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Grabowska, Maria Katarzyna (2014) Well-worn issue: conservation of ecclesiastical textiles while still in use on examples from Poland and the United Kingdom. [MPhil]

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Deposited on: 16 November 2015

***Well-Worn Issue:***  
**Conservation of Ecclesiastical  
Textiles While Still in Use on  
Examples from Poland and the  
United Kingdom**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Master of Philosophy in Textile Conservation  
in the School of Culture and Creative Arts,  
University of Glasgow, August 2014

## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the challenges and decision-making processes in the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles while in use, based on examples from Poland and the United Kingdom. The conservation of objects for use strains the objectives of preservation since use impacts the stability of a piece. The review of published and unpublished case studies alongside interviews with textile conservators indicated that modification of treatment techniques along with the appropriate application of restoration practice enables successful, and ethically sound conservation. The use of objects in continuity with Christian heritage is assisted and encouraged, if the cooperation of the client can be secured.

The thesis also investigates the nature of liturgical vestments in order to explain required considerations and limitations to the conservators practice when dealing with Christian religious objects. Dialogue with members of the clergy assisted in recognising vestments as objects consecrated to their ceremonial use. Their utilisation generates their status and affiliation exclusively with the liturgy. Competent conservation does not affect the sacred nature of the textile, thus negligible limitations apply so long as an object's integrity is protected from profanation by repurposing and is accorded proper respect in handling.

## Acknowledgments

I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor, **Karen Thompson**, for her support, guidance and constructive feedback, and encouragement. This dissertation would also not have been possible without the help of my tutors; **Frances Lennard**, **Sarah Foskett** and **Anita Quye** who, for two years, with an inimitable approach have shared with me their knowledge, experience and passion for textile conservation.

I am truly thankful to all participants who provided me with the necessary information and knowledge in order to complete this research. My special thanks go to: **Fabiano Barretti**, **Fr Ross Campbell**, **Fr Tomasz Grabowski OP**, **Teresa Heady**, **Jerzy Holc**, **Barbara Kalfas**, **Elżbieta Nowak**, **Tuula Pardoe**, **Rev. Zdzisław Sochacki**, **Anna Starzak** and **Wendy Toulson**.

I am much obliged to **The Textile Conservation Foundation** for making it all possible in the first place by their generous contribution towards my tuition fees and their interest in my growth, and **The James Whistler and Beatrix Whistler Scholarship** for rewarding me with the necessary funds which enabled me to examine the Polish aspect of this topic intimately.

**The class of 2014**, thank you for sharing with me these two years and making it so memorable.

I wish to thank **my parents** for their support through the course and for never failing me when in need of ontological and phenomenological discussions of the most peculiar sort. My ultimate thanks go to **Jeff Armstrong**, for your support, proof reading and encouragement despite the challenging circumstances.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Churches around the world are in possession of large collections of vestments and other articles of clothing worn by the clergy and generally associated with religious practices referred to as ‘ecclesiastical textiles.’<sup>1</sup> Among these assortments a wonderful array of objects collected through centuries can be found including secular garments, tapestries, banners, book cushions, wall and altar coverings, as well as carpets that were bought or offered as votives. Nevertheless, it has been accepted that the term ‘ecclesiastical textiles’ be applied to describe textile objects related only to the Christian Church liturgy, or its clergy in various forms. The use of this expression provides a primary evaluation of an artefacts’ class, since it implies their suitability for application in a church setting. The aptness for being involved in religious practice implies that they demonstrate some sort of quality and meet certain requirements appointed by the user. Liturgical textiles can be identified accordingly with the phenomenological interpretation that appoints different meaning to the objects. In its most fundamental interpretation the term ‘ecclesiastical textiles’ describes not only the matter, but also the function and essence, which enables the correct perception of an object. In this sense the term ‘ecclesiastical textiles’ communicates both static and dynamic properties. Depending on the viewers’ perspective each sphere is prioritised. Conservators or textile historians will be concerned with the matter, examining its properties and condition, while the user and the congregation appraise the essence originating from the matter.

Ecclesiastical clothing was introduced to the liturgy of the Christian Church as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century and it is in use to date with more or less the same intention.<sup>2</sup> Its form and appearance has evolved depending on factors such

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Golonka OSPPE, “Szaty Liturgiczne w Czynnościach Kultu Bożego. Kilka Uwag w Związku z Badaniami nad Zbiorem Jasnogórskim,” in *Tekstylija w Zbiorach Sakralnych. Inwentaryzacja - Konserwacja - Przechowywanie*, ed. Helena Hryszko, Anna Kwaśnik-Gliwińska, Monika Stachurska (Warszawa: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, 2013), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Janet Mayo, *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1984), 15.



as fashion, region of production, accessible materials and revisions in Church practice. Despite these changes, vestments were constructed from some of a cultures most valued fabrics, such as velvet and brocade weaves, and were embellished with an abundance of silver and gold threads as well as pearls and gems. The best of the national textile arts were utilized in the production of vestments using materials commissioned from distant and local sources combined with the most exquisite needlework. By the Middle Ages liturgical vestment had become recognized and established as Church art.<sup>3</sup> Their great value might have been an encouragement for clergy to store, care for and retain these textile objects for as long as possible. It was even a recognized custom that worn textiles or vestments were made into other vestments and repaired for as long as possible.<sup>4</sup> For centuries churches have been the most important storage facilities for textile heritage collections enabling the preservation of fabrics dated as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> Since the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 1965) the amount of required church textiles for liturgical practice has been reduced with new vestments replacing the older style.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the use of historical vestments had not been excluded and can still be observed on various occasions. Moreover, there is a desire among the clergy to return the historical vestment to the liturgy since the contemporary made garments are not their equal in beauty.<sup>7</sup> The preserved examples of vestment constitute evidence and support in broadening our knowledge in fields of art, history, technology and production, trade routes and various craft skills among many other subjects.

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<sup>3</sup> Pamela Frayser Kuchenmesiter & Mary Ann Littrell, "Liturgical Vestments in the Church of Norway: Aesthetics, Social Roles, And Artistic Production," *Dress* 14, no.1 (1988): 17.

<sup>4</sup> Marike von Roon, "Reusing Textiles in the Catholic Church of the Nineteenth Century; Changing Values and Function," in *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006), 118.

<sup>5</sup> Pauline Johnstone, *High Fashion in the Church* (Leeds: Maney, 2002), 27.

<sup>6</sup> Reneé Lugtigheid, "Religious textiles; A Special But Vulnerable Heritage," in *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006), 84-85.

<sup>7</sup> Tomasz Grabowski OP (Dominican Friar, Director of The Dominican Centre for Liturgy), personal interview with author, Cracow, June 30, 2014. Appendix 2.

Preserving religious textiles, which are still in use, presents a demanding and difficult challenge to a textile conservator since use and preservation can be rather conflicting notions or, at least, lead to creating a field of tension.<sup>8</sup> Textiles intended for service in religion are equipped with functional and spiritual meaning enhancing and enriching the understanding of the practice attended by worshippers. The importance of these textiles lies not only in their religious significance, since they often have an additional aesthetic, social or regional value.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that the religious value attached to these items is what has contributed most to their preservation either as complete objects or in parts up to today.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, leaving the textiles in their original context puts them at risk since use leads to wear and tear, accelerating deterioration. The most successful method of preservation would require removing them from religious practice and admitting them to a museum. Deciding on their withdrawal would most certainly secure the object's future, but the functional qualities and spiritual dimension would be eradicated.<sup>11</sup> Therefore the question arises: Should conservators facilitate the desire, if their assistance is required, to enable safe and continuous use of ecclesiastical textile and how this can be achieved?

This thesis is assigned to the investigation of practices related to conservation of ecclesiastical textiles in Poland and the United Kingdom. The choice of these areas is dictated by comparable familiarity of the author with languages, available conservation training, resources and

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<sup>8</sup> "Introduction," in *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006), 82.

<sup>9</sup> Reneé Lugtigheid, "All That Glisters In Not Gold. The Appreciation of Religious Textiles in the Netherlands and the Formulation of Selection Criteria for Retention or Disposal," in *Preprints of the 16<sup>th</sup> ICOM-CC Triennial Meeting in Lisbon, Portugal*,

[http://www.restauratoren.nl/upload/documenten/1806\\_254\\_lugtigheid\\_icom-cc\\_2011.pdf](http://www.restauratoren.nl/upload/documenten/1806_254_lugtigheid_icom-cc_2011.pdf) (accessed December 12, 2013), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Margareta Bergstrand & Anna Klint, "Saving by Using; To Preserve the Cultural Heritage of the Churches by Making Use of It," in *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006), 103.

<sup>11</sup> Bernice Morris, "The Ethics and Practicalities of Conserving Sacred Jewish Textiles" (MA Dissertation, Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, 2005), 15.

working framework of both countries. The concept behind the selection of these two regions is to compare, analyse and evaluate approach, methods and solutions in corresponding settings. The assessment might prove to be interesting since both countries are predominantly Christian with Poland dominated by Catholicism<sup>12</sup> and the United Kingdom by Anglicanism,<sup>13</sup> however the course of history and tradition has resulted in dissimilar mentalities and attitudes within these communities. Poland is an example of a country in which religion still plays an important role in the everyday life and the church owns a diverse part of cultural heritage. The affection towards religion in the United Kingdom seems relatively less ubiquitous, but there is greater cultural awareness resulting in a bigger number of exhibitions and events promoting church collections aimed at its preservation. The large number of churches in key Polish cities contains many textiles in their collection frequently counted in the thousands, which are stored *in situ* and are mostly unused due to their poor condition and their historical status.<sup>14</sup> This wealth of church heritage can be attributed to the absence of the Reformation influences in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which took a rather negative attitude towards vestments.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, in both countries there is presently a corresponding approach to preserve and restore this unique heritage with the help of textile conservators. The conservation possibilities are comparable, but the traditions and solutions vary. All these factors contribute to the choice and method of treatments providing an interesting subject of study.

The overall aim of this research is to discover what and how successfully, in relation to existing codes of ethics, textile conservators can manage to enable ecclesiastical textiles to be continuously used through the

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<sup>12</sup> Paweł Ciecieląg & Mikołaj Haponiuk, *Wyznania Religijne. Stowarzyszenia Narodowościowe i Etniczne w Polsce 2009 - 2011* (Warszawa: GUS, Departament Badań Społecznych i Warunków Życia, 2013), 36.

<sup>13</sup> "Facts & Stats," The Church of England, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats.aspx> (accessed July 12, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Personal communication with various members of clergy.

<sup>15</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Protestantism*, ed. Hans J. Hillerband (London: Routledge, 2004), s.v. "Vestments."

illustration of examples from Poland and the United Kingdom. A further aim is to investigate whether there are specific considerations and limitations employed in conservation of ecclesiastical textiles due to their religious function, or whether these considerations are a reflection of general practice within the field.

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **2.1. Aims of Research**

- To analyse the decision-making process in the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles intended for use through examples of past treatments from Poland and the United Kingdom in order to examine how the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles fits into the general concept of conservation and restoration.
- To establish if there are any special considerations relating to the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles imposed by their function and if they are recognised by textile conservators.
- To assess clients' expectations, existing attitudes and guidelines within the Christian Church in both Poland and the United Kingdom related to conservation of ecclesiastical textiles as well as to identify how these are met and considered by conservators.

### **2.2. Objectives**

- Review available literature to provide context for the research and to discover the existing practice related to conservation of objects in use, particularly ecclesiastical textiles.
- To synthesize available conservation codes of ethics used by the conservators in both countries to identify common approaches and differences, to help generate unambiguous and concise definitions of conservation, restoration and related practises assisting in the interpretation of discussed treatments.
- Examine available literature and relevant documents issued by the Church to recognize specific considerations and impediments of conservation of religious objects.

- Carry out a series of interviews with textile conservators in Poland and the United Kingdom to investigate what steers the treatment of ecclesiastical textiles and how this compares or contrasts within each case.
- Carry out a series of interviews with members of clergy to indicate any existing expectations and attitudes towards textile conservation as well as learn about current care practices and how this fits into existing guidelines issued by the Church depending on location.
- Analyse and assess the collected data to evaluate its nature in compliance with codes of ethics and provide an overview of occurring issues and possible interpretations.

### **2.3. Methodology of Oral History**

The research draws principally on oral evidence collected by the author through interviews with textile conservators and members of the clergy. The choice of this research tool was determined by the wish to investigate all aspects of decision-making process that might have been omitted from conservation documentation or published sources for various reasons. It was also hoped this surveying technique would allow more detailed facts and opinions to be revealed, which are not applicable to conservation records, but could have had influence on the treatment indirectly.

The interview 'is the process of recording history, ideas and opinions in an oral form,'<sup>16</sup> which is both the method and a product of the research process. The recording is a reliable and accurate account of an encounter, since all the exact words used are there as they were spoken.<sup>17</sup> To interview successfully, however, requires skills, appropriate approach and

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<sup>16</sup> Danielle Connolly, "Textile Conservators Role in the Conservation of Contemporary Textile-Based Art" (MPhil Dissertation, The Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History, University of Glasgow, 2012), 30.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 126.

attentiveness of the researcher. To undertake an interview the set of steps should be followed including various stages from detailed preparations to analysis and generation of a transcript enabling easy access to the data. Thompson offers very detailed instructions on mechanical aspects of oral interviewing, processing the data and its interpretation.<sup>18</sup> Careful execution of these measures ought to assure a correct process of recording oral history and its outcome.

#### **2.4. Limitations of Oral History**

Oral history as a research method that uses spoken testimony brings advantages and drawbacks. It is an interactive process, which allows the uncovering of multiple layers of meaning at the same time as engaging with people's knowledge and memory.<sup>19</sup> It is, however, a performance, and on many occasions the interviewees produce answers, which they think are expected of them. The interviewer is stripped of the researchers' status and can become perceived as a possible threat, making the sincerity of the collected data doubtful. The interview is also subjective since the answers are provided from a particular standpoint and rely on the informant's memory.<sup>20</sup> The researcher cannot rely on the spoken word as fact, but should question and analyse it as any other historical evidence by sourcing, contextualizing and verifying. In conclusion, oral history bears the same epistemological problems as any other branch of history relying on primary sources.

