

Many Ways of Personal Piety – From Secular World into Sacred Space Examples of Liturgical Vestments and Other Paraments from the Collections of the National Museum in Krakow

Joanna Regina Kowalska
The National Museum in Krakow, Poland

Abstract:

Personal piety could be expressed by presenting the Church with beautiful liturgical vestments. Their richness depended on the wealth of a donor. The richest could afford the most expensive fabrics and the most skilled craftsmen. But the need of a personal donation was also very strong among less wealthy people. The Church was given women's dresses, silk sashes or embroideries taken from the caparisons. All these donations were carefully examined and the most suitable were remade into liturgical vestments. In the collections of the National Museum in Krakow one can find paraments made of fabrics taken from secular outfits, mostly women's skirts and silk sashes of Polish noblemen's costume. Quite interesting are also home-made paraments offered as pious donations. We will see that the history of liturgical vestments can be fascinating and it is always worthwhile examining them carefully even if their artistic quality is not the highest one.

Contents:

Introduction / The Chasuble from Lelów (17th – 19th cent.) / Paraments Made of Silk Sashes (18th – 19th cent.) / Paraments Made of Embroideries Taken from Women's Skirts (18th – 19th cent.) / Liturgical Vestments Made by Pious Women / Conclusion / References / Picture Credits

Introduction

Personal piety could be expressed by presenting the Church with beautiful liturgical vestments. Their richness depended on the wealth of a donor. The richest could afford the most expensive fabrics and the most skilled craftsmen. We know many such donations preserved in treasures of cathedrals, important pilgrimage centres or churches located on the lands belonging to pious princes. But the need of a personal donation was also very strong among less wealthy people. The easiest way to find humble offerings is to visit places where miraculous pictures are venerated. There are many objects exposed, given *ex voto* supernatural healings, rescues from the plagues, happy births of firstborn sons or fortunate returns from long journeys. Many of them were donated and even made by poor people: wooden rosaries, hand-painted naïve pictures of miracles or pieces of cheap jewellery – the only worthy belongings of indigent people. More wealthy citizens of towns and cities, as well as noblemen, could be proud of possessing some costly vestments made of plain or figured silk fabrics, embellished with embroideries or laces. They were considered to be valuable enough to be given to the Church. Women's dresses, silk sashes or caparisons could become pious offerings. All such donations were carefully examined and the most suitable were remade into liturgical vestments.

In the collections of the National Museum in Krakow, established in 1879, there are some very interesting paraments composed of fabrics intended for secular use. These objects can tell us about recycling lasting through centuries. It is also the story about treating textile objects with respect and care apt to their value and beauty.

The Chasuble from Lelów (17th – 19th cent.)

The chasuble from St. Martin parish church in Lelów (inv. no MNK XIX-350/1-4) is an object with very interesting history (fig. 1) The church in Lelów was burnt in 1657, during the Swedish Deluge. After the fire, a certain Mikołaj Żuchowski, maybe the starost of Lelów, donated an embroidered chasuble to the church . We know the name of the venerable donor thanks to the capital letters inscription NICO/ LAUS ZUCHOWSKI, preserved in the lowest part of the orphrey band. Unfortunately the coats of arms and initials of benefactor's titles were cut off, so we can't identify him more precisely. The chasuble was purchased from Rev. Julian Gawinek, pleban of St. Martin's church, by the Society of Friends of the National Museum in Krakow in 1932 and donated to our Museum the same year.



Fig. 1:

Chasuble, Krakow, ca. 1660 and 19th c. Inv. no. MNK XIX-350. Donated by the Society of Friends of the National Museum in Krakow 1932.

