northern Europe of wearing vestments made of precious materials for the clergy. From this moment on, precious materials and images would be more or less a constant in Western liturgical attire. This essay discusses – starting from some examples still extant or known from documents – the role of figural images on sacred vestments in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, attempting to explicate the relation between the image and the space where it appears, the body, liturgical gestures, religious and political message, and function in terms of identity, as well as to show the aspects of continuity and discontinuity in the role of images worn in the liturgical sphere from the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

Keywords
Liturgical vestments; figured textiles; figured embroidery; history of liturgy; history of textiles.

Resumen
El arte de vestir prendas sagradas para celebrar ritos religiosos constituye un importante elemento de la liturgia. En los primeros siglos de la Cristiandad, la vestimenta litúrgica no era diferente de la seglar y sólo a partir del siglo XI llegó a Roma desde el norte de Europa la costumbre de usar vestiduras para el clero hechas con materiales preciosos. A partir de ese momento, los materiales preciosos y las imágenes llegaron a significar relativamente una constante en las vestimentas litúrgicas occidentales. El presente ensayo describe - a partir de algunos ejemplos existentes o

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conocidos a través de documentos - el papel de las figuras de imágenes en las vestimentas sagradas durante la Edad Media y el Renacimiento, tratando de explicar la relación entre la imagen y el espacio donde aparece, el cuerpo, gestos litúrgicos, mensajes religiosos y políticos y su función en relación a su identidad, así como mostrar aspectos de la continuidad o discontinuidad del papel de las imágenes usadas en el ámbito litúrgico desde la Edad Media hasta el Renacimiento.

Palabras clave

Vestiduras litúrgicas; tejidos con figuras; bordados con figuras; historia de la Liturgia; historia de los tejidos.

THIS ARTICLE aims to analyse the presence of representations of the sacred on liturgical vestments from the late Middle Ages to the sixteenth century, attempting to identify the perdurance or change in meaning and function of the images in relation to liturgical rites and gestures, patronage, religious message, and relation to the body of the person wearing it and the eyes of those watching him. The images are not studied here in terms of attribution, but as phenomena capable of conveying different messages – now religious, now ideological/political – which could create a relation between the one wearing the vestment and the person or persons who gave or made it, thanks to a code constructed through the medium of sacred images.

To this end, I have chosen to review a number of examples, more or less well known, of liturgical vesture – still existing or now lost but known through documentary or iconographical sources – which have in common the presence of figures or illustrated scenes, attempting to explicate the connection between the historical, religious, or political context of the production and choice of images, their placement within the space of the garment, and the function or destination of the vestment. To clarify these topics, I shall begin with a historical overview of the use of images on liturgical vestments from the early centuries of Christianity up to the twelfth century; I then narrow my focus to the use of images in the Late Middle Ages before moving on to concentrate on Florentine production from the mid-fifteenth century to the early decades of the sixteenth.

1. A LOOK BACK: THE EARLY MEDIEVAL ORIGIN OF FIGURAL DECORATION ON LITURGICAL VESTMENTS

Before analysing the development of the illustrated decoration of liturgical vestments in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, we should briefly reconstruct the origins of the topics to be discussed. In particular: the relation between the preciousness of the materials used and the decorations on the vestments, the earliest appearance and development of illustrations to decorate canonicals, and the custom of offering the gift of a vestment to create a personal bond.

The fascination with rich figurative ornamentation of liturgical vestments arose in Italy during the time of the investiture controversy and the Gregorian reform, emerging as a function of the complex project of renewal aimed at unifying the western Church under the rule of a pope-monarch.[2] Within the sphere of this new political-religious construct, the «figurative language of power» worked out in the imperial Church of western Europe was assimilated also by Rome, where from the beginning ecclesiastical clothing had been austere.[3] As is well known, Christian sacred vestments derived from secular Roman garments, and for many centuries any form

2. Miller, Maureen C.: *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, c. 800–1200*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2014; Miller, Maureen C.: *Vestire la Chiesa. Gli abiti del clero nella Roma medievale*. Rome, Viella, 2014.

3. Miller, Maureen C.: *Vestire la Chiesa*... p. 10.

of distinction between liturgical and secular attire was frowned upon.[4] The spread of barbarian customs through the Italian peninsula soon led to a more pronounced distinction between secular and liturgical clothing, since the clergy remained faithful to the Roman tradition, rejecting the new Franco-Germanic garments (as just one example, breeches) being adopted by the Latin people. Moreover, the progressive militarization of society going on at the same time, especially beyond the Alps, spurred churchmen to adopt clerical clothing – since it was recognizable – for wear even outside their sanctuaries.[5] The principal liturgical vestments thus derive from elements common to Roman clothing: the alb from the *tunica talaris manicata*, the chasuble from the *poenula*, the dalmatic from the tunic called a *dalmatica*, and the cope from the ancient cloak called a *lacerna*.[6]

During the Carolingian period a first attempt was made to regulate canonicals in terms of colour, shape, and who wore what; in particular, at a time when bishops were gaining more prestige, it was their attire that underwent the greatest change, becoming more sumptuous.[7] The opulence of vestments was northern in origin: in a letter written in AD 801, Alcuin warned the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was planning a visit to the court of Charlemagne, not to let the clergymen wear clothing of silk and gold, as this would be intolerable for the sovereign.[8] In the course of the ninth century, when the political and administrative role of bishops was strengthening, the pomp stigmatized by Charlemagne took hold in episcopal clothing, while a series of liturgical commentaries appeared in which the use of gold, embroidery, and brilliant colours began to be rationalized by a figurative reading of the Old Testament. The description of the robes worn by Aaron and his sons (Exodus 28) was cited to justify the richness of the vestments with the need to show the virtues of the priests also through the colours, shape, and materials of their clothing.[9] As early as the end of the sixth century, of course, Gregory the Great had furnished in his *Regula pastoralis* an exegetical and typological reading of Jewish priestly vestments, saying that «the priest's garments» represent «his good works».[10] In the eleventh century, the sumptuous style of vesture spread to Rome, as can be seen in mosaics and frescoes of that period, where vestments made with

4. The instruction, contained in the *Liber pontificalis* (sixth century), concerning the use of *vestimenta officialia* for the Eucharistic rite should not be interpreted as an invitation to use clothing of a different style, but rather to reserve certain garments solely for liturgical celebration. Righetti, Mario, *Manuale di Storia liturgica*. Milan, Ancora, 1966, pp. 585–586.

5. Miller, Maureen C.: *Vestire la Chiesa*... p. 23.

6. The chasuble was originally bell-shaped, full and long so as to lend solemnity and majesty, but uncomfortable for celebrating Mass. Starting in the thirteenth century, perhaps also because of the increasing preciousness and weight of the fabrics, the borders on the sides began to be taken in, to the point of creating the modern form in the sixteenth century. Flury-Lemberg, Mechthild and Vial, Gabriele: «La chasuble aux aigles de Bressanone, un témoignage important du paramentique du christianisme des premiers siècles», *Bulletin du CIETA / Centre international d'étude des textiles anciens*, 82, 2006, p. 31.

7. Braun, Joseph: *I paramenti sacri: loro uso, storia e simbolismo*. Turin, Tipografia Pontificia e della Sacra Congregazione dei riti – Marietti Editore, 1914, p. 60. Piccolo Paci, Sara: *Storia delle vesti liturgiche*. Milan, Ancora, 2008, pp. 108–109.