#### **2.5. Structure of Dissertation**

The thesis begins by exploring the concept of 'sacred' in the wider context of the religious art and the Christian tradition in order to examine what defines ecclesiastical textiles and if they are considered to have particular attributions and characteristics. Current existing practice related to their

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<sup>18</sup> Thompson, 222-245.

<sup>19</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 21-24.

<sup>20</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27.

care is outlined in order to recognise the user's attitude and inclination towards preservation providing a rationale for the conservators' involvement. The second chapter will review existing literature related to conservation of ecclesiastical vestments and other objects in use to indicate the inevitability of modifications to conservation techniques to respond to client expectations. The third chapter moves on to discuss the decision-making process in the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles based on past examples known through literature and personal communication with textile conservators in Poland and the United Kingdom. The final chapter will portray the understanding of ecclesiastical textiles to provide an accurate account of possible considerations and limitations for the conservator's work when undertaking a treatment of textile objects from the Christian tradition. The thesis is complemented with an appended section consisting of a glossary of terms used through the main text related to objects from the Christian religion and transcripts of extracts from several interviews to provide supplementary evidence and reference.



### 3. CHAPTER ONE

#### *Ecclesiastical Textiles and Everyday Care*

##### 3.1. Introduction

Conservators in their practice are guided by a system of standards and principles in order to provide justification for the choices they make, whose outcomes affect the wider public and future generations. Knowledge regarding an object as well as the intangible aspects of its meaning and nature are fundamental to devising a successful treatment. Therefore it is advisable, from the outset, to explore the character of ecclesiastical textiles in the Christian tradition, how they fit into church heritage in general and what approach is taken towards their care within the Church. The rationale of ecclesiastical textiles' essence is introduced through the prism of literature related to intangible heritage and Church documents referring to liturgical implements and their care.

##### 3.2. Seeing the Sacred

In recent decades conservators have evolved an awareness of cultural sensitivity of objects and appreciation for the 'sacred' under the considered tutoring of ethnologists and anthropologists.<sup>21</sup> Values analysis has become a regular part of conservation methodology since this system of categories can assist in designing an appropriate treatment without altering the meaning of an object.<sup>22</sup> In a Western multicultural society we have learnt to recognize and see the sacred in objects from outside of our own culture without personal barriers and with a greater sensitivity,<sup>23</sup> but it seems that the same

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<sup>21</sup> Miriam Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued. Museums, Conservations, and First Nations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Elazar Barkan and Roland Bush, *Claiming the Stones Naming the Bones. Cultural Property and the Negotiation of National and Ethnic Identity* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Barbara Appelbaum, *Conservation Treatment Methodology* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), 161.

<sup>23</sup> Julie-Marthe Cohen, "Changing Values of Jewish Ritual Textiles," in *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006), 138-153; Chuang Yiao-hwei, "Presenting Buddhism in Museums," in *Godly Things: Museums, Objects and Religion*, ed. Crispin Paine (London - New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), 107 - 119; Teresa M. Heady, "The

skill has not ordinarily been applied when dealing with artefacts more familiar to our own traditions.<sup>24</sup>

Material culture collected by the Christian Church consists of a significant part of the heritage of the Western world and it is dispersed under different ownerships between museums, churches and private collectors. The collections gathered by the Christian churches can be classified as art and historical sources, since they serve as evidence for the style, fashion and various techniques used in craftsmanship through the centuries. Above all, religious art, despite its materiality, has a metaphysical dimension that adds to its layers of significance. It is important to distinguish and understand the definition of 'sacred,' as well as factors determining it in the Christian tradition in order to interpret the potential objects of conservation accordingly.

### 3.3. Understanding the Sacred

Sacred art may, in a general sense, be material of a special or ceremonial usage for a particular event.<sup>25</sup> It can be anything, since the sacred character and special significance are not implicit, but are added to its properties by the users. Therefore sacred is perceived differently across cultures and time, and its definition does not belong to researchers or viewers, but to the users.<sup>26</sup>

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Preservation of Religious Textile from the Himalayas," in *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006), 130-137; Alison Brown, "Artefacts as 'Alliances:' Perspectives on First Nations Collections in Museums," *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 13 (2001): 79-89.

<sup>24</sup> Mary M. Brooks, "Seeing the Sacred: Conflicting Priorities in Defining, Interpreting, and Conserving Western Sacred Artefacts," *Material Religion* 8, no.1 (2012): 10.

<sup>25</sup> Marian A. Kaminitz, "The Conservator's Approach to Sacred Art. Forum," *Western Association of Art Conservators Newsletter* 17, no.3 (1995): Article 5. <http://cool.conservation-us.org/waac/wn/wn17/wn17-3/wn17-310.html> (Accessed May 10, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Brigitte Derlon & Marie Mauzé, "'Sacred' or 'Sensitive' Objects," Seminar series on: Objects and Societies, Non-European Components of European Patrimony (NECEP), 2003: 1-2. [http://www.necep.net/papers/OS\\_Derlon-Mauze.pdf](http://www.necep.net/papers/OS_Derlon-Mauze.pdf) (accessed June 13, 2014).

A few authors emphasize that it is essential to distinguish religious art from sacred art, however this can be difficult due to indefinite boundaries between them.<sup>27</sup> Religion, as defined by Durkheim, is the ensemble of beliefs and practices related to sacred things that bind people into a single moral community.<sup>28</sup> That being the case, religion is a wider concept and includes the sacred, which refers to the experience of the holy. By applying the same perspective to concepts of art it can be competently determined that religious art is a larger category and encompasses the entire artistic production inspired by the beliefs of a religion to express its ideologies and dogmas. Sacred art is a category of religious art, which has been produced from the same inspirations, using the same materials and techniques, but is designed for liturgical devotion.<sup>29</sup> Taking into account this distinction it can be concluded that sacred art is defined by its purpose and function, thus liturgical vestment constitute sacred objects within the religion.

In recent years museologists, anthropologists, and religious scholars have embarked on debate relating to the issues of the display of religious art in the setting of museums.<sup>30</sup> The subject has proven especially challenging since the last fifty years Europe has witnessed a drastic decline in church attendance and growing secularization along with a shift in the formation of religious studies in schools.<sup>31</sup> Current religious education leaves the average member of the Christian Church unaware of traditions and practises

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<sup>27</sup> António Riberio da Costa, 'Christian Sacred Art: A Conservation Challenge,' in *Contributions to the Munich Congress, 28 August - 1 September 2006: The Object in Context - Crossing Conservation Boundaries*, ed. David Saunders, Joyce H. Townsend & Sally Woodcock (London: The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 2006), 7; Seyyed Hossein Nasr & Ramin Jahanbegloo, *In Search of the Sacred: A Conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr on His Life and Thought* (Santa Barbara - Denver - Oxford: Praeger, 2010), 247-253.

<sup>28</sup> Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915), 47.

<sup>29</sup> da Costa, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Crispin Paine (ed.), *Godly Things: Museums, Objects and Religion* (London - New York: Leicester University Press, 2000); Lawrence E. Sullivan and Alison Edwards (eds.), *Stewards of the Sacred* (Washington: American Association of Museums in cooperation with the Centre for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> José Casanova, "The Religious Situation in Europe," in *Secularization and the World Religions*, ed. Hans Joas & Klaus Wiegandt (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 222.

employed, and ignorant to the meanings of many objects and rituals within their own religion.<sup>32</sup> Museums, therefore, often have an impossible task in educating the viewer through the presentation of their sacred artefacts, if they aspire to assist in the recognition of the original function and purpose of these objects. Following Kopytoff's idea of object biography<sup>33</sup> '(...) a museum artefact is one that de facto is no longer useful or is no longer fulfilling its original purpose.'<sup>34</sup> Therefore withdrawing objects from their original, Christian context could be seen as de-sanctification and absolve the museum professionals from regarding an object as sacred.<sup>35</sup>

Conservators, however, should bear in mind that sacred objects are one thing in museums or art galleries, but they are quite another in synagogues, temples and churches.<sup>36</sup> Taking this frame of mind into consideration, ecclesiastical vestments that are still in use require a different approach than an object stored in a museum, since they retain their exegetical meaning and remain the same in their character, requiring the conservator to be aware of the expectations and meaning imputed by the client.

### 3.4. Interpreting the Sacred

Christianity is one of the most widespread religions in the world based on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ developed out of Judaism.<sup>37</sup> It has separated between the Eastern Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church and various churches of Reformation as a result of differences in doctrine and practice.<sup>38</sup> Liturgies, the formal corporate worship of God 'exists in a wide variety of prescribed forms, reflecting the needs and attitudes of

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<sup>32</sup> Tomasz Grabowski OP. Appendix 2.

<sup>33</sup> Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-91.

<sup>34</sup> Clavir, 62.

<sup>35</sup> da Costa, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, "Sacred Objects in Museum Spaces," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 21, no.4 (1992): 419.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Pat Fischer, *Living Religions* (London: Pearson, 2014), 302.

<sup>38</sup> *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*, ed. Rosemary Goring, (Ware: Wordsworth Reference, 1995), s.v. "Christianity."

different religious communities.’<sup>39</sup> Ecclesiastical textiles are aids used in worship and liturgy, and however they are customary across the Christian religion; the perspective on their subject differs in each church.

In the Christian religion the unity of Christ and the Church has been often expressed by the image of bridegroom and bride.<sup>40</sup> Textiles are a crucial element of both the bride and grooms appearance, distinguishing them from the crowd and endowing on them an image of status and worthiness of each other. The metaphorical bridal garments, ecclesiastical textiles, fall into two main categories: paraments and vestments.<sup>41</sup> Paraments (from Latin *paro* - to prepare, furnish) are defined as textile coverings and hangings for liturgical objects.<sup>42</sup> The vestments are a range of distinctive clothing worn by the clergy and lay officiates and can be divided into four basic types:

- Vestments worn at the Eucharist and at other sacraments,
- Vestments worn on other liturgical occasions,
- Various items of clothing which indicate rank or specific roles - including those of religious orders,
- Garments worn on non-liturgical occasions - the civilian dress of the clergy.<sup>43</sup>

Despite any theories of Levitical origin,<sup>44</sup> church vestments were not inherited from any other religion, nor were they invented at a precise time.<sup>45</sup> Early vestments were derived from the everyday dress of ordinary people.<sup>46</sup> It was not until the middle of the third century Pope Steven I

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., s.v. “Liturgy.”

<sup>40</sup> Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), art. 796.

<sup>41</sup> Sarah Bailey, *Clerical Vestments* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2013), 5.

<sup>42</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch *et al.* (Cambridge: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2008), s.v. “Paraments.”

<sup>43</sup> *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. J. G. Davies (London: SCM Press, 1986), s.v. “Vestments.”

<sup>44</sup> Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister, *Ecclesiastical Vestments: Their Development and History* (London: Elliot Stock, 1896), 2.

<sup>45</sup> Graham Jenkins, *The Making of Church Vestments* (London: Challoner Publications, 1957), 5.

<sup>46</sup> Herbert Norris, *Church Vestments: Their Origin and Development* (London: Dent, 1949), 8.

forbade the use of liturgical dress for workday purposes indicating that specific clothing was already being employed.<sup>47</sup>

The history and development of ecclesiastical dress has been described in various publications<sup>48</sup> as a costume history providing a large amount of technical information but, due to their cultural and specific significance, the explanation of their role and character should be traced to the church and the users.

### Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church does not explain in any official document what it considers to be sacred art, however it states that it 'draws man to adoration, to prayer and to the love of God, (...)the Holy One and Sanctifier.'<sup>49</sup> Vestments comply with this concept since they become a form of visible signs leading to an invisible entity, thus constituting a part of sacred art.<sup>50</sup> Although vestments could be perceived as if they were made to enhance the priests visage, since they are rich and elaborate clothing, instead, in truth and paradoxically they were made to make him humble. The concept is rationalised in the sense that the priest in his own clothes is only himself and can attract people or repel them by his own character and his own abilities or lack thereof.<sup>51</sup> Vestments are then used as a continual reminder that he is only a vassal at the service of the people. Therefore the liturgical vesture is not a divine matter of the Church constitution, but rather a means towards liturgical and theological communication, as well as a tool in contributing to God's glory.

The most relevant set of documents regarding the issue of vestments character in the Church theology was produced during the Second Vatican

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<sup>47</sup> Mayo, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Johnstone; Macalister; Mayo; Norris; Eugene Augustin Roulin, *Vestments and Vesture: A Manual of Liturgical Art* (London: Sands & Co., 1931).

<sup>49</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, art. 2502.

<sup>50</sup> Zdzisław Sochacki (Canon of the Cracow Cathedral Chapter), personal communication with author, Cracow, July 2, 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Jerome Bertram, foreword to *High Fashion in the Church*, by Pauline Johnstone (Leeds: Maney, 2002), vii.

Council, which renewed doctrines and addressed relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world.<sup>52</sup> Among them there is the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, known as *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in which chapter seven is wholly assigned to the matter of sacred art and furnishing. Vestments are addressed as sacred and mentioned is a reminder as they should 'strive after noble beauty rather than mere sumptuous display' alongside other sacred ornaments.<sup>53</sup>

### The Protestant Church

The matter of religious art in the various churches of the Reformation is of a smaller scale than in the Catholic Church since the imagery of Christ has been generally considered to be a form of idolatry and was not encouraged. During the Reformation ecclesiastical art suffered greatly with many pieces, including vestments, destroyed completely.<sup>54</sup> From that moment in Britain more elaborate vestments disappeared from view with some being destructed and others hidden away until it was safe to use them again. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the resurgent interest in vestments has intensified in the context of the ecumenical movement.<sup>55</sup>

For a long time furnishing fabrics and ornaments for altar and pulpit were the only group of ecclesiastical textiles in the Protestant Church. The appearance and fashion of the cloths used in service were described in detail by Canon Laws.<sup>56</sup> In terms of vestments there are few subjects on which it is more difficult to be concise and accurate in the Protestant Church. Once adopted, the Anglican Church remained the same in regards

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<sup>52</sup> John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge - London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 291.