What we see now is the vestment remade probably in the nineteenth century. At first sight we can see that there is a difference between the character of embroidery in the orphrey band and the side panels. The orphrey band certainly comes from the chasuble donated by Nicolaus Żuchowski. In the nineteenth century the sides were probably too much worn out to use the chasuble. The vestment was shortened and the old side panels were substituted by new ones. They were made of red velvet adorned with heavy golden embroidery, with a net pattern of squares filled with two types of rosettes. Such embroideries we can find on seventeenth-century caparisons and wall hangings. This supposition was made by Maria Taszycka in her unpublished catalogue of embroideries from the collections of the National Museum in Krakow (cat. 69; also Taszycka 1999; Buyko 2013, 48). The tilting axis of the right side of the chasuble's back proves that we see the embroidery taken from another object. Suitable chal-

ice veil, stole and maniple were made from the same embroidered velvet. They are composed of very small pieces of fabric. We can guess that in difficult times when Poland was under occupation of Prussia, Russia and Austria the new chasuble was made out of other vestments, using their best preserved parts. One of them was certainly made of secular embroidery.

Paraments Made of Silk Sashes (18th – 19th cent.)



Fig. 2:
Polish nobleman's costume: *kontusz* and *żupan*, Poland, 1760s. Inv. no MNK XIX-2798, MNK XIX-2799; Kontusz sash, Słuck, during management of Jan Madżarski, 1767-1780. Inv. no. MNK XIX-2287.

In the eighteenth century, silk sashes were used for Polish nobleman's costume, which consisted mainly of *kontusz* (pl. *kontusz*) and *zupan* (pl. *żupan*) (fig. 2). A magnificent gold lamé silk sash usually was the most costly accessory. In the beginning such sashes were brought from Iran or Turkey, where they were made by Armenians. In Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the production had started in the second half of the eighteenth century. Sashes were produced in several manufactures and achieved an astonishing level of workmanship. The most well-known production centre was Słuck (today Belarus), but very good silk sashes were also made in Kobyłki near Warsaw, in the Paschalis Jakubowicz manufactures in Warsaw and Lipków, in the royal manufacture in Grodno (today Belarus) and in several smaller

workshops in Gdansk and Krakow. They were very expensive and valued. As precious offerings they were also given to the Church. This tendency became stronger during the partitions, when the territory of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was divided between Austria, Prussia and Russia. During this dark era it was possible to observe a decline of Polish national costume. Gold lamé silk sashes were still precious but became useless. The revival of the kontush costume in the second half of the nineteenth century changed that situation, but many beautiful examples of kontush sashes were cut into pieces and used for other purposes by then, mainly for liturgical paraments and wall-hangings (Taszycka 1985, 77-78; Wróblewska-Markiewicz 2008, 9). In our collections we have three chasubles made of Sluck kontush sashes (inv. no MNK XIX-4666, MNK XIX-4667, MNK XIX-10277), a front part of another one, made of sashes from Krakow workshops and some smaller paraments (chalice veil inv. no. MNK XIX-2597, stoles inv. no MNK XIX-2614, MNK XIX-2613), maniple inv. no MNK XIX-2611). There are also side panels of a chasuble made of a Persian sash (inv. no. MNK XIX-9811/a-d).