8. Miller, Maureen C.: *Vestire la Chiesa*... pp. 40–41.

9. *Ibidem.*

10. In the play of exegetical mirroring effected by Gregory the Great, the bells sewn onto Jewish religious clothing recall the importance of preaching: gold indicates knowledge, purple nobility of soul, scarlet charity, and so

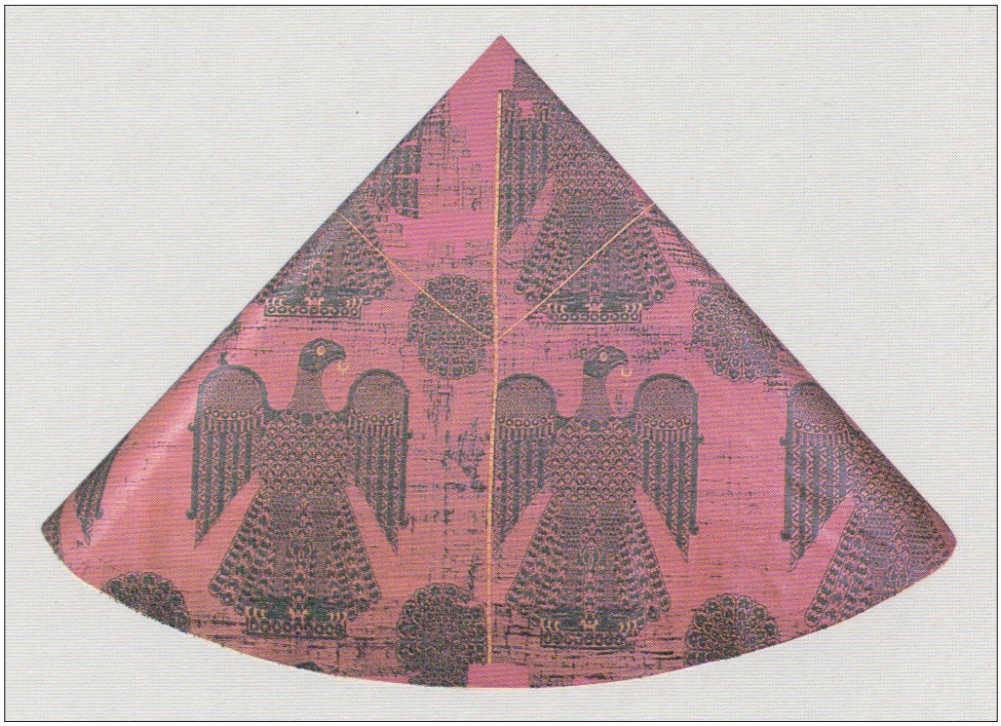

FIGURE 1: THE ALBUIN CHASUBLE, SILK SAMIT, BYZANTIUM, 10th CENTURY, BRIXEN-BRESSANONE, MUSEO DIOCESANO (FROM *WWW.HOFBURG.IT*).

ornate fabrics decorated with embroidered strips and panels are evident. Inventories of European sacristies, the *Liber pontificalis*, and surviving specimens of canonicals testify to the circulation in religious circles during the eighth and ninth centuries of precious silk fabrics of Byzantine, Egyptian, or Syrian origin, often arriving in the form of gifts.[11] Perception of the precious nature of these silks among the people of that time can be deduced from the role these played as diplomatic gifts in foreign affairs between the emperor and the Latin West and their frequent use to wrap the most precious holy relics, a circumstance which in numerous cases has enabled their preservation to our day.[12]

The highly evocative decorations of these textiles, often involving heraldry, drew on motifs from the Greek and Sasanian tradition in the repertory of images and the representation of the power of the emperor: fantastic animals borrowed from classical and Persian mythology (such as the simurg), peacocks, eagles, elephants, lions, winged horses, and hunting or fighting scenes enclosed in beaded roundels

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on. The *Pastoral Rule* of Pope Gregory the Great, part two, chapter four, *Congregation for the Clergy* website <*www.clerus.va*>. See: PICCOLO PACI, Sara: *op. cit.* pp. 100–101.

11. Before they were adopted to make liturgical vestments, these fabrics were used as veils inside the churches, as testified by the *Carta Cornutiana* of 471. RIGHETTI, Mario: *op. cit.* p. 613.

12. MUTHESIUS, Anna Maria: «Silk, Power and Diplomacy in Byzantium», *Textiles in Daily Life: Proceedings of the Third Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America, September 24–26, 1992.* Earleville, MD, Textile Society of America, 1993, pp. 99–110; MUTHESIUS, Anna Maria: *Studies in Byzantine, Islamic and Near Eastern Silk Weaving.* London, Pindar Press, 2008, pp. 85–96. On liturgical vestments in Byzantium, see: WOODFIN, Warren T.: *The Embodied Icon. Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012.

FIGURE 2: FRAGMENT OF SILK SAMIT WITH ANNUNCIATION, EGYPT, SYRIA OR BYZANTIUM, 8th–9th CENTURY, CITTÀ DEL VATICANO, MUSEI VATICANI (FROM EVANS AND RATLIFF 2012).

(*rotae*) are the most frequent.[13] A famous example is the samite used to make the so-called chasuble of Saint Albuin in the Diocesan Museum of Bressanone, characterized by mighty imperial eagles on a royal purple ground (Figure 1).[14] This is a decoration symbolically associated with the power and superiority of the Byzantine emperor,[15] and yet, precisely by virtue of the sacred nature of the *basileus*, the man chosen by God to rule the empire and the entire oikoumene – according to the ideology formulated by Eusebius in the fourth century – this decoration would not have seemed inappropriate to celebrate the Christian liturgy, emblemizing the role of the bishop and the figure of Christ *rex regnantium*.[16]

Among the textiles in circulation, many were decorated with figured designs, organized for the most part in webs of roundels containing narrative scenes or images (Figure 2). One area where figured fabrics – woven of linen on a loom or worked in wool as tapestries – were widespread was Egypt, where the practice of decorating tunics with fabrics featuring figures or ornate geometric designs dated back to the Eighteenth Dynasty.[17] In Coptic society, images decorated tunics, shawls, boots, and cloaks in

13. SCERRATO, Umberto: «Stoffe sasanidi», in LUCIDI, Maria Teresa (ed.): *La seta e la sua via*, exhib. cat., Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni. Rome, De Luca Edizioni, 1994, pp. 75–82.

14. FLURY-LEMBERG, Mechthild and VIAL, Gabriele: *op. cit.* pp. 30–50.

15. In *De cerimoniis aulae Bizantinae*, Constantine VII is described enthroned, wearing a purple chlamys decorated with eagles. DE' MAFFEI, Fernanda: «La seta a Bisanzio», in LUCIDI, Maria Teresa (ed.): *op. cit.* pp. 92–93.

16. In this case, the vestment could have been a gift to the bishop from the emperor Henry II. FLURY-LEMBERG, Mechthild and VIAL. Gabriele: *op. cit.* p. 31. The transfer of images from the Eastern imperial context to the Western liturgical sphere involves not only easily assimilated elements like the eagle or lion (in turn transformed into Christological symbols) but also all the fantastic animals that, through the medium of textiles which furnished their prototypes, became a part of the Romanesque decorative language. See: VOLBACH, W. Fritz: *Il tessuto nell'arte antica*. Milan, Fabbri, 1966, p. 15; D'AGOSTINO, Maria Rosa: «Il grifone», in LUCIDI, Maria Teresa (ed.): *op. cit.* pp. 155–157. On the migration of textile motifs into Romanesque sculpture, see the entries in the section «Dai tessuti alla scultura monumentale», in BARACCHINI, Clara, *et al.* (eds.): *Lucca e L'Europa. Un'idea di Medioevo*, exhib. cat. Lucca, Fondazione Ragghianti. Lucca, Edizioni Fondazione Ragghianti, 2011, pp. 155–188.

17. See: VOLBACH, W. Fritz: *op. cit.* pp. 38–55; DEL FRANCIA BAROCAS, Loretta: *I materiali copti. Museo dell'Alto Medioevo di Roma.* Rome, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1994, pp. 13–21; DEL FRANCIA BAROCAS, Loretta: *Tessuti copti nel Museo di Palazzo Mansi. La Collezione Tongiorgi*. Lucca, Pacini Fazzi, 1995, pp. 15–32.

the form of *clavi*, *orbicoli*, *tabulae*, and bands. Among the most frequent subjects were hunting scenes, horsemen, shepherds, dancers, cherubs, Nereids, Hellenic divinities, and in the Christian world people praying, portraits, representations of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the saints, and episodes taken from the Old and New Testaments. At least from the fifth century, fabrics with sacred scenes were used not only for making liturgical vestments but also in the sumptuous clothing worn by the wealthier classes, to the point that Bishop Asterius of Amasea stigmatized this custom.[18] The *Liber pontificalis* and other contemporary sources from the eight and ninth centuries contain numerous reports of *vestes* illustrated with sacred images (woven or embroidered), bearing witness to their spread into the Latin West, with a broad repertory of figures and episodes drawn from the Scriptures.[19] The arrival of figured textiles from Byzantium followed the various phases of the iconoclastic controversy; scholars have noted an oscillation in the number of donations of figured silks listed in the *Liber pontificalis*, and in particular a sort of decrease in those with a sacred subject during the period between the two phases of Byzantine Iconoclasm (750–815), while most of the Byzantine textiles recorded in the West had secular decorations such as vegetable and animal motifs or equestrian and hunting scenes.[20] With the end of the iconoclastic controversy and the revival of the veneration of icons, the adoption of sacred topics for decorating textiles was limited to the liturgical sphere, while in the early ninth century, Nikephoros, patriarch of Constantinople, thundered against the presence of animal figures in churches, especially on cloth placed on the altar, urging the use of such fabrics only for clothing.[21]