<sup>53</sup> Vatican Council II, "Sacrosanctum Concilium," The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (4 December 1963), in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1992), n.124.

<sup>54</sup> Bailey, 10.

<sup>55</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Protestantism*, ed. J. Gordon Melton (New York: Facts on File, 2005), s.v. "Vestments."

<sup>56</sup> Percy Dearmer, *Linen Ornament of the Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929); Percy Dearmer, *The Parson's Handbook: Containing Practical Directions Both for Parsons and Others as to the Management of the Parish Church and its Services According to the Anglican Use, as set forth in the Book of Common Prayers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

to function or the manner of wearing.<sup>57</sup> Since 1965 Canon Law has permitted varying kinds of vesture in the Church of England, nevertheless the debate carries on as to whether their use and appearance is in keeping with the spirit of reformed church.

Today, a wide range of textiles is in regular use throughout the year in the Protestant Church, such as altar frontals, vestments, banners and kneelers. Their purpose is functional, decorative and enhancing of worship, however none of the written sources advises on their significant character within the church. It is believed that the best explanation of textiles used for the liturgy in the Christian Church can be obtained through interviews with the members of the church itself. This would also be an opportunity to comprehend the importance of vestments, their essence and meaning for the religion, which would also enable the identification of possible limitations for conservation.

### **3.5. Caring for the Sacred**

For centuries textiles made from precious materials were cared for due to their great value. Ecclesiastical textiles have belonged to a group of especially valuable objects due to their use of costly fabrics, noble metals and gems or jewels. This is why many parts of ecclesiastical textiles were reused, treasured and kept safely for as long as possible. This practice most likely originated out of respect for expensive materials, difficult labour and time-consuming techniques, but also due to simple husbandry.<sup>58</sup> The Christian Church has recognised the importance and significance of its collections, and has undertaken steps in the form of the regulation of laws and practice in preserving existing heritage.

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<sup>57</sup> Mayo, 120.

<sup>58</sup> Zdzisław Sochacki (Canon of the Cracow Cathedral Chapter), personal communication with author, Cracow, July 2, 2014.



## Roman Catholic Church

The Catholic Church, for a myriad of reasons not applicable here, has consciously supported the arts. The best example of such care has been expressed through the expanding patronage of works of art as well as artists through the centuries. More recently, during Second Vatican Council, the Fathers Bishops officially addressed issues related to religious art. They acknowledge the varied collections accumulated through the centuries of any particular style and they emphasised the importance of its preservation.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, it was decided that ‘during their philosophical and theological studies, clerics are to be taught about the history and development of sacred art(...)’<sup>60</sup> As a consequence of that education the members of the clergy would be able to appreciate and preserve the Church heritage, as well as to advise artists in the production of other works of art. Thus, the Church considers it to be crucial to pass down the patrimony of cultural goods, and deliberately makes an effort ‘(...)to restore, preserve, catalogue and protect them.’<sup>61</sup> Most importantly, it accepts and encourages the seeking of professional advice from those who are experts when passing judgement on works of art.<sup>62</sup> Conservators, without a doubt, are recognised as belonging to this group and should be addressed where applicable.

The Church has also devised regulations related to the art-historical patrimony, which is not in regular use. Firstly, the Catholic Church recommends caution in order to not dispose or disperse anything what was intended as ornament of God’s house. Secondly, official guidelines state that unused objects should be placed within the church, in close proximity to it or, most desirably, in an ecclesiastical museum.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Vatican Council II, n.123.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., n.129.

<sup>61</sup> John Paul II, “Address to Participants in the First Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Patrimony of the Church“ (October 12, 1995), no.4.

<sup>62</sup> Vatican Council II, n.126.

<sup>63</sup> Francesco Marchisano, “The Pastoral Function of Ecclesiastical Museums,“ The Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, Circular Letter (August 15, 2001).

The Roman Catholic Church has a great range of instructions regarding its collection of art, which includes sacred vestments. These recommendations demonstrate a full awareness of the issue as well as the importance of acting in compliance with them. The guidelines have been issued from the Vatican, and the Roman Curia endeavour to develop and improve them. The advice coming from the centre of the Catholic Church is written in broad language in order to make it widely encompassing and relevant to everyone. As a result, a few local councils of Bishops have attempted to produce detailed specifications appropriate for their diocese. The Catholic Church of England and Wales assigned the Patrimony Committee in order to encourage the appreciation and care of the churches and their content. The Committee prepared a series of guidance notes on the conservation of churches.<sup>64</sup> The notes comprehensively cover aspects of preventive and interventive conservation alongside lists of respected institutions and organisation, whose advice should be sought when necessary.

The most recent document; *Consecrated for Worship: A New Directory on Church Building*, was published in 2006 and concerns the building, alteration, conservation and maintenance of churches.<sup>65</sup> The resource is designed to assist those involved in building, reordering or making alterations within a church, as well as dealing with statutory bodies responsible for listed buildings. There are particular paragraphs on sacred vestments and altar linen specifying their properties, as well as instruction on how to store vestments of historical or artistic significance to prevent the deterioration of precious materials. The document encourages the

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<sup>64</sup> "Care of Churches." The Catholic Church In England and Wales, [http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Departments/Christian-Life-and-Worship/Patrimony/Care-of-Churches/\(language\)/eng-GB](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Departments/Christian-Life-and-Worship/Patrimony/Care-of-Churches/(language)/eng-GB) (accessed June 10, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, *Consecrated for Worship: A Directory on Church Building* (London: Catholic Truth Society and Colloquium, 2006).

cleaning of contemporary pieces, while seeking professional advice in the instance of textiles that ‘need restoration or conservation.’<sup>66</sup>

### Protestant Church

The Protestant Church has its own regulatory system for buildings and their historical contents. Each denomination has attended the issues in a similar manner to the Catholic Church and, as recommended on the Institute of Conservation (Icon) website, it is important to contact an appropriate body before starting a conservation project since there might be specific procedures to follow.<sup>67</sup>

The Church of England has appointed the Conservation Section of the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division, which intentionally supports the appropriate use and care of the Church’s heritage.<sup>68</sup> The aspect of heritage care seems to be extensively planned and addressed on many levels in the Church of England. It has produced its own regulatory system and the guidelines aim to set the standard for practice in church conservation projects and, most essentially, have been prepared in collaboration with the wider conservation sector. Additionally, the range of grants for repair and conservation of ecclesiastical buildings and their content is provided by the Church.<sup>69</sup> Most interestingly, guidelines for conservation reports have also been issued clearly stating what is expected of the conservator.<sup>70</sup> The instructions provide an essential explanation of its aims and purpose, but

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., art. 304.

<sup>67</sup> “Conservation of Churches And Their Contents-Sources of Advice And Information,” ICON, Conservation Register, <http://www.conservationregister.com/Plcon-churches.asp> (accessed 16 June, 2014).

<sup>68</sup> “Conservation,” Churches, The Church of England, <http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/our-buildings/churches/conservation.aspx> (accessed June 14, 2014); Cathedral and Church Building Division, Arcbishops’ Council, Church Care <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/> (accessed June 14, 2014).

<sup>69</sup> “Funding and Grants,” Church Care, Cathedral and Church Building Division, Arcbishops’ Council. <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/cathedrals/funding-and-grants> (accessed June 14, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> “Guidelines for Conservation Reports,” The Arcbishop’s Council, The Church of England, Cathedral and Church Building Division [http://portsmouth.anglican.org/fileadmin/images/What\\_we\\_do/property\\_finance\\_DAC/dac/Guidelines\\_for\\_Conservation\\_Reports.pdf](http://portsmouth.anglican.org/fileadmin/images/What_we_do/property_finance_DAC/dac/Guidelines_for_Conservation_Reports.pdf) (accessed June 7, 2014).

also describe in detail each section of conservation documentation required by the church. The exact instructions on the care of church textiles could not have been found in general guidelines, but only in particular dioceses, e.g. Diocese of Lincoln.<sup>71</sup> These provide their parishes with instructions prepared by specialists and thoroughly explaining possible dangers to the textile collection as well as solutions of preventive conservation.

### 3.6. Summary

Ecclesiastical textiles, vestments in particular, are a significant part of religious practices and traditions of the Christian Church. According to the definition of 'sacred art' and its basic interpretation, ecclesiastical vestments in liturgical use are sacred, but it is not completely certain what and if there are implications that are entangled to the conservators' practice when handling these objects. The continued use of historic garments, as well as a desire for continuous use, is widely recognised among the clergy and acknowledges the traditions of the Catholic Church and the continuity of the Catholic heritage.<sup>72</sup> The Church, however, clearly encourages the appropriate care of cultural heritage of historical or artistic significance and provides basic guidelines to a differing degree depending on denomination. The Church located in the United Kingdom is especially active in following and improving on existing regulations. Guidelines emerge from the central institutions of the church and it would be advantageous to establish whether local parishes act in compliance with them. Due to a lack of similar documents in Polish it would be helpful to conduct interviews with the members of clergy and conservators to scrutinize the relationship between these two professions. The information from conservators is crucial to recognise what the challenges and limitations are when undertaking the treatment of ecclesiastical textiles in use.

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<sup>71</sup> "Guidelines for the Care of Church Textiles," Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches. Diocese of Lincoln, [http://www.lincoln.anglican.org/pdf\\_view.php?id=13](http://www.lincoln.anglican.org/pdf_view.php?id=13) (accessed June 12, 2014).

<sup>72</sup> Wendy Hickson, "Developing a Preventive Conservation Strategy for Historic Vestments at Saint Peter's Catholic Church, Winchester" (MA Dissertation, Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, 2007), 78.

## 4. CHAPTER TWO

### *Literature Review*

#### 4.1. Introduction

Ecclesiastical textiles are considered to have special characteristics as a sub-group of textiles,<sup>73</sup> however their preservation is not regarded as a distinctive field within conservation. Most textile conservators are capable of providing suitable advice or treatment to this category of objects without additional training since the conservation techniques allow the addressing of commonly occurring problems. Obviously, there are recognised specialist professionals, who concentrate their efforts on the subject of church collections, predominantly due to their personal interest and through developing associations.<sup>74</sup> Existing qualified studios dedicated to the preservation of ecclesiastical textiles and related artefacts if established, are typically located within major church complexes, which are in possession of significant cultural heritage requiring regular care.<sup>75</sup> Frequently, the objective of their practice is to assist the continuous use of these historical items.

This chapter is intended to explore, through literature, if the preservation of ecclesiastical textiles in continuous use constitutes a separate part of textile conservation and what the conservation perspective and policies towards working collections might be. Furthermore, it has been attempted to evaluate what the ethical considerations to be regarded are when designing a treatment and what are the limitations of the conservator's work to facilitate the functionality and aesthetics of the objects.

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<sup>73</sup> Leanne Tonkin, "Development in the Conservation of Ecclesiastical Textiles: the Whalley Abbey Orpheys c. 1390 - 1500" (MA Dissertation, Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, 2009), 34.

<sup>74</sup> "Practice Details for: Wendy Toulson Textile Conservator," ICON Conservation Register.  
<http://www.conservationregister.com/WorkshopDetail.asp?WorkshopID=708> (accessed July 27, 2014).

<sup>75</sup> "Textile Conservation Laboratory," The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, <http://www.stjohndivine.org/about/textile-conservation-lab> (accessed July 27, 2014).

## 4.2. Conservation of Ecclesiastical Textiles

The research for this thesis revealed many published and unpublished sources related to conservation and the subject of religious textiles in general. In regards to textiles from the Western-European Christian tradition, most of these articles and individual case studies consider the conservation techniques and methods employed while undertaking a particular treatment. The most detailed records include student dissertations submitted as a fulfilment of conservation courses, since there is often ample time and resources allowed in investigating complex issues thoroughly. These range from detailed standard conservation reports written in the 80's to more scientific focused research undertaken more recently in an attempt to resolve particularly difficult issue limiting the conservator's work.<sup>76</sup> Still, the individual case studies are the most common technique to undertake the most advantageous analysis of occurring issues enabling the identification of challenges and solutions in the treatment of religious textiles.<sup>77</sup> Another group of meticulous conservation reports has been usually associated with important artefacts, either due to their exceptional value or their historic or artistic significance.<sup>78</sup> Understandably, these receive more attention due to various means of promotion and are frequently published through a variety of media. This is especially visible in

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<sup>76</sup> Barabara Heiberger, "The Conservation of an Opus Anglicanum Altar Frontal" (Unpublished Diploma Report, Textile Conservation Centre, Hampton Court Palace, Courtauld Institute, University of London, 1982); Wendy Toulson, "The Conservation of Late Medieval English Pall" (Unpublished Diploma Report, Textile Conservation Centre, Hampton Court Palace, Courtauld Institute, University of London, 1985); Sarah Reardon, "An Investigation Into the Wet Cleaning Treatment of Textiles Supported with Paper with Reference to a Collection of Opus Anglicanum Ecclesiastical Embroideries Belonging to The National Trust's Hardwick Hall," (MA Dissertation, Textile Conservation Centre, Univeristy of Southampton, 2008).

<sup>77</sup> Florence Maskell, "The Use and Re-use of Liturgical Textiles: A Communion Table Carpet in Corpus Christi College, Oxford" (MA Dissertation, Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, 2006).

<sup>78</sup> Brigitta Schmedding, "The Conservation of the Bernward Chasuble," in *Conservation and restoration of Textiles: International Conference, Como, 1980*, ed. Francesco Pertegato (Milano: C.I.S.S.T, 1982), 266-270; Anne Robinson & Christine Storey, *The Medieval Chasuble at St. John the Evangelist R.C. Church Poulton-Le-Fylde*, [http://www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk/data/\\_uploaded/image/Chasuble%20Booklet.pdf](http://www.stjohnspoulton.org.uk/data/_uploaded/image/Chasuble%20Booklet.pdf) (accessed April 11, 2014); Tuula Pardoe, "Dossal. Lanercost Priory," Unpublished Treatment Report, The Scottish Conservation Studio LLP, March 2013.