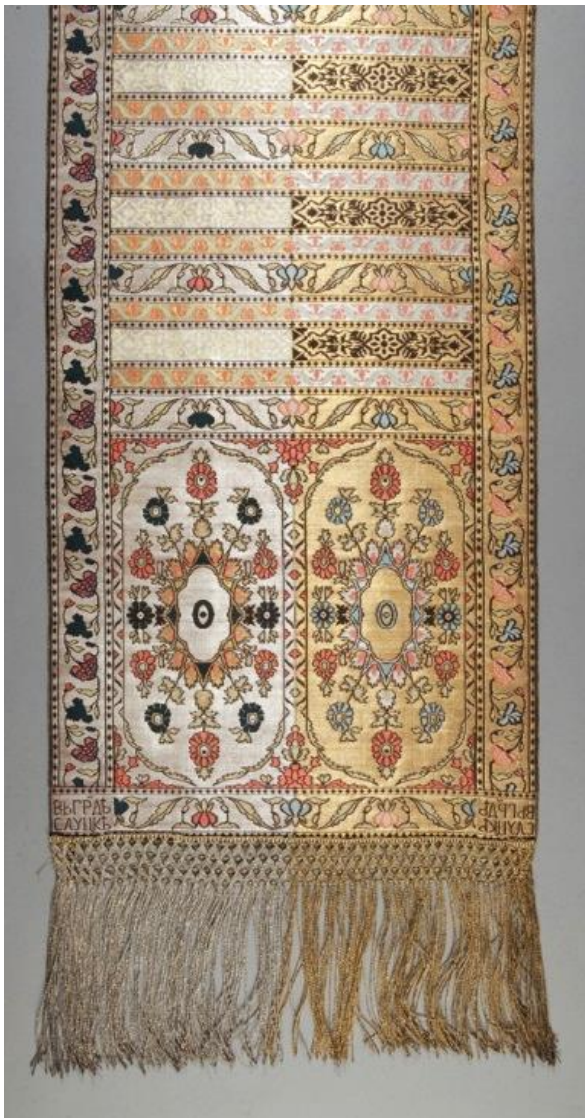


Fig. 3:
Kontush sash, Sluck, during management of Leon Madżarski, 1780-1807. Inv. no. MNK XIX-2288 Given by Maria Skarbek-Ważeńska, 1926.

The Polish kontush sash seemed to be a perfect material to make a chasuble. It was very long, ca. 3.5m to 4m, and its width varied mostly from 27cm to 37cm, with several examples exceeding 40cm. The composition of ornament was also very convenient for making liturgical paraments. The background of a Polish sash is striped, it has also a thin, ornamented border

along the edges. The most decorative part of a sash are its endings, called “heads”, usually with floral ornament inspired by Persian textiles. The Polish sash is double-sided. The most valuable sashes are “four-sided” (fig. 3), i.e. the background of both sides is divided into two colour zones, which allowed the nobleman to wear his folded-in-half sash in four different colour versions. As the surface of a chasuble is divided into three parts: orphrey band and two sides – it was very easy to sustain such a composition using only one kontush sash.



Fig. 4:
Chasuble made of kontush sashes, circa 1800. Inv. no. MNK XIX-4666. Given by Feliks Jasioński, 1929.

Chasubles from our collections are mostly made of sashes executed in Słuck, the most well-known production centre in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – it was so famous that the name *pas słucki* (sash from Słuck) became a synonym of “kontush sash”. The most precious kind of sash, which is four sided gold lamé silk sash, became a material to make the first chasuble (fig. 4). The composition of such a sash allowed sewing the chasuble with only one seam in the middle: two adjacent parts in gold and terracotta form an orphrey band and sides are silver and cream. The second chasuble was made of cheaper silk sashes, only partly woven with silver thread (fig. 5). It is executed with a great care about colour combinations and composition. The orphrey bands are terracotta colour and the sides are blue. Ornamented edges were cut of the sash and used as trimmings, together with golden braids. The chasuble has its lining preserved and we can't be sure if someone used one “four-sided” sash or two “double-sided”. The upper part of the chasuble is made from a fragment of another sash, produced in Paschalis Jakubowicz workshop. In these paraments the most decorative “heads” weren't used.



Fig. 5:
Chasuble made of kontush sashes, ca. 1800. Inv. no. MNK XIX-4667. Purchased 1914.

The third chasuble, also made out of Sluck sashes, has no lining. Apparently it was a double-sided cheap solution for a poor parish church. Usually double-sided sashes had one side in bright colours and one with predominance of black, used during mourning. A maker of the chasuble utilized this feature and created the gold and silver vestment for the greatest church feasts and the black one for funeral celebrations. Golden braid trimmings on both sides of the chasuble prove that we have to do with a double-faced vestment, not with a vestment lacking its lining. This time the „heads” of the sash were used for additional decoration of the lower part of the chasuble.

Paraments made of Polish kontush sashes could bring in mind the memories about the glorious past of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under the occupation in the nineteenth century.