2. THE HANDLING OF SPACE (13th–14th C.)

In the twelfth century the liturgy began to be enriched with elements aimed at arousing in the faithful a sensitivity to the Christian mystery: first the celebrant's gestures, which translated his words into visible action; then vestments, which took on an important role, indicating by their various shapes the religious hierarchy in

18. Del Francia, Loretta: «La seta in Egitto. Tessuti con rappresentazioni di figure umane», in Lucidi, Maria Teresa (ed.): *op. cit.* p. 84. See also: Peri, Paolo (ed.): *Tessuti copti nelle collezioni del Museo del Bargello*. Florence, SPES, 1996. A famous example of the 'fashion' of decorating secular clothing with embroidered sacred scenes is the dress worn by Teodora in the mosaics in San Vitale in Ravenna, where the lower border of her purple cloak shows the Magi bearing cups, echoing the bejewelled cup the empress is about to offer to the Church.

19. Volbach, W. Fritz: *op. cit.* pp. 71–73. Just a very few pieces of this rich patrimony survive, such as the two well-known fragments of samite decorated with the Annunciation and the Nativity enclosed in *rotae* found in the early twentieth century in the chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum and now in the Museo Sacro (Città del Vaticano, cat. nos. 61231 and 61258). The two samite fragments, dated eighth to ninth century, have been variously attributed to Syrian, Egyptian, or Byzantine craftsmen. For the vast bibliography on this subject, see: Evans, C. Helen and Ratliff, Brandie (eds.): *Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th–9th Century*, exhib. cat. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2012, p. 148, pp. 152–153.

20. Thomas, K. Thelma: «'Ornaments of Excellence' from 'the Miserable Gains of Commerce': Luxury Art and Byzantine Culture», in Evans, C. Helen and Ratliff, Brandie (eds.): *op. cit.* pp. 130–131.

21. *Ibidem* and note 82. Anastasius Bibliothecarius, in the Acts of the Councils of Nicaea (VII) and Constantinople (VIII), describes the vestments embroidered with vegetable motifs worn by the participating churchmen. Piccolo Paci, Sara: *op. cit.* p. 192.

FIGURE 3: STAR MANTLE OF HENRY II, SOUTH GERMANY, *C.*1020 (EMBROIDERY); EUROPE 15th CENTURY (DAMASK), BAMBERG, DIÖZESANMUSEUM (FROM WWW.EO-BAMBERG.DE).

the celebration of the Mass; and finally the unfolding of liturgical time through the use of different colours.[22] In the thirteenth century, the need to associate a mystical meaning to every element of the liturgy imparted a symbolic role to vestments too, as demonstrated by the allegorical reading given for them by Guillaume Durand in the *Rationale divinorum officiorum*.[23]

Since «les images rendent présent ce qui est absent, visible ce qui est invisible, donnent à voir quelque chose qui peut ne pas même exister»,[24] the presence of sacred images on canonicals became a constant, together with the preciousness of

22. CATTANEO, Enrico: *Il culto cristiano in Occidente*. Rome. CLV, 1984, pp. 254–255. The first tendency to connect colours with liturgical time seems to date back to the eighth century, but a canonical codification of the use of colours came in the late twelfth century with Innocent III's *De Sacro altaris mysterio*. RIGHETTI, Mario: *op. cit.* pp. 597–598; PICCOLO PACI, Sara: *op. cit.* pp. 219–246.

23. For example, the cope, which by its structure hides the body of the man wearing it, is an allegory of eschatological revelation, that is to say, the future unveiling of what is now hidden. Gulielmus Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, Liber III De Indumentiis, seu ornamentis Ecclesiae, Sacerdotum atque Pontificum et aliorum Ministrorum*, 14 *Cappa sive pluviale.* See: LARSON, Wendy R.: «Narrative Threads: The Pienza Cope's Embroidered 'Vitae' and Their Ritual Setting», *Studies in Iconography*, 24, 2003, pp. 148–150. The very act of putting on the sacred vestments is an important liturgical moment, preceded by ritual washing and accompanied by prayer, symbolizing the passage from the secular to the sacred dimension. On *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* see: FAUPEL-DREVS, Kirstin: «Bildraum als Kultraum? Symbolische und liturgische Raumgestaltung in 'Rationale divinorum officiorum' des Durandus von Mende», in AERTSEN, Jan A. – SPEER, Andreas (eds.): *Raum und Raumvorstellungen im Mittelalter*. Berlin and New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1998, pp. 665–684; and FAUPEL-DREVS, Kirstin: *Vom Rechten Gebrauch der Bilder im liturgischen Raum: Mittelalterliche Funktionsbestimmungen bildender Kunst im Rationale divinorum officiorum des Durandus von Mende (1230/1–1296)*. Leiden, Brill, 2000, pp. 293–323, 356–360. On the value of vestition in rites of passage, see: SILVESTRINI, Elisabetta: «Abiti e simulacri. Itinerario attraverso mitologie, narrazioni e riti», in SILVESTRINI, Elisabetta, GRI, Giampaolo and PAGNOZZATO, Riccarda: *Donne Madonne Dee. Abito Sacro e riti di vestizione, gioello votivo, «vestirci»: un itinerario antropologico in area lagunare veneta*. Padua, Il Poligrafo, 2003, pp. 45–48. TRAMONTANA, Salvatore: *Vestirsi e travestirsi in Sicilia. Abbigliamento, feste e spettacoli nel Medioevo*. Palermo, Sellerio, 1993, pp. 138–144.

24. SCHMITT, Jean-Claude: «Introduction», in BASCHET, Jérôme, DITTMAR, Pierre-Olivier and SCHMITT, Jean-Claude (eds.): *Les images dans l'Occident Médiéval* (L'atelier du Médiéviste 14). Turnhout, Brepols, 2015, p. 17.

their materials. As for any representation of the sacred, the images were chosen according to criteria aimed at amplifying the significance of the liturgical moment and at rendering recognizable, by means of emphasis, the role of the donor or patron of the object.[25] As opposed to a painting cycle or any other «fixed» furnishing, an illustrated vestment is destined for a use that provides for movement and thus for differing points of observation. Moreover, it has a relation to the body wearing it and to liturgical time; as a result, the iconographical program has to take into account the message to be transmitted in relation to the words and liturgical gestures of the officiants. From the semantic standpoint, the message of the images and the vestments has two targets: the celebrant and clergy taking part in the service, for whom the vestments and images have a precise symbolical meaning and a «close-up» observation point; and the faithful attending the Mass, for whom the vestment becomes a sort of sensory amplifier of the rite even if they cannot see all its detail.

The specificity of the textile medium for liturgy-related images lies in the fact that figural images cover a real living body and move with it in space. Kapustka and Woodfin have explained well this aspect: «the textile, being in this context simultaneously a fabric, a form, and a metaphor, enabled participants in liturgical actions to see through surfaces and images and to bring opposite notions together: disguise and revelation, delimitation and transparency, hierarchical subordination and general invitation to witness».[26] Following the officiant's gestures, the vestments in turn stretched out making the figures visible, or folded showing part of them and concealing the rest. This helped to express the concept of divine presence/absence during the liturgy of mass. Likewise, the officiant wearing sacred images personified and literally *embodied* them, visually magnifying the concept of *substantial presence* in the Eucharist. While painted images usually need a frame to delimit the sacred from the material/earthly space,[27] woven and embroidered figures had their shifting *limen* in the vestment itself, which encompasses a precious and consecrated space. Liturgical vestments, with their figures, ornaments, and splendour, played a crucial part in the synaesthetic experience of the solemn rite, together with words, gestures, songs, candles, incense smokes. Clearly, such a complex semantic construction was addressed to the faithful, foremost among them the clerics themselves, who were often the only ones capable of understanding the theological references conveyed by liturgical vestments.