England, where much of the collection was destroyed, therefore any item dating before the time of the dissolution of the monasteries is an important and significant artefact, and its preservation is a priority.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, the majority of published references relate to objects stored in museums or selected for display in various settings, seldom considering the objects while still in use. The latter only being discussed in the context of applying preventive conservation measures,<sup>80</sup> especially in Greece, where the Directorate of Conservation of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture has been actively engaged in performing first-aid and preventive strategies on the collections from the Eastern Orthodox churches and monasteries.<sup>81</sup>

The papers related to the preservation of ecclesiastical textiles concentrate on practical aspects of treatments, offering explanations on how and why an object was conserved as well as providing results of extensive technical examinations.<sup>82</sup> All these records add to a collective knowledge of conservation and are enormously beneficial for professionals considering the different options for their treatments. A large group of case studies reveals a complicated history of vestments, providing a body of evidence for numerous repairs, alterations and reuse of fabric as well as a fundament for an object's biographical studies.<sup>83</sup> On rare occasions authors have reflected whether special considerations should be assigned to the character of the

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<sup>79</sup> Marion Kite, "The Preservation of Religious Textiles in a Museum Context," in *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006), 155.

<sup>80</sup> Hickson.

<sup>81</sup> Tatiana Koussoulou, "First-Aid and Preventive Conservation of Ecclesiastical Vestments in the Greek Orthodox Monasteries," in *Recovering the Past: The Conservation of Archaeological and Ethnographic Textiles: Preprints of the 5th North American Textile Conservation Conference, 9-11 November 2005 in Mexico City*, ed. Emilia Cortes and Suzanne Thomassen-Krauss (Quebec: NATCC, 2005), 205-211.

<sup>82</sup> Marion Kite, "The Conservation of the Jesse Cope," *Textile History* 20, no.2 (1989): 235-243; Tatiana Koussoulou, "Epitrachelion, Epigonation, Epimanikia: Conservation and Display of the Most Treasured Accessories of the Christian Orthodox Vestments", *e-conservation magazine*, 25 (2013): 138-152. <http://www.e-conservationline.com/content/view/1106> (accessed April 12, 2014).

<sup>83</sup> Tatiana Koussoulou, "Conserving the Legend: Conservation and Research of A Sixteenth-Century Sakkos from Mount Athos," *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, 36, no.1 (2013): 18-34.

undertaken treatments and enquiring of their suitability.<sup>84</sup> The conclusions, however, are consistently based on scant evidence and do not incorporate the wider interpretation of the user's perspective, which is supposed to be essential in resolving the issue of an object's nature. In most cases the conservators rely on their own understanding of Church guidance, which may sometimes lead to misinterpretation of the Christian traditions. This is even a case in very comprehensive records trying to incorporate very broad anthropological perspective.<sup>85</sup> Instead, the conservators have offered their own definition and interpretation of the artefact, placing them on a par with any other historical item. This has been done most probably in order to remain objective and provide conservation concurrent with the predominant principles and practice while remaining remote from distracting emotions. It is especially helpful when dealing with an object of critical value to the wider community, such as a relic or an item associated with the cult of a saint.<sup>86</sup>

Emotional detachment allows not only the provision of an objective treatment, as much as possible, for the artefact at the time, but also enables the evaluation and critical analysis of any previously undertaken conservation or restorative work. Revisiting and assessing past treatments, even though these can be relatively rare to find, is beneficial for practitioners of conservation in order to avoid identical mistakes or verify successful solutions. Ann French evaluated her own work on the Othery Cope and produced a very well-known and valuable record in the field of textile conservation, in which she discussed the possibility different approaches she would embark on if the object was to be conserved again.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Kite, "The Preservation of Religious Textiles in a Museum Context," 162-163; Tonkin, 18-35.

<sup>85</sup> Mary M. Brooks, 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Barbara Kalfas, "Konserwacja Infuły Zwanej Św. Stanisława. Podsumowanie Wyników Prac," in *Źródła Kultury Duchowej Krakowa*, ed. Jacek Urban (Kraków: Archiwum i Biblioteka Krakowskiej Kapituły Katedralnej, 2008), 95.

<sup>87</sup> Ann French, "A Re-evaluation of the Conservation of the Othery Cope," in *Mind the Gap! Structural and Aesthetic Options for the Treatment of Loss in Textiles. Postprints Icon Textile Group Annual Forum*, ed. Alison Fairhurst (London: Icon Textile Group, 2010), 32-40.



Nevertheless, this very constructive example of treatment assessment is more associated with the perplexity of conservation and its practice, rather than the difficulties and interrelations within the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles as such.

Only a few sources to date jointly focus on ethical dilemmas, politics and resources of this particular kind of conservation.<sup>88</sup> The most recent publication incorporates papers from an international conference in The Hague in 2005 solely focused on the preservation of religious textiles in use.<sup>89</sup> The general character of diverse topics was imprinted with the desirability of keeping religious textiles in their functional context rather than removing them to storage or a museum. It is particularly remarkable to realise the conservators are largely unanimous in this opinion despite different backgrounds and traditions. The Polish voice, however missing in this case, seems to express identical beliefs. The evidence for this can be found in the presence of a very distinctive and potent workshop in Cracow allocated exclusively to the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles.<sup>90</sup> The studio is solely dedicated to the preservation of the church collection stored in the Wawel Royal Cathedral with the objective of work both for use and for the ecclesiastical museum located in close proximity. Still, the projects that had received the most promotion and attention are the conservation programmes aiming to restore textile objects for display.<sup>91</sup> The most recognised work was undertaken by the students of textile conservation under the supervision of Helena Hryszko in the Jasna Góra Monastery, a most famous Polish shrine.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Ecclesiastical Textiles*, Post-prints of the Joint Forum for Conservation Issues, 20 November 2002 (London: Council for the Care of Churches, 2002).

<sup>89</sup> *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Amsterdam: Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006).

<sup>90</sup> "Textile Conservation Workshop," The Wawel Royal Cathedral of St Stanislaus BM and St Wenceslaus M, [http://www.katedra-wawelska.pl/english/about\\_workshop,157.html](http://www.katedra-wawelska.pl/english/about_workshop,157.html) (accessed July 27, 2014).

<sup>91</sup> Magdalena Uchto, "Ornaty Da się uratować," *Dziennik Polski*, March 3, 2014, <http://www.dziennikpolski24.pl/artykul/3351201,ornaty-da-sie-uratowac,id,t.html?cookie=1> (accessed March 17, 2014).

<sup>92</sup> Helena Hryszko, "Współpraca Katedry Konserwacji i Restauracji Tkanin Zabytkowych i Klasztoru OO. Paulinów na Jasnej Górze," in *Tekstylija w Zbiorach*

The shortage in published accounts of conservation treatments of ecclesiastical textiles in use does not indicate a complete absence of this demand. Private conservators and practices specialising in providing services for churches have been asked to aid in the use of historical vestments on various occasions. The records of these experiences exist usually in the form of conservation documentation, however it is not always easily accessible by the public. The treatment with the intent to facilitate the object's use is challenging and often impossible without maximum intervention and alteration of the item's nature.

### 4.3. Objects in Use

Conservation, at its core, is concerned with the safeguarding of objects or structures now and into the future.<sup>93</sup> Allowing unlimited use of these pieces without any regards for this would be a contradiction of the overall aim. However, it should be noted, the meaning of object in use in conservation varies. In most instances conservation enables an object to be continuously accessible and usable as opposed to allowing its deterioration, however most often by doing so simultaneously limits the object's utilization. The concept of use and accessibility in this instance is usually associated with the acceptance that the object will be exposed to external factors such as light, weather and handling, even though it is recognised these might be potentially damaging.<sup>94</sup> Each conservator specialist will contribute their particular understanding to the idea of an object in use accordingly with his or her expertise. Conservation of books or paintings assist their use as originally intended, since the books may be continuously read and a painting can be contemplated, studied and admired, although this might be done in the controlled environment of an archive or museum.<sup>95</sup> Analogically, despite

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*Sakralnych. Inwentaryzacja - Konserwacja - Przechowywanie*, ed. Helena Hryszko, Anna Kwaśnik-Gliwińska, Monika Stachurska (Warszawa: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, 2013), 32-46.

<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth Pye, *Caring for the Past* (London: James & James, 2001), 25.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>95</sup> Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou and Stephen Rickerby, "The Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Wall Paintings of Cyprus: Conservation Practice in a Context of Continuing Religious Use", *Studies in Conservation* 55, s.2 (2010): 231-236.

the successful conservation a ceramic pot, it will not serve as a cooking utensil or an ivory comb as a hair decoration, but can be seen, examined and understood by the viewer. Therefore although the object does not serve its original purpose it remains in continuous use.

Textiles artefacts belong to rather complex and unique group of objects, since each has been created with a different purpose that may be more or less functional. Objects of wear are the ultimate practical items and the wish to provide their long-term preservation in conjunction with their utility is most likely destined to fail. The general recommendation is to avoid use of a historical object consistently with its original role to prevent its deterioration.<sup>96</sup> This is not always unchallenging to execute due to the tangled context of an object's existence, its unique and irreplaceable character or a particular current trend in fashion imbuing vintage items with some exceptional value.

The function of the object as well as its surroundings are sometimes imperative in order to understand an object and 'the maximum historic and artistic value of an object is only realised when the context of that object in its natural setting is fully exploited.'<sup>97</sup> This is fulfilled, for example, in the model of historic houses, in which all the elements of the collection, including the setting, are indivisible from the whole. Furthermore, in recent years the open room settings, with a 'touch and feel' policy, have been introduced to allow museum visitors the chance to connect with collections without any limitations.<sup>98</sup> Contrary to most traditional museums the conservation treatments in this environment are carried out consciously considering the effect of an object and any possible interactions on its

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<sup>96</sup> 'Care and Conservation of Costume and Textiles', Icon Caring for, <http://www.conservationregister.com/Icon-christening.asp> (accessed July 19, 2014).

<sup>97</sup> Robert Child, "Putting Things in Context: The Ethics of Working Collections," in *Restoration - Is It Acceptable?* ed. Andrew Oddy (London: British Museum Department of Conservation, 1994), 141.

<sup>98</sup> Alice Young (Textile Conservation Student, University of Glasgow), personal communication regarding upcoming MPhil Dissertation titled "Investigating the Conservation and Access of Furnishing Textiles Within Historic Interiors," 2014.

neighbours and surroundings.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, the historic house remains a type of museum, with professionals devising programmes of care and implementing them.

Ecclesiastical textiles seem to be the only such distinctive group of textile objects continuously used within their intention, apart from items designed for static application in decoration or furnishing of a building, such as tapestries or carpets. The approach to use in a museum context, however, has been challenged by living traditions within a culture, reviving the object and its agency. There are a growing number of examples where indigenous cultural concerns are modifying museum practice, bending the established framework and affecting regulations, which were once considered to be absolute and inflexible.<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, the general lack of similar frames of reference makes the collections of continuously used ecclesiastical textiles a unique and special group of objects. The textile conservator, faced with an issue of preserving the object in use, is asked to prioritise the item's function and substantiate the structure, which tends to be the aim of restoration.<sup>101</sup> Despite the use of the term 'restoration' interchangeably with 'conservation' in mainstream media, these are two different activities with more or less defined boundaries. Clear definition and understanding of these two concepts is an essential foundation for any further discussion.

#### **4.4. Conservation versus Restoration**

Historically, conservation is a practice which emerged out of the traditions and techniques of restoration, and together they depend on a common foundation of skills and knowledge, therefore some conservators were not

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<sup>99</sup> Christopher Rowell, "The Historic House Context - The National Trust Experience", in *The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping: Care and Conservation of Collections in Historic Houses* (London: National Trust, 2011), 9.

<sup>100</sup> Clavir, 93-94.

<sup>101</sup> Cesare Brandi, *Theory of Restoration* (Firenze: Nardini Editore, 2005), 45.

always inclined to make as clear distinction between these two activities.<sup>102</sup> In a general sense to ‘restore’ something means to return it to a former state.<sup>103</sup> This former state has often been understood as the ‘perfect’ or ‘unimpaired’ condition, which is improbable to achieve since very few actions manage to accomplish this result.<sup>104</sup> Not to mention the ‘perfect’ state may be rather a subjective perception and the expectation may vary depending on the interpretation of the object. All the more, the idea of restoring an object to its ‘original’ state is a relatively problematic one since the ‘true nature’ of the artefact is not always easy to identify.<sup>105</sup>

All authors seem to agree that conservation minimizes the existing or future effects of change, while the focus of restoration is on revealing and clarifying or making more understandable the attributes, which contribute to the significance of the object.<sup>106</sup> This is compatible with definitions included in professional guidelines issued by European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers’ Organisations (E.C.C.O), which are also used by The Institute of Conservation. The explanations present conservation as an activity consisting of any direct action carried out on cultural heritage with the aim of stabilising its condition and retarding further deterioration. Restoration is also listed as any direct action, but is carried out on damaged and deteriorated cultural heritage with an intent to facilitate its perception, appreciation and understanding, and this is done respecting as far as possible its aesthetic, historic and physical properties.<sup>107</sup> The

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<sup>102</sup> Andrew Oddy, “Introduction,” in *The Art of the Conservator*, ed. Andrew Oddy (London: British Museum, 1992), 7; Philip Ward, *The Nature of Conservation: A Race Against Time* (Marina del Rey: Getty Conservation Institute, 1986), 67.

<sup>103</sup> Andrew Oddy, ‘Restoration - Is It Acceptable?’ in *Restoration - Is It Acceptable?* ed. Andrew Oddy (London: British Museum Department of Conservation, 1994), 3.

<sup>104</sup> Salvador Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 17.

<sup>105</sup> Dinah Eastop, “Decision Making in Conservation: Determining the Role of Artefacts,” in *International Perspectives on Textile Conservation: Papers from the ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group Meetings, Amsterdam, 13-14 October 1994 and Budapest, 11-15 September 1995*, ed. Dinah Eastop and Ágnes Tímár -Balázs (London: Archetype, 1998), 43.

<sup>106</sup> Pye, 29.