Paraments Made of Embroideries Taken from Women’s Skirts (18th – 19th cent.)

Some liturgical vestments in the collections of the National Museum in Krakow are very strongly connected with women’s world – they were made presumably out of women’s outfits. Extensive skirts of eighteenth-century women’s dresses were large enough for being cut and remade into something new.

Chasubles

The white chasuble for the St. Mary fetes looks quite impressive, with an orphrey band embellished with scenes of St. Mary's Coronation and Christmas (Inv. no MNK XIX-367; fig. 6). The embroidery is very shiny, executed with silk yarn, golden thread, golden bullion and golden and silver sequins. Faces of peoples and angels are painted. The edges and seams of the vestment are trimmed with silver lace. At first glance the chasuble seems to be a donation of a very wealthy donor. When we look closer we can see that the embroidery is naïve in style and not of a high artistic quality. The sides were probably made from a women's skirt: the fabric is decorated with embroidery typical for early eighteenth-century dresses: flowers on long stems are shown in the field adorned with little silver sequins. The pattern doesn't suit the cut of the chasuble well and it is partly obscured with opulent silver lace. In this vestment we can observe a combination of naïve style and "recycled" materials together with an effort to create an impression of richness and splendour (Taszycka unpublished, cat. 94).



Fig. 6:
Chasuble, Poland, 18th c. Inv. no. MNK XIX-367. Unknown provenance.

The next white chasuble was also partly made of a skirt (fig. 7). In this case we can omit the word "probably" (Inv. no MNK XIX-399). The vestment looks much humbler than the former one. Both orphrey band and sides are made of small pieces of fabrics. Somebody was trying to do his best to make this vestment agreeable, but even the continuity of the ornament couldn't be maintained because of lack of bigger samples of fabric. The orphrey band is made of Lyonnaise silk fabric (circa 1735). The sides of the chasuble are adorned with floral embroidery with *chinoiserie* motives: we can see Chinese pagodas in a landscape and thick

sinuous stems with flowers arising from them (Taszycka unpublished, cat. 130). The embroidery is executed with silk yarn and silver thread. The elongated shape of the composition, its style and character, prove that it had to be taken from women's skirt. Such embroideries, embellishing low edge of the skirt, were very popular throughout the eighteenth century, especially in townswomen costumes. We can compare the embroidery from the side panels of the chasuble with two objects from our collections. The first one is a green taffeta skirt, adorned with fine embroidery with fantastic landscape motives (inv. no MNK XIX-9920; Gutkowska-Rychlewska 1968, 595; Biedrońska-Słotowa and Kowalska 2003, 39).



Fig. 7:
Chasuble, Poland, 18th c. Inv. no. MNK XIX-399. Given by Helena Dąbcańska 1916-1922.

Another one is a piece of fabric taken from the skirt which belonged to Princess Maria Zofia Czartoryska, de domo Sieniawska (fig. 8. Inv. no. MNK XIII-2813; Gutkowska-Rychlewska 1968, 595). Embroideries preserved on skirts from our collections are very similar to the embroidery from the sides of the chasuble in composition and technique of execution, i. e. shading with silk yarn with elements made with silver thread. We can imply that this chasuble had to belong to a poor parish church – it is sewn together from quite small pieces of fabrics, not corresponding well to each other. The final aesthetic effect is disappointing.



Fig. 8:
Fragment of a skirt, which belonged to Princess Maria Zofia Czartoryska, de domo Sieniawska, Poland, ca. 1735-1750. Inv no MNK XIII-2813.

Copes

Copes made of secular outfits are very interesting to examine because of their big size. They are usually circa 3m wide and 1.3m high. To make a cope one needed a lot of fabric. We can presume that almost an entire skirt had to be used to sew one cope.



Fig. 9:
Cope front made of embroidered skirt, Poland, ca. 1765 – 1770. Inv. no. MNK XIX-361. Unknown provenance.