In liturgical vestments, the architecture of the composition, in other words the placement of the images in the space of the garment as it is worn, immediately takes on major importance. This is evident in one of the earliest masterpieces of gold embroidery in Europe: the extraordinary *Sternenmantel* which Henry II of Saxony donated to Bamberg Cathedral after receiving it as a diplomatic gift from Ismahel,

25. On the general topic of iconography in liturgical vestments, see the essays collected in: Wetter, Evelin (ed.): *Iconography of Liturgical Textiles in the Middle Ages*. Riggisberg, Abegg-Stiftung, 2010.

26. Kapustka, Mateusz and Woodfin, Warren T.: «Clothing the Sacred: An Introduction», in Kapustka, Mateusz and Woodfin, Warren T. (eds.): *Clothing the Sacred: Medieval Textiles as Fabric, Form, and Metaphor* (Textile Studies 8). Berlin, Imorde, 2015, pp. 8–9.

27. Bacci, Michele: «L'effigie sacra e il suo spettatore», in Castelnuovo, Enrico and Sergi, Giuseppe (eds.) *Arti e storia nel Medioevo*, vol. 3: *Del vedere: pubblici, forme e funzioni*. Turin, Einaudi, 2004, p. 234.

duke of Apulia, in 1018 (Figure 3).[28] The original decoration was organized so that the spatial arrangement of the ornamental motifs (cosmological, Christian, epigraphic) was an indispensable element for decoding the message: the glorification of the divine power that, reigning in the heavens, ruled the earthly world and protected the role of the emperor – a protection, what is more, that had to be visually obvious in the very act of wearing the cloak by the ecclesiastic, who in turn placed himself under the emperor's protection. The central position of the *Maiestas Domini*, the arrangement of astrological symbols – in particular the two hemispheres that assumed antipodal positions once the cope was put on –, and the placement of the two inscriptions, as though to divide the earthly space from that of the divine, as David Ganz has shown, are evidence of the importance of space in the decoration of this type of object and transform a regal cloak (this was its original function, even though it was never worn by Henry II) into a sacred garment that recalls the cloak of Abraham (Wisdom 18:24).[29]

The central role taken by images in Christian worship in the thirteenth century and the need to 'see' during the rite, made evident in the elevation of the Host after the confirmation of the Real Presence decreed by Lateran Council IV in 1215 – which would be followed by establishment of the feast of Corpus Christi in 1264 –, are elements that reflect and are made manifest in the decoration of canonicals, which increasingly became a real liturgical narrative space.[30] This happened undoubtedly also because of perfection of the techniques of execution; the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries mark the blossoming of needlework 'painting' in various European art centres and the primacy over all of them of *opus anglicanum*.[31] The effects that these sacred images, glittering with silk, gold, pearls, and gems, were meant to arouse in the faithful cannot avoid bringing to mind the role assigned to images by Gregory the Great in his famous letter to Bishop Secundinus, that of moving souls to religious

28. The cloak, destined from the beginning for liturgical use and later considered a relic after the emperor's canonization (1146), was originally made of a purple fabric, which was replaced in the fifteenth century with the current damask. Thought to have been made in Regensburg, it is decorated with gold embroidery appliqués of astronomical and Christian symbols inside frames made of stars. At the level of the shoulders, in a central position surrounded by the symbols of the Evangelists, Alpha and Omega, and the sun and moon, is an appliqué of the *Maiestas Domini* in a square frame. Various inscriptions are associated with the images: praising Henry II (along the bottom hem), commemorating the gift to the cathedral (under the *Maiestas Domini*), and explaining the heavenly bodies. Ganz, David: «Pictorial Textiles and their Performance: The Star Mantle of Henry II», in Dimitrova, Kate and Goehring, Margaret (eds.): *Dressing the Part: Textiles as Propaganda in the Middle Ages*. Turnhout, Brepols, 2014, pp. 13–29, including bibliography to that date. Along with the Star Mantle, Bamberg Cathedral was also given the cope known as the Cope of Saint Kunigunde (the wife of Henry II, canonized in 1100), embroidered with a series of round medallions enclosing sacred figures and scenes. Durian Ress, Saskia: «Ricami», in Crivello, Fabrizio (ed.): *Arti e tecniche del Medioevo*. Turin, Einaudi, 2006, pp. 203–204.

29. Wisdom 18:24: «For the whole world was on his flowing robe», a passage that seems to be cited also in the inscription on the lower border of the cloak, «descripcio tocius orbic». Ganz, David: *op. cit.* p. 25.

30. Schmitt, Jean-Claude: *Le corps des images. Essais sur la culture visuelle au Moyen Âge*. Paris, Gallimard, 2003, pp. 63–95.

31. The new technique made it possible to fragment light on the surface of the fabric, thanks to the use of gold thread worked with the method of underside couching, and to obtain pictorial effects in the naturalistic depiction of figures by using a great number of coloured silks. For an up-to-date bibliography and the *opus anglicanum* techniques, see: Monnas, Lisa: «The Making of Medieval Embroidery», in Browne, Clare, Davies, Glyn and Michael, M.A. (eds.): *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus Anglicanum*, exhib. cat. London, Victoria and Albert Museum. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2016, pp. 7–24. Greenup, Sylvia: «Mabel: l'arte del ricamo in Inghilterra», in Castelnuovo, Enrico (ed.): *Artifex bonus. Il mondo dell'artista medievale*. Bari, Laterza, 2004, pp. 129–137.

FIGURE 4: THE ASCOLI PICENO COPE, *OPUS ANGLICANUM* (SILVER-GILT AND SILVER THREAD AND COLOURED SILKS ON LINEN), ENGLISH EMBROIDERERS, *C.*1265–88, ASCOLI PICENO, PINACOTECA CIVICA (FROM BONITO FANELLI 1991).

FIGURE 5: THE LATERAN COPE, *OPUS ANGLICANUM* (SILVER-GILT AND SILVER THREAD AND COLOURED SILKS ON LINEN), ENGLAND, *C.*1340–60, ROME, SAN GIOVANNI IN LATERANO (FROM BROWNE, DAVIES AND MICHAEL 2016).

feeling, and at the same time to the significance of light and precious materials in the thought of Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis.[32] The opulent embroidered vestments for Eucharistic celebration were adopted also by the mendicant orders, which could seem to be a contradiction if we do not take into account the fact that, as Saint Thomas Aquinas maintained, the sumptuousness does not glorify the celebrant wearing it but his sacred ministry.[33] This justification seems a bit weak to us today, given that

32. SCHMITT, Jean-Claude: «Introduction» ... p. 14; GASPARRI, Françoise: *Suger de Saint Denis. Abbé, soldat, homme d'État au XIIe siècle*. Paris, Picard, 2015, pp. 105–109.

33. GARDNER, Julian: «Opus Anglicanum and its Medieval Patrons», in BROWNE, Clare, DAVIES, Glyn and MICHAEL, M.A. (eds.): *op. cit.* p. 56.

the most precious vestments which have come down to us often bear heraldic and iconographic elements enabling identification of the patron or the donor.

Because of its shape and use – worn in processions and for incensing during recitation of the Divine Office – the cope became a prime space for images, which in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries unfurled in the form of narrative cycles. On copes designed to be worn the sequence of images usually presented the most important figures or episodes around the neckline, along the front opening (*aurifrisium*), and in the centre of the back, in the portion that more or less fell from the shoulders to the ankles (Figures 4–5). The fulcrum of the narrative, that is to say the element which was intended to be most easily visible, was placed in the central section of this axis, where among other things the fabric lay flat, making the images easier to read. Analysing a group of copes in *opus anglicanum* with complex sequences of images, where the episodes or figures are laid out on two or three registers separated by frames, we note that right in this position appear key Christological scenes such as the Crucifixion (Ascoli Piceno, the Vatican, Madrid, Syon, Bologna, Steeple Aston, San Giovanni in Laterano, and in the drawing by Pietro Santi Bartoli of a lost cope from the Treasury of St Peter's)[34] or the Nativity (Toledo, Pienza, Vic).[35] The images placed along the central axis are sometimes detached from the logical or chronological order of the remaining narrative, but they are pictures easily recognized by the faithful and frequent in popular devotion, often featuring the Virgin Mary, such as the Virgin and Child Enthroned (Ascoli, the Vatican) or the Coronation of the Virgin (the Vatican, Syon, Steeple Aston, Toledo, Vic, and the lost cope from the Treasury of St Peter's), and the Annunciation (Madrid).[36] Along the sides, in the part of the cope that falls from the shoulders towards the front, we often find Marian episodes like the Assumption of the Virgin (Toledo, Pienza, Syon, the lost St Peter's cope) or figures of saints.[37]

One key aspect to consider in order to comprehend these cycles of images is how their appearance changed in accordance with the officiant's gestures. When a cope was worn, some scenes would be concealed by the fabric folds, and would become visible only as a result of certain gestures. It would be interesting to understand

34. For an up-to-date bibliography on the individual copes, see the relative catalogue entries in: Browne, Clare, Davies, Glyn and Michael, M.A. (eds.): *op. cit.* nos. pp. 22, 23, 31, 33, 38, 45, and 48. Two of the copes cited (Ascoli and Pienza) were papal donations, from Nicholas IV and Pius II respectively. Bonito Fanelli, Rosalia (ed.): *Il piviale duecentesco di Ascoli Piceno. Storia e restauro*. Florence, Cantini, 1991. Martini, Laura: *Il Piviale di Pio II*. Milan, Silvana Editoriale, 2001. On the value of these two objects as 'gift', see Elster, Christiane: «Liturgical Textiles as Papal Donations in Late Medieval Italy», in Dimitrova, Kate and Goehring, Margaret (eds.): *op. cit.* pp. 65–79.