<sup>107</sup> “Icon Professional Guidelines,” Institute of Conservation: [http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=121](http://www.icon.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&id=121) (accessed June

conservators' guidelines in different countries vary and there are not always clear distinctions between these two notions.<sup>108</sup> The code of ethics acknowledged by Polish conservators is a modified extract from the same E.C.C.O's document, but does not include a direct definition of what the profession is. Instead there is a consequent use of the term 'conservator-restorer' (*konserwator-restaurator*) described as 'a specialist who has the training, skills, knowledge of the subject and of legal considerations related to cultural heritage to act with the aim of preserving its value.'<sup>109</sup> This term has been adopted by various countries to avoid confusion originated in the semiotics of different languages.

Some authors attempt to persuade towards the idea that restoration is a stage of the broader concept conservation, following cleaning and stabilisation.<sup>110</sup> Conservation is regarded as a field, in which preservation and restoration act together in spite of constituting two distinct concepts. '(...)The preservation attempts to change the non-perceivable features of an object, while restoration attempts to change the noticeable features of that same object.'<sup>111</sup> The accuracy of this definition could be easily demonstrated on numerous examples from textile conservation, in which the concept of restoration usually means more intervention to a piece, often resulting in losing scientific, historic and technical information.<sup>112</sup> Mary M. Brooks, in collaboration with several other textiles professionals, wrote the crucial reference related to the concept of restoration and conservation in order to discuss and evaluate possible challenges and

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14, 2014); "E.C.C.O Professional Guidelines," European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations.

<http://www.ecco-eu.org/about-e.c.c.o./professional-guidelines.html>. (accessed June 14, 2014).

<sup>108</sup> Dinah Eastop, "Introduction," in *Compromising Situations: Principles In Everyday Practice*, Postprints UKIC Textile Section, London. (London, 1993), 1-5.

<sup>109</sup> "Kodeks Etyki Konserwatora-Restauratora Dziel Sztuki," Ogólnopolska Rada Konserwatorów Dziel Sztuki, trans. M. Grabowska <http://www.orkds-zpap.pl/?kodeks-etyki-konserwatora-dziel-sztuki>,53 (accessed June 14, 2014).

<sup>110</sup> Oddy, "Introduction," 3.

<sup>111</sup> Muñoz Viñas, 21.

<sup>112</sup> Sharon E. Manitta, "The Care of Rugs and Carpets: The Case for Conservation," in *Restoration - Is It Acceptable?* ed. Andrew Oddy (London: British Museum Department of Conservation, 1994), 95.

advantages of both.<sup>113</sup> In this paper it is argued that the conservation and restoration of textiles are very different concepts and that they are placed on opposite ends of a continuum. They are expressed through different approaches, but combined together can work for the ultimate benefit of the object.<sup>114</sup>

The authors methodically show benefits and problems experienced with conservation and restoration by scrutinizing existing theory and applied practice. It is pointed out that conservators are practitioners after a formalised training structure showing commitment to particular standards and guidelines. They ‘(...)aim to retain the integrity of the textile as far as possible with the minimal removal of materials and minimal additions.’<sup>115</sup> Their responsibility extends beyond the treatment to the provision of suitable care by identifying and recommending a future environment for the object. Despite their methodology and skills, conservator’s work proves to be challenging when dealing with the request to provide visual completeness and physical strength to an object. Therefore, for any functional textiles, such as carpets or three-dimensional pieces, restoration might provide successful treatment due to an established and different set of skills. Summarising: restoration offers another tool to a conservator if undertaken carefully with compliance to practice and principles of conservation.<sup>116</sup> Above all, it should not be overlooked that both conservation and restoration bear subjectivity and future textile scholars should not be compromised in their appreciation or understanding of a piece as a result of choices made by practitioners contemporary or antecedent to this study.

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<sup>113</sup> Mary M. Brooks *et al.*, “Restoration and Conservation - Issues for Conservators: A Textile Conservation Perspective,” in *Restoration - Is It Acceptable?* ed. Andrew Oddy (London: British Museum Department of Conservation, 1994), 103-122.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>116</sup> Clavir, 6.

#### 4.5. Summary

Ecclesiastical textiles constitute a unique group of cultural heritage due to their character and a frequently associated desire to maintain them in a functional context. It is rather difficult to specify a comparable collection of historic textiles, which is equally used in the most unambiguous sense. The Christian Church has a long tradition of recycling and repairing liturgical textiles while providing them with care and storage, therefore seeking the conservator's expertise seems to prolong this practice.<sup>117</sup> It is a challenging choice for conservation since use accelerates deterioration of the object, but hopefully the conservator can respond to this type of request and direct the clients' pursuit without retreating from their own basic precepts of integrity and preservation.<sup>118</sup>

Textile conservators are able to provide treatment for historical vestments, prolonging their life, but despite numerous literature sources describing conservation methodology when dealing with these objects, there is lack of evidence supplying answers on what to do to facilitate their use in their original setting. The most cogent reflection implies application of restoration techniques combined with preservation methodology in order to provide structural support, improve aesthetic properties and ensure the implementation of preventive measures to reduce the rate of future deterioration. The examination and evaluation of past treatments and conservation traditions seems to be the only route available to confirm this hypothesis, understand the decision-making process and the rationale behind any selected solution.

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<sup>117</sup> Helena Hryszko, 'Problematyka Przekształceń Paramentów Liturgicznych,' in *Tekstyliia w Zbiorach Sakralnych. Inwentaryzacja - Konserwacja - Przechowywanie*, ed. Helena Hryszko, Anna Kwaśnik-Gliwińska, Monika Stachurska (Warszawa: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, 2013), 216 -217.

<sup>118</sup> Child, 141.



## 5. CHAPTER THREE

### *Evaluating the Interventive Aspects of Conservation Treatments on Ecclesiastical Textiles*

#### 5.1. Introduction

One of the fundamental principles in conservation recognises that every object is unique and each should be judged on its own merit due to its transcendental value.<sup>119</sup> This concept implies existing set of agencies and meanings outside of the object, tightly associated with it and defining it. The object becomes something vital and alive, and it is not frozen in the form of matter. Additionally, it can adapt to the perspective of the viewer accordingly with their expectations. The Great Seal of England for a prince will therefore just be a simple nutcracker for the pauper.<sup>120</sup> This recognition guarantees that there are never two objects the same, entrusted to the care of the textile conservator. Each differs in terms of character, value, but also in the degree of damage it has suffered and the extent of conservation it requires. It should be remembered that objects, particularly if they constitute a related class of items, tend to be exposed to the same agents of deterioration affecting condition and preservation in a similar manner. Ecclesiastical textiles, vestments in particular that are still in use, are subjected to various types of deterioration agents determined by the objects' function and the role they playing within the church and during its ceremonies. Due to comparable utilization and conditions it is possible to distinguish any damage occurring on ecclesiastical garments as well as anticipate the required treatment.

This chapter aims to present the deterioration factors harming the collection of ecclesiastical textiles and influencing conservation activities. The range of interventive procedures engaged in the preservation of liturgical vestments is described along the decision-making process

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<sup>119</sup> Titika Malkogeorgou, "Everything Judged on Its Own Merit? Object conservation and the Secular Museums," *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies* 10, no.2 (2012): 6.

<sup>120</sup> Mark Twain, *The Prince and the Pauper* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

characteristics and ethical considerations based on examples collected from relevant literature and through interviews conducted with practising professionals. The investigation has been conducted in order to identify the factors determining treatment as well as the existing relationship between the techniques employed and the particular country, in which the conservation is undertaken.

## 5.2. Deterioration Factors

The nature of deteriorating factors affecting ecclesiastical textiles can be divided into two categories: mechanical and chemical, which can act alone or in combination, resulting in several kinds of damage.<sup>121</sup> Deterioration agents vary since they can occur in use, storage and display in some instances. They also come from within the object due to its construction and selection of materials used in its production. Historically, vestments were made from various layers with the implementation of exclusively natural materials that were regarded as the product of the earth.<sup>122</sup> Silk, linen, cotton and wool are widely identified either alone or in combination with each other across all collections. Every piece of clothing was opulently decorated with dense embroidery, metallic thread, mostly gold and silver, pearls, jewellery or painted embellishments.<sup>123</sup> Sometimes the decorative applications were even more innovative and were for instance carved from wood into intricate shapes.<sup>124</sup> Therefore the historical vestments, in an overwhelming majority, are constructed from mixed media components resulting in a combination of heavy and lightweight materials with every element susceptible to different types of damage and affected by identical and dissimilar factors. The incompatibility of the materials, the excessive use and weight of decorative elements, and the different rate and type of

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<sup>121</sup> Eleni Alexandra, Tatiana Kousooulou & Stavroula Rapti, "The Epitaphs in the Greek Orthodox Church. Preservation Proposals for Epitaphs Still in Use," in *The Preservation of Religious Textiles* (Stichting Textielcommissie Nederland, 2006), 110.

<sup>122</sup> Tomasz Grabowski OP. Appendix 2.

<sup>123</sup> Hryszko, "Współpraca Katedry Konserwacji i Restauracji Tkanin Zabytkowych i Klasztoru OO. Paulinów na Jasnej Górze," 33.

<sup>124</sup> As seen on the chasuble in the collection of the Dominican Monastery, Cracow.

deterioration of the components can lead to internal stresses inherent in the object; tension, abrasion and weakening of the structure among many others. The multiple layers of different materials results in extremely heavy objects of clothing,<sup>125</sup> which are often stored on wooden hangers without adequate support causing weakening of the construction due to the force of their own weight. All these physical forces can attribute to and result in the distortion of textiles and an increase in the rate and degree of deterioration.

The major damage on objects, which are continuously used, proceeds from mechanical activities while wearing and in storing through unsuitable handling of fragile textiles, unintentionally provoking further deterioration through amplifying physical stresses. Inattentive wearing of garments can also lead to various disfigurements while sitting, kneeling or through an inappropriate manner of putting them on and taking them off. Incautious actions can lead to the removal of decorative attachments, cause snags and pulls in the weave as well as creasing and folds. The main area of mechanical damage, however, is usually reported at the front at waistline due to abrasion through recurring gestures employed in the liturgy.<sup>126</sup> On a regular basis holes have been identified in the chest area caused by priests supporting the heavy monstrance on their body while leading the various processions.<sup>127</sup>

The textiles are affected directly as well as on chemical level by liturgical props: candles and smoke from their burning, flowers decorating the church, wine or perfume and incense used for various sacraments. The priests use water, recognised as holy, to symbolise sanctification by sprinkling worshippers or everyday items. The water staining can cause

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<sup>125</sup> The author has had an opportunity to undertake a survey of a vestment weighed c. 20kg weight at the Dominican Monastery in Cracow, Poland.

<sup>126</sup> Wendy Toulson (Freelance Textile Conservator, Leominster), interview by author, June 25, 2014. Appendix 3.

<sup>127</sup> Barbara Kalfas (Textile Conservator at Textile Conservation Workshop of The Wawel Royal Cathedral of St Stanislaus BM and St Wenceslaus M., Cracow), personal communication, June 30, 2014.

shifting of soiling leading to the appearance of tide lines and ringing but also to dye bleeding, dissolving of binding materials on painted areas and the introduction of localised moisture into the objects causing creasing and wrinkling. Additional staining and discolouration can occur due to contact with the body of the wearer caused by sweat or greasy hands. This is especially relevant to the area around the neckline.<sup>128</sup> Many members of the clergy also customarily kiss garments before or after wearing to pay their respect.

Frequently, churches store their collections in unsuitable storage units without allowing the necessary amount of space for each item. In some cases the vestments are packed in cardboard boxes and stored in attics or damp closets, which do not provide a constant climate.<sup>129</sup> Inappropriate storage may result in an accumulation of dust and particulate soiling, which leads to the disfiguration of the objects. Additionally, tightly packed garments can suffer from creasing and folds, which cause tension and breakage of fibres.<sup>130</sup> All the textiles stored in the church are affected by existing environmental conditions including rapid changes in levels of relative humidity, temperature, exposure to light, pests and indoor pollutants as well as volatile fumes released, in particular, by wooden storage units. The environmental conditions affect each of the components of the vestments in a different manner and rate.

All these factors combined lead to the weakening the of textile and to deterioration. Conservation applies various techniques in order to treat any damage that has occurred. Practical treatments can be categorised into three main groups: cleaning, stabilisation and restoration. All of these

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<sup>128</sup> Teresa Heady (Conservator, St. Paul's Cathedral), interview by author, June 25, 2014. Appendix 4.

<sup>129</sup> Lugtigheid, "All That Glisters In Not Gold.' The Appreciation of Religious Textiles in the Netherlands and the Formulation of Selection Criteria for Retention or Disposal," 2.

<sup>130</sup> Dinah Eastop and Ágnes Tímár -Balázsy, *Chemical Principles of Textile Conservation* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998), 14.

activities aim to reduce and slow deterioration but also to provide continued functionality to the object and compensate for aesthetic loss.

### 5.3. Cleaning

Cleaning is one of the most often applied treatments to textiles in conservation, as well as controversial, and it presents both technical and ethical problems.<sup>131</sup> Conservation employs two main processes to facilitate cleaning: mechanical methods involving vacuum suction of adjustable force and chemical-physical methods undertaken in an aqueous environment consisting localised cleaning or washing by immersion in water or solvent.<sup>132</sup> Mechanical cleaning is efficient for removing loose dirt and surface dust, and can be controlled by modifying the method accordingly and employing range of different tools, e.g. soft brushes. It can be stopped at any time to evaluate the results and alter the variables if necessary. The process conducted in an aqueous environment aims to assist the removal of soluble components of dirt and the separation of soil from fibres. Washing textiles has provided satisfactory results on numerous occasions, however is it a very interventive treatment with its advantages and disadvantages.<sup>133</sup> Cleaning can sometimes alter the appearance of the fabric and, in this sense, is considered an irreversible treatment.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, it can be very effective in revealing textile objects disfigured by soiling and creasing and enhancing the long-term preservation by removal of soiling that results in mechanical and chemical damage or can be hazardous to health.<sup>135</sup> Some soiling preserved on historical textiles, however, can be evidential,

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<sup>131</sup> W. D. Cooke, "A Pilot Study in the Use of Ultrasonic Cleaning in Textile Conservation," *The Conservator* 13, no.1 (1989): 41.