In our collections there is a white cope front made of French droguet decorated with silk yarn and silver thread embroidery, with a net pattern of interlacing leafy stems with carnations, roses and lilies (fig. 9. Inv. no MNK XIX-361; Taszycka unpublished, cat. 205). We can easily notice, that the ornament of blooming stems doesn't correspond with the shape of the vest-

ment. The large surface of the cope is composed of many pieces of fabric. Their shape indicates that they came probably from a skirt. Nevertheless the overall effect is quite pleasing.



Fig. 10
Cope (fragment). Fabrics from Lyon, ca. 1735–1740 / Cope sewn in Poland.
Inv. No MNK XIX-8262. Purchased 1971.

Another very beautiful example from our collections is a cope made of Lyonnaise fabric c. 1735-1750 (fig. 10. Inv. no. MNK XIX-8262). Elaborate pattern with *chinoiserie* motives: fantastic landscapes with figures of Chinese people among naturalistic flowers in full bloom and colourful exotic birds. Such an ornament was not very proper for liturgical purposes and was much more suitable for women's dress. It would be worth comparing our cope with a set of liturgical paraments in the collections of Kaiserliche Schatzkammer in Vienna, adorned with an embroidered pattern of flowers and parrots. The embroidered fabric used for these paraments was probably used previously as a wall decoration (Schmitz-von Ledebur 2016, 48-54). It is interesting that the heads and claws of the birds are covered with appliqué leaves and flowers – the visible sign that exotic birds were not adequate for liturgical purposes.

Chalice Veils

One of the most interesting examples of embroideries in our collections is a square piece of embroidered taffeta, which served as a chalice veil (fig. 11. Inv. no. MNK XIX-108). It was purchased by our museum in 1905. The embroidery was made by a very skilful craftsman. Its technical as well as aesthetical quality is very high. The embroidery was executed with gold thread, gold cord and colourful silk yarn. The well balanced composition of delicate flowers, garlands and abstract forms is very delightful. Maria Gutkowska-Rychlewska described it in the 1960s as Chinese for the European market (Gutkowska-Rychlewska 1968, 594). This hypothesis was confirmed several years ago when I noticed an almost identical, but monochromatic embroidery on a mantua from the collections of The Gemeentemuseum in the Hague (Taszycka unpublished, cat. 205: catalogue entry by M. Taszycka and J.R. Kowalska). The mantua was a wedding dress of Anna Maria Boghert. The embroidery for her

dress was commissioned in China by the bride's guardian, Jacob Roman, probably two or three years before the wedding in 1747 (Meij 2005, 140-9, 222). When we compare the embroidered fabric from our collections with white mantua from the Hague museum we can say that analogically it had to be placed on the central axis of a skirt.



Fig. 11:
Chalice veil, China for European market, ca. 1745. Inv. no. MNK XIX-108. Purchased 1905.

Very lovely examples of embroideries taken from a woman's outfit are a chalice veil and a pall with an ornament executed with silk yarn, gold thread of two kinds and gold foil. The ornament resembles *indienne* or *chintz* textiles from the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The delicacy of the floral motives and the very precise technique of embroidery execution indicate Far Eastern inspirations (Taszycka unpublished, cat. 143).

Liturgical Vestments Made by Pious Women

In the nineteenth century, women were embroidering liturgical vestments at home to offer them as pious donations. Patterns for liturgical paraments were published in journals for ladies, as well as patterns for secular clothes and bed or table linen. Adorning the church with beautiful vestments and other paraments were indispensable occupations of devout women. This time consuming work could be also treated as pious practice. Executed in silence, this occupation should turn thoughts of a woman toward heavenly matters (Kowalska 2012, 65-7). In the collections of the National Museum in Krakow there are two particularly lovely examples of such amateur work.

The first one is an embroidered stole (Inv. no. MNK XIX-6787; Taszycka unpublished, cat. 249). It is embroidered on canvas, with wool yarn and metal and glass beads. The technique used is cross stitch and half cross stitch embroidery. Both materials and technique are not very sophisticated. The most interesting is a choice of motive adorning the ends of the stole. Each of them bears the copy of *Madonna della Sedia* by Rafael. The stole's execution needed the hand of a talented, but not professional craftsman. It could be made at home, by a devout lady. The stole comes from a parish church in Szydłów, and could be a pious offering.