35. Browne, Clare, Davies, Glyn and Michael, M.A. (eds.): *op. cit.* nos. pp. 46, 49, and 61.

36. The remaining images are usually devoted to one sole iconographical theme, for example pope saints on the cope donated by Pope Nicholas IV to Ascoli Cathedral, episodes from Genesis on the cope in Madrid, the life of Christ on the cope in Bologna, or the life of the Virgin, of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, and of Saint Margaret on the cope in Pienza. For an analysis of the iconography used in *opus anglicanum* embroidery, see the recent work by Morgan, Nigel: «Some Iconographic Aspects of Opus Anglicanum», in Michael, M.A. (ed.): *The Age of Opus Anglicanum* (*Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 15 February 2013*). London, Harvey Miller Publishers, 2016, pp. 90–115.

37. Contemporary museum management, for conservation reasons, calls for the display of copes lying on a flat surface, which prevents observers from understanding how the images decorating them would have been read when they were worn by a living person.

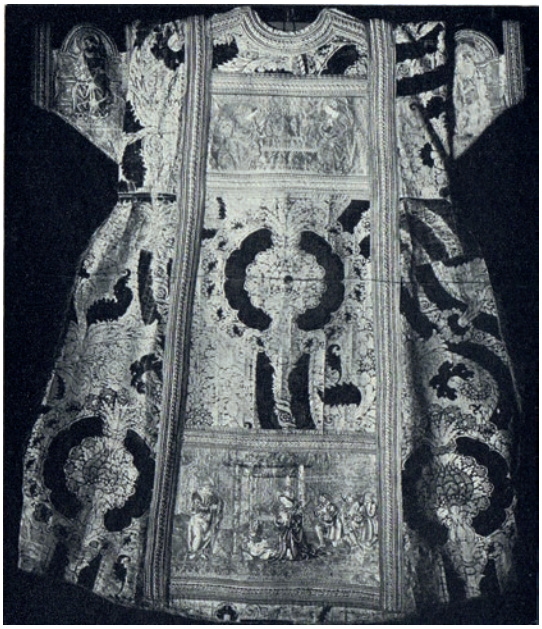

FIGURE 6: TUNICLE (FRONT) FROM THE SET OF BISHOP SEBASTIANO VANZI, WITH FIGURATE *OR NUÉ* EMBROIDERIES (CARTOONS ATTRIBUTED TO SANDRO BOTTICELLI AND BARTOLOMEO DI GIOVANNI), FLORENCE, *C.*1480, ORVIETO, MUSEO DELL'OPERA DEL DUOMO (FROM GARZELLI 1973).

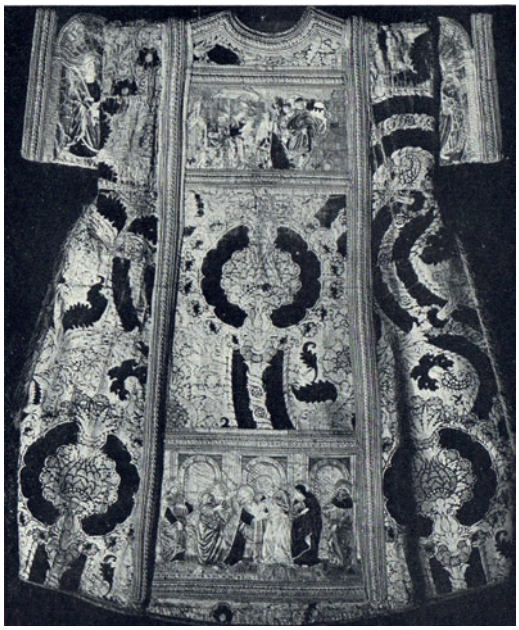

FIGURE 7: DALMATIC (FRONT) FROM THE SET OF BISHOP SEBASTIANO VANZI, WITH FIGURATE *OR NUÉ* EMBROIDERIES (CARTOONS ATTRIBUTED TO SANDRO BOTTICELLI AND BARTOLOMEO DI GIOVANNI), FLORENTINE, *C.*1480, ORVIETO, MUSEO DELL'OPERA DEL DUOMO (FROM GARZELLI 1973).

whether there was a specific planning which related the visibility of images with liturgical gestures and their sequence.

Even though we cannot make generalizations, we must observe that this way of arranging the decoration and iconographical elements developed between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that is to say contemporaneous with the birth and spread of liturgical and worship phenomena like the growing importance of preaching, the spread of sacred theatre, the enormous rise of the veneration and exposition of relics, the emergence of the veneration of saints and the Virgin Mary, the spread of confraternities, and the custom of processions.[38] All of these developments bear witness to the heightened devotional spirit of the time, manifested also in the presence of easily recognizable and emotionally compelling images as the fulcrum of iconographical programs destined for liturgical wear, and in particular copes, utilized precisely for processions.

When *opus anglicanus* lost its primacy among techniques – it was the needlecraft most highly in demand among European popes and cardinals in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – and sumptuous Italian worked fabrics began to be preferred, just as the Gothic polyptych yielded ground to the square Renaissance altarpiece with a predella, the figural ornamentation of copes moved to the inner lining of

38. CATTANEO, Enrico: *op. cit.* pp. 295–306. On the role of images in processions, see: COLLOMB, Pascal and RIHOUET, Pascale: «Liturgie et images processionnelles», in BASCHET, Jérôme, DITTMAR, Pierre-Olivier and SCHMITT, Jean-Claude (eds.): *op. cit.* pp. 145–158.

the hood, which broadened to take the shape of a shield, and along the orphreys.[39] Complex narrative cycles were abandoned in favour, especially in Italy, of decorations organized in a regular pattern: on copes, inside the hood and the orphrey; on chasubles, on the cross and orphreys; and on dalmatics, inside the rectangular frames of the two panels (*bruste*) on the front and back.[40]

The chasuble, as it is worn by the priest during Mass, is connected with the gestures of the Eucharist. Since the Mass was celebrated with the officiant facing the altar, the decoration of the back orphrey was what the faithful saw during the consecration, while in the key moment of the Elevation, the Host raised above the celebrant's head was precisely aligned with it. The chasuble's figured ornamentation also is contained in the front orphrey and the rectangular patch that from the fifteenth century was applied to the front at chest height.[41] The question arises, given that for a long time the rite of the Mass – except in the moment of the Eucharist – was not easy to see for the faithful, if the primary audience for the images on chasubles was, even more than the faithful, the clergy themselves and the authorities who participated in the Mass from 'privileged' positions.