<sup>132</sup> Mauro Matteini, Isetta Tosini, "Evaluation of Possible Methods of Cleaning the Opus Anglicanum Cope of Pope Pius II," *ICOM-CC, 12th Triennial Meeting, Lyon, 29 August - 3 September 1999: Preprints* (London: James&James, 1996), 625.

<sup>133</sup> Pippa Cruickshank, Anna Harrison & John Fields, "From Excavation to Display: The Conservation of Archaeological Textiles From an AD First-third Century Cemetery Site in Jordan," *The Conservator* 26, no.1 (2002): 48.

<sup>134</sup> Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, *Textile Conservation and Research* (Bern: Schriften Der Abegg-Stiftung, 1988), 23.

<sup>135</sup> Dinah Eastop & Mary M. Brooks, "To Clean or Not To Clean: The Value of Soils and Creases," *ICOM-CC, 11th Triennial Meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, 1-6 September 1996: Preprints*, ed. Janet Bridgland (London: James&James, 1996), 687.

informing the user about the object and adding to historical, technological or cultural knowledge. In these circumstances cleaning is not appropriate, posing a risk to the loss of the evidential value of the object.<sup>136</sup> The fragile condition of an object also acts as an argument against washing, which after all is a rather vigorous treatment.

Ecclesiastical textiles are exposed to a diverse range of deteriorating factors, often resulting in a layer of particulate and ingrained soiling, in particular if they are in continuous use for an exceedingly long period of time. Through interviews conducted for this research it was observed that all textile conservators agreed: soiling was universally the primary and usually most harmful and disfiguring to ecclesiastical objects. Therefore the first objective of most treatments following detailed documentation has been to evaluate the object's condition and design a cleaning treatment. It has been noted that some clients had not realise the layer of soiling on vestments until the soiling was removed. This realisation has assisted conservators in persuading the client to execute new measures in collection care.<sup>137</sup> Between identified case studies from Poland and the United Kingdom it was possible to observe almost all cleaning tools and methods have been applied when dealing with liturgical vestments. Due to their complex and multiple layers they prove to be challenging objects to identify exactly what the best technique for the removal of soiling will be.

Surface cleaning has been undertaken in all records examined during this research and a few professionals have discontinued other cleaning attempts after this stage.<sup>138</sup> It is especially noted among conservators in the United Kingdom, who tend to claim this process to be the most effective and providing very satisfactory results.<sup>139</sup> Polish conservators maintain mechanical cleaning to be inadequate therefore in almost every instance

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 687.

<sup>137</sup> Barbara Kalfas, personal communication, June 30, 2014.

<sup>138</sup> French, 34.

<sup>139</sup> Wendy Toulson, Appendix 3; Teresa Heady, Appendix 4.

additional wet cleaning is preferred.<sup>140</sup> The search for correlating examples of contemporary conservation treatments' including wet cleaning in the United Kingdom was unsuccessful.

The issue of washing ecclesiastical textiles is further complicated due to the construction of the object. In Poland, a common solution is to separate the layers of the vestments. The outer decorative fabric is unpicked from the lining and frequently additionally divided into the original panels to provide a more efficient cleaning treatment.<sup>141</sup> The concept of washing all the layers together is completely excluded due to the difficulty of the task and the fear of causing more damage. The inner lining is usually constituted of a sturdy black linen of plain weave, which had been soaked in sugar or flour to make it additionally robust.<sup>142</sup> This provides the perfect surroundings for the development of microorganisms and fungi, which in humid conditions can continue to multiply and spread through all the layers of the object. To prevent ringing as well as guarantee the unconditional removal of the soiling and microorganisms, dismantling vestments seems to be a suitable answer. This action is believed to be beneficial in avoiding damage caused by differential shrinkage between layers and of ensuring that each layer remains crease-free during the drying process.<sup>143</sup>

All of these are very strong arguments and appear to justify such highly interventive treatment, which could be perceived as contradictory to the general principles of conservation. The issue of the integrity of the object seems to be considerably disturbed in this situation, but it has to be remembered that the context and role of an object can influence the choice as well as the implementation of an appropriate treatment while respecting

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<sup>140</sup> Barbara Kalfas, personal communication, June 30, 2014.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Jerzy Holc (Managing Director, Textile Restoration Workshop, Wawel Royal Castle), personal communication, July 1, 2014.

ethical criteria.<sup>144</sup> The treatment, however interventive, balances any physical benefits against potential risks, losses and gains.

Wet cleaning of church textiles in the United Kingdom has been undertaken on flat textiles<sup>145</sup> and it is almost impossible to find modern case studies of washing more complex objects such as vestments. There have been studies conducted in order to develop a suitable method for the wet cleaning of elements of the *Opus Anglicanum* embroidery, but this does not provide applicable data.<sup>146</sup> In the one identified case study involving wet cleaning the conservator considered if the washing she provided for a pall during her training was appropriate.<sup>147</sup> She solemnly doubted she would do it again if put in similar situation due to the effects of water on the velvet fabric which became very stiff. Also, she believed the washing action removed any remnant of the original colour, which had not been anticipated. The treatment was done including the necessary separation of layers to facilitate the flattening of the object to provide the most satisfactory outcome. This appears to have been done in line with comparable case studies from the same time. The descriptions of the vestment being separated into components for wet cleaning were recorded mainly in the 1980s and early 1990s. The case studies from this period share similar characteristic with the priority placed on the beauty and cleanliness of the object after treatment. Dismantling an object to facilitate treatment was a common practice in textile conservation training, which demonstrated a desire to restore vestments to their former glory.<sup>148</sup> This can be highlighted

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<sup>144</sup> Mary M. Brooks, "International Conservation Codes of Ethics and Practice and Their Implications for Teaching and Learning Ethics in Textile Conservation Education," in *International Perspectives on Textile Conservation: Papers From the ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group Meetings, Amsterdam, 13-14 October 1994 and Budapest, 11-15 September 1995*, ed. Dinah Eastop and Ágnes Tímár -Balázs (London: Archetype, 1998), 76.

<sup>145</sup> Tuula Pardoe (Textile Conservator at The Scottish Conservation Studio LLP, South Queensferry), interview by author, July 10, 2014. Appendix 5.

<sup>146</sup> Reardon.

<sup>147</sup> Wendy Toulson, Appendix 3.

<sup>148</sup> Flury-Lamberg, 323-325.



in the conservation of the Whalley Abbey vestments, in which each piece was individually cleaned with the appropriate method for it.<sup>149</sup>

In response to the lack of contemporary conservation treatments' examples in the United Kingdom comparable to Poland the question arises: what could be the possible reason for this situation? It is possible the technique of vestments construction varies between the countries, especially if they were made in different eras by following the specifications of local artists and craftsman. For that reason the problems of inner lining stiffened with organic substance might be attributed to Poland only, encouraging radical measures as a solution to stop considerable deterioration. It has been also noticed as a general observation that the various countries in Europe differ in the selection and choice of methods in conservation treatment.<sup>150</sup> This could explain the differences in cleaning techniques of ecclesiastical textiles, since wet cleaning is more popular in Poland, while solvent cleaning has been only recorded in the United Kingdom.

Solvent cleaning of church vestments in the United Kingdom has been accounted for mostly within context of the museum, however garments in use also benefit from occasional solvent cleaning.<sup>151</sup> The rationale for using solvents in cleaning has been justified in incompatible materials and the risk of further damage caused by water.<sup>152</sup> In the case of the Jesse Cope the conservator undertaking the treatment ruled out the application of water due to fragile elements, the presence of under drawing, the poor condition of metal threads and a possible risk in shrinking of the lining.<sup>153</sup> These seem to correlate to a few of the reasons supporting the rationale for wet cleaning treatments undertaken in Poland. The case studies from Poland do

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<sup>149</sup> Tonkin, 43.

<sup>150</sup> Susanne Cussell, "Different Methods or Different Choices?" in *International Perspectives on Textile Conservation: Papers From the ICOM-CC Textiles Working Group Meetings, Amsterdam, 13-14 October 1994 and Budapest, 11-15 September 1995*, ed. Dinah Eastop and Ágnes Tímár -Balázsy (London: Archetype, 1998), 108.

<sup>151</sup> Teresa Heady, Appendix 4.

<sup>152</sup> Jean M. Glover, "The Conservation of a Sixteenth-Century Spanish Funeral Cope," *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* 19, no.1 (1985): 32.

<sup>153</sup> Kite, "The Conservation of the Jesse Cope," 240.

not register the use of solvent cleaning, which could be explained by an unfamiliarity or lack of popularity among textile conservators. The search for published examples of the application of solvent cleaning in a wider context of textile conservation was futile, which does not necessarily verify its rareness.

The analysed studies of the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles almost always involved the cleaning of the object. In an instance where the object is intended for continuous use there are different preferences in employed methods and solutions depending on the country. This distinction should be recognised, but it should also be understood that these may have been caused by dissimilar conditions and needs of the object. In every example of conservation treatment the rationale is explained and justifies employed solutions. This fits into the general principle of textile conservation, in which there are no standardised answers, but each case study is unique

#### **5.4. Stabilisation**

Weak areas in textiles require support to prevent further deterioration caused by physical forces and stress when handling the object. When providing a conservation treatment for an object in use this must be adequate and sufficient to be able to withstand regular handling, especially within a church setting where priests are not often very careful when removing heavier vestments.<sup>154</sup> Therefore the customary conservation support needs to be re-adjusted to prioritise the structural integrity of the object foremost. This is challenging since, although conservation techniques can improve the structure and compensate for loss, they are not *per se*, repair techniques.<sup>155</sup>

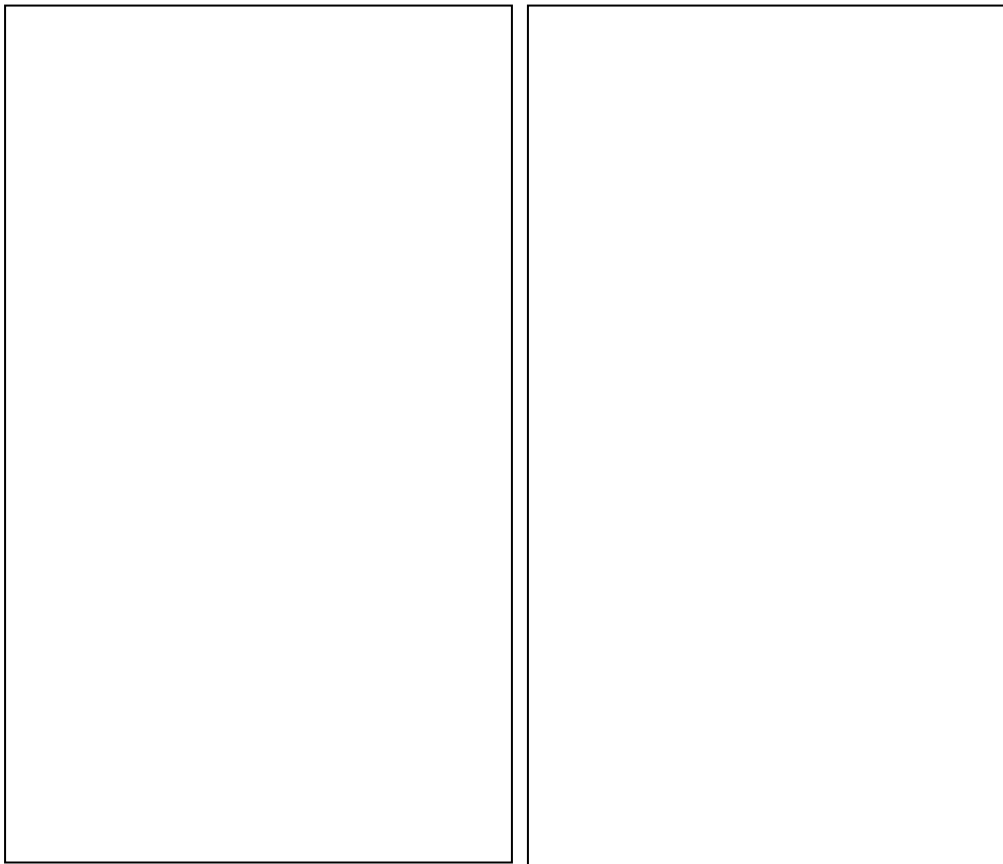
The most common support is applied by inserting pieces of compatible fabric under the object and securing them in place with laid-and-couched

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<sup>154</sup> Eleanor Palmer (Conservation Officer Textiles, Lancashire Conservation Studios), e-mail message to author, August 7, 2014.

<sup>155</sup> Tuula Pardoe, Appendix 5.

stitches. This method is successfully used on a wide range of objects to secure torn, frayed or weak areas.<sup>156</sup> It was applied during the conservation of the Lanercost Priory Dossal by inserting dyed fabric patches of different sizes under a small number of the losses and holes for support and camouflage (Fig. 1).<sup>157</sup> The patches can be easily identified on the back of the Dossal and removed without any damage if necessary. The possibility of taking the stitching away ensures that this technique is in agreement with the criteria of reversibility of treatment, which many conservators still regard as conservations prime directive.<sup>158</sup>



**Figure 1. Section of Dossal, after treatment, face and reverse, showing the localised stitched support. Photograph by Tuula Pardoe. 2013. ©Scottish Conservation Studio LLP.**

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<sup>156</sup> “Stitches Used in Textile Conservation,” Canadian Conservation Institute, CCI Notes 13/10 [https://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/resources-ressources/ccinotesicc/13-10\\_e.pdf](https://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/resources-ressources/ccinotesicc/13-10_e.pdf) (accessed August 13, 2014).

<sup>157</sup> Pardoe, “Dossal Lanercost Priory,” 8.

<sup>158</sup> Jerzy Holc, Elżbieta Nowak & Anna Starzak (Textile Conservators, Textiles Restoration Workshop, Wawel Royal Castle), personal communication, July 1, 2014.