Quite different is the white chasuble made by Maria z Młodzianowskich Symonowiczowa (fig. 12. Inv. no. MNK XIX-10272/1-2; Taszycka unpublished, cat. 143). It is a silk vestment adorned with embroidery made with silk yarn. An orphrey band bears scenes from the life of St Francis of Assisi. The sides are decorated with a pattern of lilies of the valley. Maria Symonowiczowa was a friend of Stefan Stasiak, the professor of the John Casimir University in Lviv. She was visibly aware of the trends in decorative art, because the chasuble is very much in Art Nouveau style. It was appreciated also in Paris, where the chasuble won the first prize at the exhibition *La broderie et ses applications* at the Musée Galliera in Paris, 1912. It has never served for the liturgy, and remained in the hands of Stefan Stasiak as a friend's souvenir, but it shows us what high quality of craftsmanship could be achieved at home (Kowalska 2012, 65-7; Kowalska 2015, 123, ill. 7).



Fig. 12:
Chasuble, Maria z Młodzianowskich Symonowiczowa, Lviv, 1911. Inv. no. MNK XIX-10272/1-2. Given by Stanisław Stasiak.

Conclusion

Liturgical paraments made of formerly secular textiles are very interesting to examine. They prove the persistent need to adorn the Church with beautiful things even among not very wealthy people. It is always worth taking them into consideration even if their artistic quality is not the highest one.

References

Biedrońska-Słotowa, Beata and Joanna Regina Kowalska. 2003. *Za modą przez wieki: Ubiorzy z kolekcji Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*. [Wystawa - Gmach Główny Muzeum, 26 września - 31 grudnia 2003]. Kraków: Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie.

Buyko, Małgorzata. 2013. *110 lat Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*. Kraków: Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie.

Gutkowska-Rychlewska, Maria. 1968. *Historia ubiorów*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

Kowalska, Joanna Regina. 2012. „Długie popołudnia i wieczory. Roboty ręczne i ich rola w prowadzeniu gospodarstwa domowego w 2. połowie XX wieku”. In *Ziemiaństwo na lubelszczyźnie V. Praca i życie codzienne w majątku ziemiańskim. Materiały V sesji naukowej w Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłowie w dniach 12 – 14 października 2011 roku*, edited by Hubert Łuszczkiewicz. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Werset.

Kowalska, Joanna Regina. 2015. „Secesyjne hafty, aplikacje i inkrustacje w kolekcji Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie”. In *Pamiętnik Sztuk Pięknych* 10, 119-126.

Meij, Ietse. 2005. „À propos de beauté exotique: une mantua commandée en Chine”. In *Modes en miroir. Le France et la Hollande au temps des Lumières*. Exhibition Catalogue, 140-5. Paris: Paris musées.

Schmitz-von Ledebur, Katja. 2016. *Gottes Lob: Kirchliche Textilien aus der Zeit Maria Theresias*. Wien: KHM-Museumsverband.

Taszycka, Maria. 1985. *Polskie pasy kontuszowe*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Taszycka, Maria. 1999. „O kilku haftach z Galerii Rzemiosła Artystycznego Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie”. In *Gazeta Antykwaryczna* 11, 44-46.

Taszycka, Maria. *Hafty z kolekcji Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*. Unpublished.

Wróblewska-Markiewicz, Małgorzata. 2008. *Pas kontuszowy - recepcja formy, recepcja mitu : [katalog wystawy, Łódź, Centralne Muzeum Włókiennictwa, 8.X.2008 r. - 31.I.2009 r.]*, Łódź: Centralne Muzeum Włókiennictwa.

Picture Credits

All pictures were made in the Photographic Workshop of the National Museum in Krakow, except fig. 10, taken by Joanna Regina Kowalska.