In the fifteenth century, when together with veneration for Mary that of the saints too – celebrated as protectors of towns, social groups, guilds, or namesakes of donors and patrons – took firm hold, the orphreys of chasubles and copes began to be filled with figures of saints standing within niches or sitting on thrones. Their role was generally to recall the titular saints of the church or of its altars, but also to refer to the name of the patron or donor. On *bruste* (rectangular panels) of dalmatics, on orphrey crosses of chasubles, and on hoods of copes – in other words wherever the illustrations could unfold within fairly large four-sided frames – were placed episodes from the life of Christ, Mary, or the saints.[42] In Solemn High Masses, the images represented on the individual vestments of a set had to be related to each other, involving in the narration not just one 'body' but all the participants in the service. The unifying element was provided by the fabric used to make the entire set – chasuble, dalmatic (deacon), tunicle (subdeacon), stoles, maniples, burse for the

39. The technical characteristics of textiles and embroideries produced in Florence across the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries implied high expenses, fabrics turned heavier and stiffer than those used in the fourteenth century. Their cost, scarce flexibility, and weight influenced the shape: all unnecessary elements were eliminated – as an example, chasubles became shorter and gave up their previous rhomboid shape. Accordingly, decoration patterns changed: by now sacred figures embroidered in *or nué* (the *oro velato* executed on a heavy cotton or linen background fabric with silk and metal threads) no longer occupy the entire cope, as it was the case in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. On the evolution of the cope, see: Righetti, Mario: *op. cit.* pp. 607–612. On the move away from the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century type of layout in *opus anglicanum*, see: Heard, Kate: «Ecclesiastical Embroidery in England from 1350 to the Reformation», in Browne, Clare, Davies, Glyn and Michael, M.A. (eds.): *op. cit.* pp. 77–89.

40. In northern Europe, the arrangement of images on dalmatics followed different patterns. See: Eggert, Barbara: «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 Kapustka, Mateusz and Woodfin, Warren T. (eds.). *Clothing ...* pp. 53–70.

41. In earlier centuries the band which ran vertically down the back forked at the neck, rejoining at the chest and continuing on to the bottom hem (*crux bifida*). Righetti, Mario: *op. cit.* pp. 597–598.

42. Regarding less frequently used iconographical elements like the Tree of Jesse (rarely seen in Italy) or Marian cycles, their use has been hypothesized for celebrations or readings pertaining to the genealogy of Christ and the infancy of Mary, for example at the end of Matins on Christmas and Epiphany. See: Morgan, Nigel: *op. cit.* p. 30.

corporal, and cope – while the embroidered or woven images varied. An example is the Vanzi set (Orvieto), embroidered following a design by Sandro Botticelli and Bartolomeo di Giovanni and made up of a dalmatic, tunicle, and chasuble. The chasuble presents the figures of the Virgin Mary and Saint John in the orphrey cross on the front and a series of saints on the front and back orphreys, including Saint Peter of Parenzo and Saint Costanzo and Saint Brizio, patron saints of Orvieto. Dalmatic and tunicle each present four *bruste* with Gospel episodes, while the sleeves bear figures of saints and apostles. The images on the dalmatic and tunicle follow a chronological order of the episodes which is read by placing them next to each other (the tunicle on the left and the dalmatic on the right) and top to bottom: Annunciation, Adoration of the Shepherds (tunicle front, Figure 6), Epiphany, Presentation in the Temple (dalmatic front, Figure 7); Pentecost, Assumption of the Virgin (tunicle back), Resurrection, Ascension (dalmatic back). Evidently, the application of the *bruste* to the back of the dalmatic and tunicle was not carried out properly following the chronological order of the episodes, but it is clear that the intent of the iconographical program was to show stories from the infancy of Christ when the officiants were facing the faithful and episodes after his death when they were turned towards the altar.[43]

3. IMAGES, PATRONS, DONORS, AND THE FAITHFUL: FLORENTINE EXAMPLES FROM THE 15th AND 16th CENTURIES

The motives for donating liturgical vestments stem from two desires, often both present at the same time: to manifest or reinforce a tie between the giver and the receiver of the gift – a tie that presumably involved loyalty and support from the recipient towards the donor – and to keep the donor's memory alive. In the case of a gift to a bishop or even a pope, the recipient was further endowed with meaningful and valuable political recognition.[44] In the fifteenth century, the building up of bonds by means of precious embroideries and textiles became much more frequent, transforming liturgical vestments into instruments of identity. In citing examples, we shall limit ourselves to the Florentine context in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Here, figured embroidery in *or nué* flourished, reaching very high levels of excellence in the production of technically complex fabrics. At the same time, the manufacture of much simpler figured textiles developed, providing economical substitutes for the more expensive gold and silk embroideries, and these bear witness to the widespread use of sacred images also on less luxurious vestments.[45] Within this sphere of different types of production, a primary role was played by the

43. According to Garzelli, the mistake was made because the embroideries were assembled without the supervision of Botticelli, who had overseen and designed the cycle. Garzelli, Annarosa: *Il ricamo nell'attività artistica di Pollaiolo, Botticelli, Bartolomeo di Giovanni*. Florence, Edam, 1973, p. 28.

44. See: Elster, Christiane: *op. cit.* pp. 65–79; Eggert, Barbara M.: «Exegese, Memoria, Projektionsfläche in Überlegungen zu Funktionen und Ortsspezifik bebilderter Paramente des 13. bis 16. Jahrhundert», in Böse, Kristin and Tammen, Silke (eds.): *Beziehungsreiche Gewebe. Textilien im Mittelalter*. Frankfurt am Main, Lang, 2012, pp. 269–285.

45. The most comprehensive catalogue of figured borders, including an up-to-date bibliography, is: Grönwoldt, Ruth: *Paramentenbesatz in Wandel der Zeit*. Riggisberg, Abegg-Stiftung and Munich, Hirmer, 2013.

FIGURE 8: ANTEPENDIUM OF POPE NICHOLAS V (DETAIL), BROCADED SILK VELVET, WOVEN WITH CHRIST WALKING ON THE WATER WITH SAINT PETER, FLORENTINE *C.*1450, FLORENCE, MUSEO NAZIONALE DEL BARGELLO (FROM PAOLOZZI STROZZI 2000).

most illustrious artists, who were asked to provide designs for embroideries and figured textiles; these constituted, together with their work in the 'major' arts, an inexhaustible source of inspiration in the serial production of figured textiles.[46] The luxurious Florentine textile production – a powerful driving force for the city's economy – achieved such a great importance in the fifteenth century as to be, as it were, a reference point for the identity of the community. This appears evident from the constant reference to precious brocades in painting of that period,[47] but also in episodes like the magnificent commission for the set of liturgical vestments known as the *Parato di San Giovanni* – the summit of excellence reached by the textile industry – which the merchants' guild, in other words, the economic elite of Florence, made for the Baptistery, the place of worship which represents «la sintesi di una serie di valori condivisi (civici e religiosi, ecclesiastici e laici), che tengono insieme la collettività cittadina.»[48] An example of how, in the middle of the fifteenth century, a liturgical set could serve to make visible diplomatic alliances between the city's institutions is the one – known only from documentary sources – which the abbess of the Santa Verdiana convent, Piera de' Medici, had her nuns embroider for the bishop of Florence, the Dominican (and future saint) Antonino Pierozzi, including in it a precious cope bearing the embroidered figure of Saint Zenobius, his predecessor on the episcopal throne of Florence and a patron saint of the

46. For a bibliographical overview of these aspects, see: BORGIOLI, Cristina: «Figure di seta. La produzione tessile e a ricamo a carattere figurativo nella Firenze del Quattrocento: modelli, committenze, manifatture», in «Imagens e História na Arte Antiga e Medieval». *Revista Diálogos Mediterrânicos Universidade Federal do Paraná*, 10, 2016, pp. 113–146, available for consultation at: <*www.dialogosmediterranicos.com.br*>.

47. An emblematic case is the frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli in the chapel inside the Medici Palace on the Via Larga; see: BORGIOLI, Cristina: «Benozzo Gozzoli and the Florentine Silk Production in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century», *Jacquard*, 28, 79, 2017, pp. 3–14.