This method of providing support to objects is mainly satisfactory in the context of the museum or when the object has been appointed for a display. The conservation of objects in museums can always be more passive since the storage of the object is controlled and supervised by a suitable professional. Nevertheless, laid-and-couched stitching provides suitable results for support, enables the movement of the object and prevents further deterioration. For all these reasons it is frequently used by conservators around the world. The choice of compatible support is always one of the most important elements of conserving textiles by stitching, because it enables the textile artefact to retain its move and drape.<sup>159</sup>

The modification of the localised stitched support includes using patches of fabric coated with thermoplastic adhesives, seemingly to add additional support where conservation stitching might be considered insufficient, impossible or undesirable due to the condition of the object. The example of adhesive use seems more common for conservation treatments in the United Kingdom than Poland that displays non-adhesive approach in general. Having said that it has been impossible to identify the applicable case study in the United Kingdom apart from the conservation of the Whalley Abbey vestments in 1990s, which was preserved as a museum object. As Tonkin suggested “the use of adhesives may have reassured the conservator that the textile would remain stable if the object was expected to go on long-term display.”<sup>160</sup>

The use of adhesives in conservation of ecclesiastical vestments has not been identified on examples for continuous use. It could be possibly explained by the generally existing concerns of adhesives working limitations, which include aspects of susceptibility to environmental conditions, attraction of dust and compatibility of modern materials with degraded fabrics.<sup>161</sup> The technique has been especially beneficial in

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<sup>159</sup> Karen Finch and Greta Putman, *The Care and Preservation of Textiles* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1985), 101.

<sup>160</sup> Tonkin, 50-51.

<sup>161</sup> Lynda Hillyer, Zenzie Tinker & Poppy Singer, "Evaluating the Use of Adhesives

conservation of banners,<sup>162</sup> which are also the only identified kind of church textiles supported with this method. The use of adhesives is preferred mostly to flat surface due to easy application. It proves advantageous on painted surfaces and on fabrics, which are too brittle to withstand the stitching. Church banners removed annually from storage for religious processions fit the description of the possible case studies.

The set of seven banners belonging to St. Mary's Basilica in Poland made of mixed media materials with painted decorations were presented to conservators for their expertise. Due to their poor condition their continuous use was discouraged, but the client desired their utilization and insisted on treatment (Fig. 2). To assure their prolong preservation the conservator decided to undertake highly interventive treatment and used both support methods; adhesives with supplementary stitches (Fig. 3). Additionally, the missing textile elements and decorations were reproduced and attached to provide aesthetic compensation. It can be seen that this treatment consists of a fusion of conservation and restoration, which is often observed in cases of preserving an object for continuous use.



**Figure 2. Banner, before treatment, face A. Photograph by Jerzy Holc. ©St. Mary's Basilica.**

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in Textile Conservation: Part I: An Overview and Surveys of Current Use," *The Conservator* 21, no.1 (1997): 37.

<sup>162</sup> Frances Lennard, "The Conservation of the United Tin Plate Workers' Society Banner of 1821," *The Conservator* 13, no.1 (1989): 3-7.



**Figure 3. Banner, after treatment, face A. Image showing the area supported with adhesives and stitches. Photograph Jerzy Holc. ©St. Mary's Basilica.**

The type of conservation support depends on each case individually depending on the role and function of the object. The aim to use garments, for example, requires the provision of a type of substructure that is as durable as possible. This leads to a different type of operation than usual, frequently demanding solutions that are relatively interventive. The conservators faced with the problem of adapting historical garments for use will often devise changes or additions to the construction. For instance, the experience from St. Paul's Cathedral has showed that the introduction of cotton bands on the bottom of copes or removable collars reduce damage and soiling on the most exposed areas of vestments through wear.<sup>163</sup> Barbara Kalfas, when conserving historical objects with the preserved original lining in place, frequently considers covering it with a modern lining to protect it.<sup>164</sup> The lining is exposed the most to further damage through

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<sup>163</sup> Teresa Heady, Appendix 4.

<sup>164</sup> Barbara Kalfas, personal communication, June 30, 2014.

wear, therefore the introduction of a new ‘sacrificial’ layer allows its protection for future references and analysis. These modifications to garments, however they might be evaluated as intervention and change to the appearance of the object, are reversible and provide preventive measures to limit the deterioration and prolong the existence of an artefact.

In addition to the intervention into the structural integrity of the object, conservators are frequently asked to affect the item’s nature and appearance by providing a compensate for loss in the outer layers that are richly decorated.

### 5.5. Restoration

The profession of textile conservation recognises alternative treatment for areas of loss since they affect the visual, physical and functional aspects of a textile.<sup>165</sup> An area of loss, in the case of ecclesiastical textiles, can dominate a design, destroy the intended visual effect and lead to the withdrawal of the object from its setting. The removal of the object from its functional context can often be equivalent to the cessation of care of the garment.<sup>166</sup> The notion of incompleteness is regarded as a pejorative in the context of vestments which, after all, are designed to add splendour to the liturgy. Conservators, therefore, need to introduce creative compromises to develop treatment responding to the needs of the object and their roles.

Pure restoration is an interventive treatment that involves a complete recreation of the visual image or structure.<sup>167</sup> The traditional practice for ecclesiastical vestments has been to seek the expertise of professional embroiderers or nuns, who often had been involved in making the vestments in the first place. Their work, however, often resulted in changing the

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<sup>165</sup> Brooks *et al*, 109.

<sup>166</sup> Lugtigheid, “‘All That Glisters In Not Gold.’ The Appreciation of Religious Textiles in the Netherlands and the Formulation of Selection Criteria for Retention or Disposal,” 2.

<sup>167</sup> Brooks *et al*, 110.

object and adding new information deceiving the future viewer and understanding. The attempts have been made to discontinue this custom when dealing with historical objects. Obviously, the service of embroiders is suitable and desirable under supervision of a conservator, who is responsible for safeguarding of the collection. St. Paul's Cathedral is continuously using skills and expertise of the employees of the Royal School of Needlework who are well known for the excellent quality of their work.<sup>168</sup> The conservator at St. Paul's Cathedral has developed a great working relationship with the School in order to seek their help in securing the embroidery and devise improvements in production of new vestments to prevent occurring problems in their preservation in the future.<sup>169</sup>

The task requires more intervention when dealing with older and more fragile collection, such as stored in the Wawel Cathedral dating back to 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>170</sup> The treatments undertaken in this setting seem to benefit more from techniques of restoration, but are consciously integrated with conservation principles, which has been referred to as 'ethical restoration.'<sup>171</sup> This approach within the collection is comparably new since the objects with evident traces of restoration work can be also identified.

The set of chasuble and two dalmatics was made most likely in 16<sup>th</sup> century in Żywiec for the local church and donated to the Wawel Cathedral in 1927 (Fig. 4).<sup>172</sup> The set is traditionally worn on the Maundy Thursday, which in the Catholic tradition commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus Christ and celebrates the institution of sacrament of the Eucharist. The embroidery decorating the vestments was made in the medieval technique of *or nué* and is regarded of the highest class out of preserved ecclesiastical vestments in Poland comparable with the co-existing examples in churches around the world. The chasuble's embroidery of the orpheys presents seven sacraments, while dalmatics depict the Reconciliation and the Eucharists.

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<sup>168</sup> The Royal School of Needlework, <http://www.royal-needlework.org.uk/> (accessed August 9, 2014).

<sup>169</sup> Teresa Heady, Appendix 4.

<sup>170</sup> Jacek Urban, "Muzeum Katedralne na Wawelu," *Muzealnictwo* 49 (2008): 120.

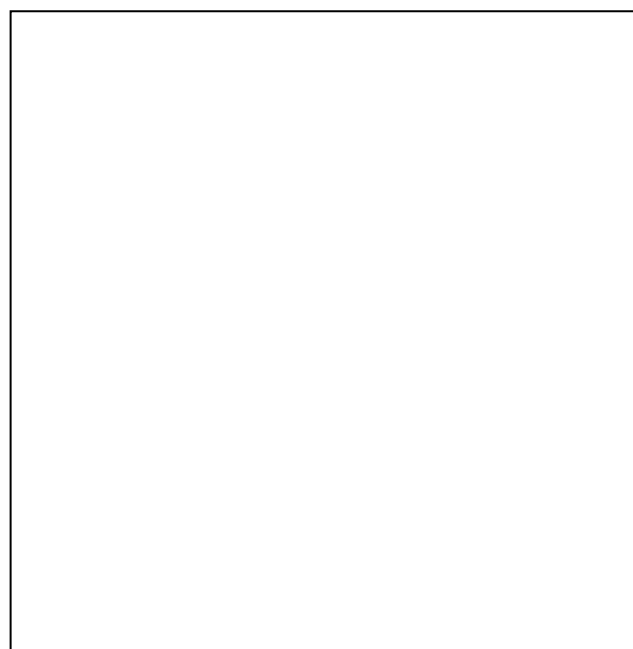
<sup>171</sup> Brooks *et al*, 111.



The existing photographic records of the set at the beginning of early 20<sup>th</sup> century shows objects to be in very poor condition with damaged embroidery, which does not allow easy interpretation of the design.



**Figure 4. Chasuble (above) and dalmatic (right) from Zywiec. Photograph by Barbara Kalfas.©Wawel Royal Cathedral.**



The chasuble was given to the sisters of Order of Saint Clara for renovation. During 1983 - 1995 the nuns reconstructed the embroidery and exchanged the lining. Two trained textile conservators; Jolanta Cetnarowicz-Bis and Barbara Kalfas

treated the dalmatics between 1996-2003. The execution of the treatment by three different subjects allows comparison and reflections over techniques and solutions.

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<sup>172</sup> Tadeusz Kruszyński, *Ornat i Dalmatyki z Żywca i Ich Holandzkie Pochodzenie* (Kraków: Skład Główny w Muzeum Przemysłowym w Krakowie, 1927), 6.

The chasuble is the most controversial since the sisters reconstructed the design of embroidery according to their knowledge and understanding. The standard of finish seems absolutely faultless with the restoration work being almost impossible to recognise. From the aesthetic point of view this might be much appreciated and believed to restore the object to its former state, while producing noticeable changes. The 'noticeability' of the action is often used as a criterion to distinguish between preservation and restoration since conservation intervention is discernible to the knowledgeable.<sup>173</sup> Therefore, however, the type and quality of work on the embroidery on the dalmatics is comparable and it is impossible to recognise the contemporary stitches from the original, the conservators attempted to employ solutions to prevent the loss of information. Before conducting any restoration the object was thoroughly documented with photographic records showing all the areas of loss. The thin layer of organza was introduced between the embroidered fabric and lining to document all the new stitches. Due to this action all the new stitches can be recognised and removed if necessary. Despite the high intervention the conservators found a procedure, which allowed them to act accordingly with their conservation code of ethics.

The considerable issue of restoration occurs if the person undertaking it starts adding new set of information or subjective interpretation to the object. For example in one of the panels on the chasuble's orphrey the sisters depicted a face of the person, who clearly does not belong to this scene (Fig. 5). On archival images of the object it can be seen the area of loss was especially large and the decision was made to complete the design with individual interpretation (Fig. 6). This is regarded to be inappropriate in conservation due to the changing the nature of the object and obscuring its understanding for textile researchers and viewers. The object, which is considered a document, loses its authenticity through rewriting it.<sup>174</sup>

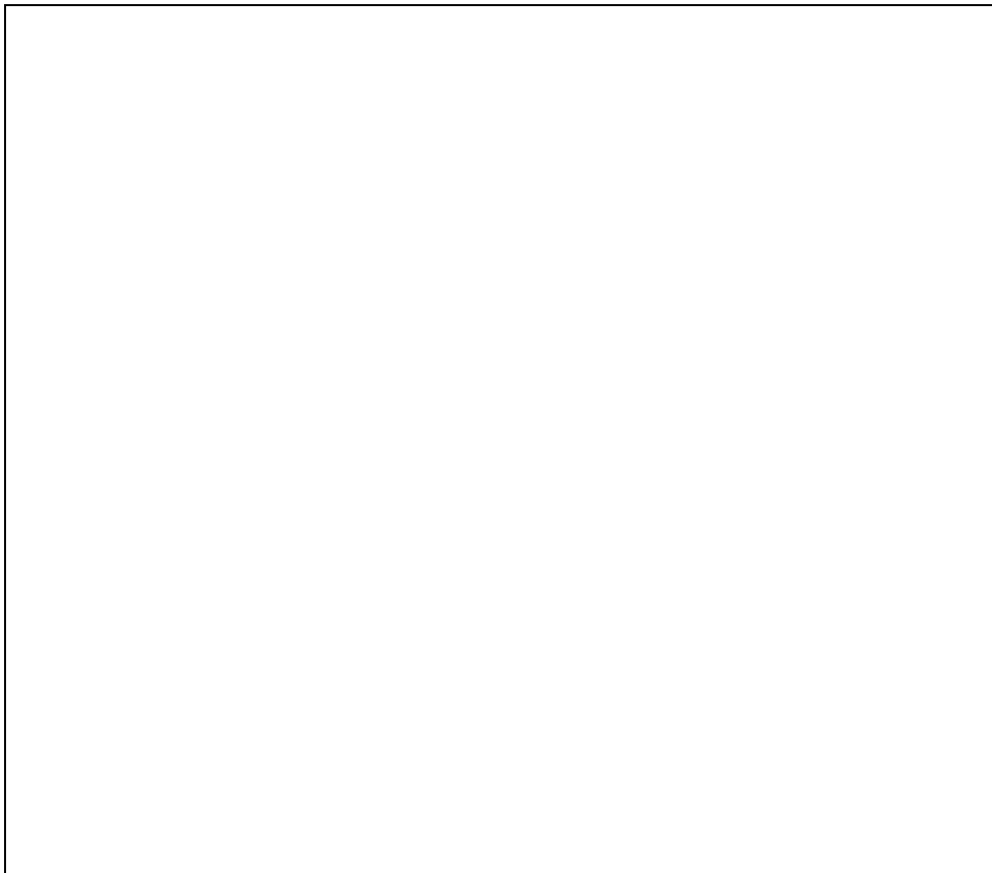
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<sup>173</sup> Muñoz Viñas, 20.