48. FABBRI, Lorenzo: «Calimala e l'Opera di San Giovanni: il governo del Battistero di Firenze fra autorità ecclesiastica e potere civile», in GURRIERI, Francesco (ed.): *Il Battistero di San Giovanni. Conoscenza, diagnostica, conservazione: atti del Convegno internazionale, Firenze, 24–25 novembre 2014*. Florence, Mandragora, 2017, p. 81. The largest Florentine embroidery project of the fifteenth century, attested today by both material and documentary witnesses, was the set of liturgical vestments (two dalmatics, a chasuble, and a cope) of brocade decorated with embroidered scenes from the life of St John the Baptist, following a design by Antonio Pollaiuolo, which the merchants' guild (Calimala) commissioned for Florence Baptistery. Nothing remains of the original cloth, but twenty-seven embroideries survive. The work was carried out over a period of twenty-two years, beginning in 1466, and cost more than 3,000 florins. WRIGHT, Alison: *The Pollaiuolo Brothers: The Arts of Florence and Rome*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 257–285, with a bibliography to that date.

city.[49] The set is part of a complex play of gifts which the very capable abbess – a member of a minor branch of the Medici family – used to win the protection of Giovanni de' Medici, the son of Cosimo and future prior of the city, and of Bishop Antonino himself. The cope was intended for wear by the bishop during the procession, in full splendour, that on the feast day of Saint Verdiana in 1452 carried a precious relic to the convent bearing her name: an arm of the saint, lifted from her body – which was preserved in the dependent territory outside the city walls – thanks to Antonino's intercession. With this public ceremony, the relic conveyed an important recognition for the convent, since it was a gift, together with a sumptuous reliquary, from Giovanni mediated by the bishop.[50] The set demonstrated to the city the convent's gratitude to the giver Giovanni, honoured Bishop Antonino by associating with him a key element in the identity of the diocese of Florence like Zenobius, and at the same time put on display the complex system of interdependence and protection enjoyed by that religious house.[51] The desire to link visually, through images on vestments, personalities, and institutions, was not limited just to figural embroidery. At mid-century, a company of Florentine merchants, headed by Tommaso Spinelli, appeared to specialize in figured velvet, an extremely elitist production because very few weavers were technically capable of making it. Among Spinelli's clients were many cardinals and a pope: Nicholas V (born Tommaso Parentucelli), for whom references in the inventories of St Peter's survive attesting to his possession of some liturgical sets made of velvet brocade with the image of Saint Thomas.[52] Remarkably, the Bargello museum holds the set made for the pope on the occasion of the canonization of Saint Bernardino of Siena

FIGURE 9: COPE OF POPE NICHOLAS V (SCAPULAR), BROCADED SILK VELVET, WOVEN WITH CHRIST AND SAINT THOMAS (WITH EMBROIDERED FACES), FLORENTINE, *C.*1450, FLORENCE, MUSEO NAZIONALE DEL BARGELLO (FROM MONNAS 2008).

49. The story is reconstructed in: STROCCHIA, Sharon: «Abbess Piera de' Medici and Her Kin: Gender, Gifts and Patronage in Renaissance Florence», *Renaissance Studies*, 28, 2014, pp. 695–713.

50. *Ibidem.*

51. Since the convents in Florence were also refined embroidery workshops open also to trade with the public (see BORGIOLI, Cristina: *Figure di seta ...* pp. 121–125), the procession probably also provided publicity, as it were, for the skill of the Santa Verdiana nuns.

52. MONNAS, Lisa: *Merchants, Princes and Painters: Silks Fabrics in Italian and Northern Paintings 1300–1550*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2008, p. 9.

FIGURE 10: ATTRIBUTED TO PIETRO NERI SCACCIATI, *CHASUBLE, FLORENCE, CHURCH OF SANTA CROCE*, TEMPERA, WATERCOLOUR AND PENCIL ON PAPER, *C.*1710, WORMSLEY LIBRARY (FROM SICCA 2008).

on Pentecost of the Jubilee year 1450.[53] The velvet used for the set features large polylobate leaves containing the scene of Christ Walking on the Water in Front of Peter (Figure 8), an episode that refers to the figure of the pope, while the hood of the cope is made of velvet illustrated with Doubting Thomas, an allusion to Nicholas V's Christian name (Figure 9). While the set is unique in terms of the actual artefact, documents show that this type of velvet was also used on other occasions. Tommaso Spinelli himself – whose palace was located in the Santa Croce district – donated to the church of Santa Croce, where he held the patronage of a chapel, a set of velvet brocade vestments with the woven image of Doubting Thomas[54] and a series of pieces of the same fabric.[55] We also know, from a drawing attributed to Pietro Scacciati (*c.*1710) which was in the John Talman collection,

53. Peri, Paolo: «Il Parato di Niccolò V», in Paolozzi Strozzi, Beatrice (ed.): *Il Parato di Niccolò V per il Giubileo del 1450*. Florence, SPES, 2000, pp. 19–42.

54. The fabric alone cost 500 florins. The embroidered borders cost almost 900 florins. Monnas, Lisa: *Merchants* ... p. 308.

55. Moisé, Filippo: *Santa Croce di Firenze*. Florence, 1845, p. 483.

that this same church once held a now lost chasuble made of a figured fabric (probably also in this case velvet brocade) with the image of Saint Francis, complete with an orphrey embroidered with stories of Saint Anthony Abbot (Figure 10).[56] In the drawing, the chasuble bears the coat of arms of the noble Castellani family, resident in Santa Croce and patrons of the chapel frescoed with stories of Saint Anthony Abbot and Saint Nicholas by Agnolo Gaddi in the transept of that church.[57] These two pieces of evidence lead us to suppose that, by the gift of highly prized historiated velvet vestments – the pope's preferred fabric – the donors were celebrating not only their patron saints but above all the social and economic status achieved by their families in the church where they worshipped.

From the middle of the fifteenth century, the custom grew of inserting the family arms, mottoes, and heraldic emblems into the design of luxurious fabrics utilized for secular purposes, which were sometimes also used for liturgical vestments and hangings on the occasion of votive gifts.[58] During this same period there was a production specifically devoted to liturgical vestments commissioned by the highest ranks of ecclesiastics: Pope Sixtus IV (Francesco della Rovere) ordered from the most celebrated textile producers of the time (Venice and Florence, and maybe

FIGURE 11: CHASUBLE OF POPE SIXTUS IV, BROCADED, VOIDED SILK VELVET, VENETIAN, *C.*1470–83, PADUA, BASILICA DI SANT'ANTONIO (FROM MONNAS 2008).

56. BORGIOLI, Cristina: «A History of Church Vestments and Textiles through John Talman's Drawings», in SICCA, Cinzia M. (ed.): *John Talman: An Early Eighteenth-century Connoisseur*. London and New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008, p. 248.

57. The fresco cycle shows several analogies with the embroidered scenes of the chasuble. On the Castellani Chapel painted by Agnolo Gaddi, see: CHIODO, Sonia: «Filologia e storia per gli affreschi di Angolo Gaddi nella Cappella Castellani in Santa Croce», *Paragone*, 121, 2015, pp. 24–44.

58. Two famous examples are the altar frontal donated by Ludovico Sforza to the Shrine of the Sacred Mountain of Varallo and the altar frontal with doves in the Museo Poldi Pezzoli. MOLINELLI, Marina and BUSS, Chiara (eds.): *Tessuti serici italiani 1450–1530*, exhib. cat. Milan, Castello Sforzesco. Milan, Electa, 1983, p. 118 and entries no. 28 and no. 30. BUSS, Chiara (ed.): *Seta oro cremisi. Segreti e tecnologia alla corte dei Visconti e degli Sforza*, exhib. cat. Milan, Museo Poldi Pezzoli. Milan, Silvana Editoriale, 2010, pp. 63–65. CARMIGNANI, Marina: *Tessuti ricami e merletti in Italia. Dal Rinascimento al Liberty*. Milan, Electa, 2005, p. 36. On the technical complexity of figured velvets and brocades, see: MONNAS, Lisa: *Renaissance Velvets*. London, V&A Publishing, 2012, pp. 8–20.

FIGURE 12: COPE OF CARDINAL SILVIO PASSERINI (DETAIL), BROCADED SILK VELVET, FLORENTINE, *C.*1522, CORTONA, MUSEO DIOCESANO (FROM CARMIGNANI 2005).

Milan) some velvet brocades in which the usual 'pomegranate' or 'pineapple' motifs were accompanied by the oak branches and acorns of his family's coat of arms (Figure 11).[59] Attributed to the Florentine workshops is the worked velvet used to make the set donated in 1526 to Cortona Cathedral by Margherita Passerini on behalf of her brother Silvio, a cardinal and confidant of two Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII. Leo named him a cardinal, with San Lorenzo in Lucina as his titular church (1517), and appointed him bishop of Cortona, enlarging the diocese's territory, in 1521.[60] This set acts as a sort of celebration of the close ties between Passerini and the Medici family; the velvet presents an imposing design *a griccia* featuring, at the top of the individual motifs, the Medici emblem of a diamond ring, and in the centre of each motif the Passerini emblem of a sitting bull (Figure 12). The borders embroidered with figures of saints in *or nué*, following a cartoon by Andrea del Sarto

59. Among these we cite the altar frontal donated to the basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, the chasuble that was part of the set for the Basilica del Santo in Padua, and other textiles known from documents. See: D'AMICO DEL ROSSO, Elvira: «Sisto IV della Rovere: un dono per Palermo», in ABBATE, Vincenzo, D'AMICO, Elvira and PERTEGATO, Francesco (eds.): *Il Piviale di Sisto IV a Palermo*. Palermo, Arnaldo Lombardi Editore, 1998, p. 16; MONNAS, Lisa: «The Vestments of Sixtus IV at Padua», *Bulletin des liaisons du CIETA*, 57–58, 1983, pp. 104–125; BORGIOLI, Cristina: «Il paliotto di Sisto IV», in BENATI, Daniele, NATALE, Mauro and PAOLUCCI, Antonio (eds.): *Melozzo da Forlì. L'umana bellezza tra Piero della Francesca e Raffaello*, exhib. cat. Forlì, Musei San Domenico. Milan, Electa, 2011, pp. 244–245; BUSS, Chiara: «Della Rovere o Sforza», in BUSS, Chiara (ed.): *Seta oro...* pp. 75–77.

60. DEVOTI, Donata: «Parato Passerini», in COLLARETA, Marco and DEVOTI, Donata: *Arte aurea aretina. Tesori dalle chiese di Cortona*, exhib. cat. Cortona, Palazzo Casali. Florence, SPES, 1987, pp. 56–59. BRUNELLI, Giampiero: s.v. «Passerini Silvio», in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 81. Rome, Treccani, 2014, available online at <*www.treccani.it*>.

and Raffaellino del Garbo, are positioned according to the emphasis intended to give them and celebrate personages and episodes connected with Passerini's life. Here we find Saint Lawrence, in honour of the Roman basilica whose title was granted to Cardinal Passerini by Leo X; Saint John the Baptist and Saint Mark the Evangelist as patron saints of Florence and Cortona respectively, Passerini's two home cities; Saint Margherita, referring to the concession by Leo X of veneration of the saint (at the time Blessed) from Cortona and to the name of the sister and mother of the cardinal; and Saint Anthony Abbot, since his feast day is the anniversary of the Florentine conquest of Cortona.[61] In this case too, the decoration of the set communicates, through both religious and secular figures, the identity and relations of power of the donor, in keeping with an ancient scheme whose roots are sunk in the Late Medieval tradition. However, from the fifteenth century on, images became increasingly related to the cult of saints and to the figures of donors. In Florence, this went together with the progressively increased spectacularism of public religious ceremonies, like processions and consecrations. Representatives of all social classes in town and members of lay confraternities participated in these events, where apparatuses and sceneries similar to those of the *sacre rappresentazioni* were staged. Clerics carried out of churches the relics of saints, who were in turn portrayed on liturgical vestments, as in a game of mirrors. Lavishness continued to be one of the most powerful visual aspects, as contemporary chronicles attest: the leading families financed and sponsored these ceremonies, in order to show their power and their connections with the Church.[62] The political character of these spectacles had much in common with the choice of sacred or heraldic images to decorate liturgical vestments across the Quattrocento. At a time when Cosimo the Elder could lobby the pope to move the Council from Ferrara to Florence,[63] and the Florentine mighty had themselves portrayed within fresco cycles in churches' chapels, likewise the images on liturgical vestments assumed new references which went beyond the religious message to foster a bridge with local power.[64]

CONCLUSIONS

Even though it is difficult to draw conclusions on a topic so open-ended in terms of its numerous cultural interrelations and historical-geographical variables, we can try to identify the characteristics that endure and those that change in the figural decoration of sacred vestments within the historical and geographical sphere examined in this paper.

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61. Devoti, Donata: *op. cit.* p. 58.

62. Ciseri, Ilaria: «Cerimonie, riti e feste religiose», in Rolfi, Gianfranco, Sebregondi, Ludovica and Viti, Paolo (eds.): *La chiesa e la città a Firenze nel XV secolo*. Milan, Silvana, 1992, pp. 222–225.

63. Viti, Paolo: «La chiesa e la città a Firenze nel XV secolo: aspetti e momenti di una storia», in Rolfi, Gianfranco, Sebregondi, Ludovica and Viti, Paolo (eds.): *La chiesa...* p. 20.

64. On an analogue process but in a different context, see: Brandner, Christine: «Sakrale Bilder in Bewegung. Die Darstellung und Rezeption der Heiligenfiguren am Ornat des Ordens vom Golden Vlies», in Kapustka, Mateusz and Woodfin, Warren T. (eds.): *Clothing...* pp. 71–87.

The preciousness and luminosity of the materials (silk and gold) are a constant within liturgical vesture. In this regard, however, we must note that the concept of preciousness can take different meanings: a vestment is certainly precious because of the richness of its materials, but contributing to the concept of splendour are also the rarity of the fabric used (whose exceptional nature is given by its provenance or the fact of being a 'gift' from an illustrious personage) and the technical skill with which it was made. At least until the consolidation of western European textile manufacturing, the element of the rarity and preciousness of sacred vestments seems to prevail over the presence and significance of the decoration as well as over the possible relation between image and liturgical context (the mind goes to the use of Byzantine fabrics with imperial iconographical motifs). It is from the thirteenth century onwards that sacred themes begin to prevail in the decoration of liturgical vesture: the vestments become a medium to express theological concepts through images. That is to say, the liturgical vestments, too, participate in the process of making the words of the liturgy a visible image, ratifying «la nécessité vitale de l'image dans le psychisme religieux occidental».[65] In the analysis of figural decorations, however, we must distinguish between vestments (such as copes) destined for public celebrations such as processions and consecrations, and those worn for celebrating Mass. For it is hard to believe that the faithful could manage to read with any precision the image on the liturgical vestments during the Mass, which, we must remember, was celebrated facing the altar. In any case, the complex iconographical structures used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to organize the images suggest that the message of the decorations was aimed primarily at the clergy themselves and only in a different and lesser manner to the faithful, who in all probability were not culturally equipped to understand the message fully but could certainly appreciate the splendour of the vestments and intuit the relation between liturgical gesture and images in motion.

A decisive change in the spatial organization of the images and, in part, in iconographical themes took place starting in the fifteenth century in Italy. The sacred images were concentrated in established, readily visible parts of the vestments (for example the hood of a cope or the orphrey cross of a chasuble), and this changed the relation between the iconographical structure and the liturgical movements/gestures of the celebrant's body, with the images less liable to be hidden in the folds of the garments, and thus visually more 'stable'. Since the images were different on the front and the back of the vestment, the message changed according to the officiant's position (turned facing or with his back to the assembly) in relation to the faithful.

Another element that distinguished these centuries is the marked tendency to use images that, directly or indirectly (for example heraldic devices, eponymous saints), were connected with the person wearing the garment or with the one who donated it. This 'personalization' of the use of sacred images in a certain sense brings liturgical vestments closer to secular ceremonial garments, which visually glorified the reigning family by means of heraldry or devices during public ceremonies, and is related to the contemporary custom of inserting increasingly direct references to

65. Dupront, Alphonse: *L'Image de religion dans l'Occident chrétien*. Paris, Gallimard, 2015, pp. 48–66.

donors (sometimes even their portraits) into sacred scenes painted or frescoed in places of worship.

This phenomenon essentially concerns the vestments of the higher ecclesiastical spheres, while more generally, for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we can speak of a real triumph of historiated decoration of liturgical vesture. This can be seen in Italy not only in the luxurious production of figural embroidery destined for church vestments and executed on the basis of cartoons made by the leading artists of the time, but – and above all – by the widespread production of more economical woven and historiated borders (made of silk, linen, and copper gilt) manufactured serially, which, imitating embroidery, decorated the less costly church vestments, using a repertory of images referring mainly to the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. This repertory is often borrowed from successful formulas used in painting being done in the same period and place, made known by woodcuts, but also inserts new iconographical motifs like Saint Bernardino of Siena's rayed monogram of Christ, widely adopted for liturgical vesture in Tuscany from the late fifteenth century.[66]

This shows that in these centuries sacred images are by now not only a constant but a predominant element in the decoration of liturgical vestments, independently of the preciousness of the materials, to the point of forming an interesting case of modest, serial production realized starting from exalted pictorial models and intended also for less wealthy parishes.

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66. See notes 45 and 46.

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AÑO 2018
NUEVA ÉPOCA
ISSN: 1130-4715
E-ISSN 2340-1478

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ISSN 1130-4715 06
9 771130 471008

AÑO 2018
NUEVA ÉPOCA
ISSN: 1130-4715
E-ISSN 2340-1478

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