<sup>174</sup> Hanna Jedrzejewska, "Problems of Ethics in the Conservation of Textiles," in *Conservation and restoration of Textiles: International Conference, Como, 1980*, ed. Francesco Pertegato, (Milano: C.I.S.S.T, 1982), 100.



**Figure 5. Section from chasuble's orphrey. Photograph by Barabara Kalfas. ©Wawel Royal Cathedral.**



**Figure 6. Section from chasuble's orphrey showing area of loss and damage before restoration. From: Kruszyński, Tadeusz. *Ornat i Dalmatyki z Żywca i Ich Holandzkie Pochodzenie*. Kraków: Skład Główny w Muzeum Przemysłowem w Krakowie, 1927: 109.**

Barbara Kalfas, who was enquired about the treatment, recollected her own experiences of restoring the lost information only in the situation she had enough evidence to follow it. On the upper panel of dalmatic before the treatment the scenery was difficult to read (Fig. 7), but the detailed and time consuming examination revealed clear pattern of pin holes and small fragments of threads enabling to recognise the lost shape and colouring of the missing dog (Fig. 8). Only in this instance the conservator felt self-assured to restore the lost data without deceiving the viewer or adding her own interpretation of the design.<sup>175</sup>

The case study of the discussed set shows that treatment can lie somewhere in between restoration and conservation. Facilitating the wish of the client can be connected with embarking on highly interventive treatments and remaining ethical in this circumstances is the question of choice. Nevertheless, the appropriate use of conservation principles with techniques of restoration can result in creative solutions allowing the artefact to be preserved, enjoyed and used accordingly with its intention.

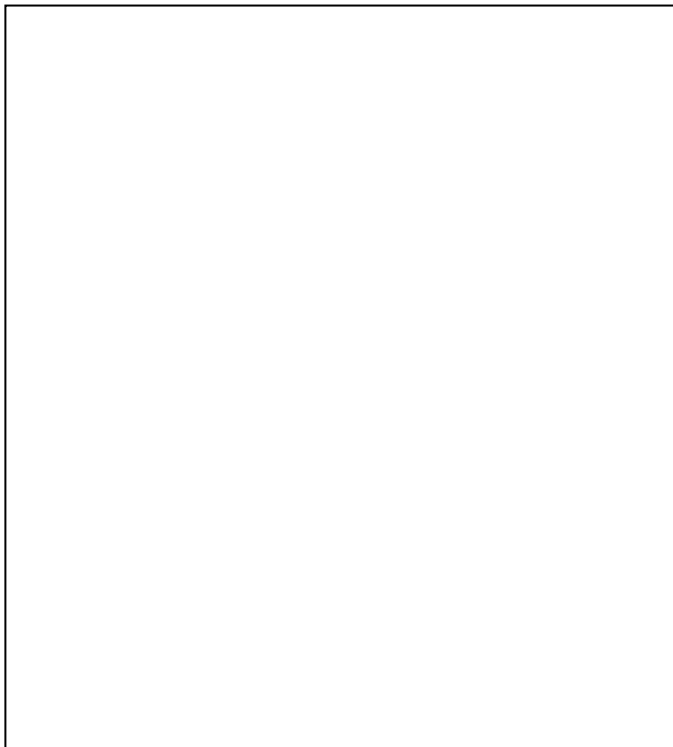
## 5.6. Summary

The discussed case studies as well as reasoning behind the decision-making process show conservation in both countries is based on the same principles with use of different methods and solutions. The varying treatments emphasize that the only suitable approach to conservation is to address the objects needs and adjust the conservation to it. The context of the treated textile has immense effect on type of the treatment. This is especially noted in conservation of objects for use when the applied methods have to be modified to ensure the structure of the object is supported and preserved while the true nature of the object is not lost. The levels of intervention vary depending on the degree of functionality. And although conservation has progressed towards minimum of intervention as the key principle of the treatment, this is not always correct and possible. The lack

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<sup>175</sup> Barbara Kalfas, personal communication, June 30, 2014.

of intervention will equal allowing the object to deteriorate, which either does not seem to be ideal. Additionally, there is no need to disregard techniques of restoration since together with conservation they are aspects of the same process - preservation and safeguarding the objects for future generations.



**Figure 7. Section from the upper decorative band of dalmatic before treatment. Image showing the area of damage and traces of dog's outline. Photograph by Barbara Kalfas. ©Wawel Royal Cathedral.**



**Figure 8. Section from the upper decorative band of dalmatic after treatment. Image showing the restored design. Photograph by Barbara Kalfas. ©Wawel Royal Cathedral.**

## 6. CHAPTER FOUR

### *Ecclesiastical Textiles as Sacred*

#### 6.1. Introduction

The case studies examined for this research have indicated that the practicalities of ecclesiastical textiles preservation fit into the general practice of textile conservation. All textile conservators, when questioned about the concept of sacred character and the possible existence of special practice regarding such an artefacts handling, showed their understanding of the subject in accordance with their personal knowledge and experience. They unanimously communicated general cooperation with the client, with no limitations imposed on their practice by the client, with showing appropriate respect being the only related stipulation.

In the course of conducting interviews with several different representatives of the clergy (Fig. 9) it has been shown that each person could explain the role and character of ecclesiastical textiles in general. It should be noted that the education of the Christian clergy is dependant on the type of denomination in which they reside as well as the country, order within the Church, and the communities overriding mission. In the results members of the clergy, as in any other profession, differentiate between each other in terms of knowledge regarding specific topics depending on the obligatory education received and their selected specialisation. One such specialisation, liturgics, is the discipline of theology dedicated to the study of liturgy, with various approaches to rituals including practical, historical and theological.<sup>176</sup> Most clerics will usually have a choice as to what extent they wish to continue their education in this subject.<sup>177</sup> Although familiar with the day to day use of the devices at their disposal, not every cleric has a comprehensive understanding of the vestments that may be in their care.

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<sup>176</sup> Bogusław Nadolski, *Leksykon Liturgii* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2006), 853-857.

<sup>177</sup> Fr. Ross Campbell (Catholic Priest, Glasgow), personal communication, June 16, 2014.

When faced with more detailed inquiries the interviewee would suggest the assistance of a liturgics authority.

This chapter is an attempt to synthesize the information collected in order to recognize the nature of liturgical vestments, determine their importance in the Christian religion and ultimately resolve the question of considerations and limitations arising from their conservation. These deliberations are principally allocated to the practice of the Roman Catholic Church unless specified otherwise. The Anglican Church does not recognise vestments as having any special meaning consistent with their beliefs regarding the idolatry of objects.<sup>178</sup> The vestments are only recognised as rarefied due to age, maker or its historical significance, therefore the general consideration of textile conservation are applicable.<sup>179</sup>



**Figure 9. The author with Fr. Tomasz Grabowski OP discussing the regularly accessed and used collection of vestments stored in the sacristy of the monastery. ©Dominican Priory, Cracow.**

<sup>178</sup> Fabiano Barretti (Virger, St. Paul's Cathedral), personal communication, June 26, 2014.

<sup>179</sup> Teresa Heady, Appendix 4.

## 6.2. Ecclesiastical Vestments' Essence

An initial confusion on the part of the researcher at the outset of this theoretical investigation derived from the choice of particular words associated with vestments. In English, vestments are recounted as 'sacred,' while Polish describes them as 'liturgical.' Particular paragraphs from *General Instructions of the Roman Missal* describe and explain types of sacred vestments, correlating rank of users wearing them, suitable colours and materials used for their production.<sup>180</sup> The *Book of Blessing* provides that items to be used in the celebration of liturgy, including relevant textiles (altar-linens, corporal, pall and purificator) and vestments (alb, stole and chasuble), can be blessed by the bishop or a delegated priest.<sup>181</sup> Conservators from time to time refer to this requirement and inquiry about the necessity to deconsecrate the vestments before becoming incorporated into, for example, a museum context.<sup>182</sup>

In its standard understanding, blessing, in the Roman rite, is used to endow people and things with the potency for good, but also for the sanctification of an object.<sup>183</sup> Blessing, however, is not an equivalent with a transformation into the concept of sacred. It should be noted, there are two meanings of 'sacred' in the context of the Christian religion. The first one signifies the moral category by bearing resemblance to God, while the second is assigned to anything separated from the profane.<sup>184</sup> In this meaning everything that is used in the liturgy is sacred, because it is offered to God and devoted to the cult. Therefore 'liturgical' denotes 'sacred' and the linguistic distinction between English and Polish is made irrelevant.

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<sup>180</sup> Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal. General Instructions of the Roman Missal* (England & Wales: International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation, 2011), art. 335.

<sup>181</sup> Catholic Church, "Blessing of things designated for sacred purpose," in *The Roman Ritual*, trans. Philip T. Weller (The Bruce Publishing Company, 1964), Part XI, Chapter VII.

<sup>182</sup> Kite, "The Preservation of Religious Textiles in a Museum Context," 162.

<sup>183</sup> *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, s.v. "Blessing."

<sup>184</sup> Tomasz Grabowski OP, Appendix 2.



The liturgical object has been created for a particular purpose, and through the execution of that purpose, transforms into a sacred object. By this rationale, through the termination of a vestments' employment in a cult, the object has been deconsecrated.<sup>185</sup> However, discontinued use is not equivalent to approval or encouragement to use the item within different context, since it has been primarily allocated to the cult. The museum setting is excluded because, although the object is not used with its purpose and is static, the setting does not interfere with its character.

The act of blessing vestments is a continuing practise and marks the introduction of the vestments into the cult and their consecration. The pre-Vatican II Catholic Encyclopaedia states that a blessing given to an object can be lost when the form of the vestment is essentially altered, when they are much worn, which makes them unworthy of the holy service and when they are greatly repaired.<sup>186</sup> The last part of this guideline could bear possible consideration for the conservator's interventive treatments if the regulations have not been changed. It could be hypothesized, however, that this rule was introduced to encourage the clergy to care for objects used in sacred liturgy, since they were supposed to stand out from everyday items.<sup>187</sup>

There are only a few instances that would limit treatments undertaken by a conservator. Objects considered to be relics, such as the tunic of Christ or the garments of saints, with a living tradition constitute a special kind of object requiring delicacy and a suitable attitude from the professional. From a conservator's point of view their significance makes them virtually untouchable.<sup>188</sup> There are, however, members of the clergy, who place the

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<sup>185</sup> Tomasz Grabowski OP, Appendix 2.

<sup>186</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann *et al.* (London: Caxton, 1912), s.v. "Vestments."

<sup>187</sup> Tomasz Grabowski OP, Appendix 2.

<sup>188</sup> Flury-Lamberg, 160.

aesthetic aspect of an object as a priority and encourage interventive cleaning methods.<sup>189</sup>

There is a set of special practises related to the treatment of textiles in contact with the Eucharist. The altar linens, for example, are washed separately, often by a designated person in a specified area.<sup>190</sup> These objects are not customarily preserved, but burnt when applicable. This is done in order to prevent any unintentional disrespect to even miniscule particles of the Body and Blood of Christ. Historically, if the textile object was affected by e.g. spillage, the fabric was cut out, washed to dissolve any remaining pieces and burnt.<sup>191</sup> The conservators might choose to consider these ethical parameters between a textile and elements of liturgy when undertaking a treatment, but they are not obliged to since it does not have to be their faith. Respect towards the artefact, preventing is mistreating is the only specification from the user.

### **6.3. Summary**

Vestments are consecrated, because they are devoted to God alone, and should not be remade into any other functional object. In this sense the vestments are sacred, but this property is acquired through context and use. The object on its own does not demonstrate any power or attributions to be considered a sacred item. It is the purpose and the function, which transform it into something more. Outside of its context it is regarded as a ritual garment that does not require any particular operation apart from respect, which conservators manifest towards any textile artefact no matter its age or significance.

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<sup>189</sup> Personal communication, details withdrawn.

<sup>190</sup> Tomasz Grabowski OP, Appendix 2.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Ecclesiastical textiles comprise an interesting collection of objects for various reasons. They convey layers of information regarding technical, artistic, historical and religious aspects, and often constitute highly significant artefacts for various communities. Ecclesiastical vestments also provide a subject of challenging treatment for conservators since they are a unique example of historical artefacts used and worn as originally intended. The review of existing case studies has shown ecclesiastical vestments to be a frequent subject of conservation, however relatively rarely for continuous use. The interviews with practising conservators proved the existence of such requests and demonstrated the overview of existing issues.

In both countries, Poland and the United Kingdom, care for church heritage is consciously undertaken with a small number of professional studios or conservators employed on a site to assist the significant collection. Additionally, the conservator's expertise is sought to provide preventive and interventive conservation treatments on continuously accessed and used historical garments. In the instance of these requirements conservator frequently modifies a typical treatment to provide and warrant strong support and reinstitute the loss of design.

The conservators have often taken the position prioritising long-term preservation over short-term use.<sup>192</sup> This is rather understandably in the light of conservation objective, which aims to safeguard the heritage for future generations. The ritual objects, however, have been created for a specific purpose and it seems that conservator should strive to maintain a balance between the need of community to use the historical artefact and to ensure its preservation. It appears to be a challenging call, but the textile conservators undertaking conservation of liturgical vestments have proven it is possible.

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<sup>192</sup> Clavir, 64.

The most frequent solution involves creative combination of conservation and restoration techniques working together accordingly with ethical framework to facilitate use, but also comply with considerations for future appreciation and understanding of the object allowing to recognise conservation repairs. The discussed case studies have shown that despite differences in approach of conservation and restoration these two techniques can work together for the benefit of an object.

The chosen methodology enabled examination of the established aims of research.

- To analyse the decision-making process in the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles intended for use through examples of past treatments from Poland and the United Kingdom in order to examine how the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles fits into the general concept of conservation and restoration.

The professionals from both countries undertake conservation treatments accordingly with accessible materials, traditions and preferences. Every treatment can be identified by effective and comprehensive decision-making process seeking to respond correctly to the object needs, but also client's expectation. The preferences of methods are dependant on conservation traditions and professional priorities. Polish conservators frequently undertake restoration on objects, but their work strives to act accordingly with ethical framework employing creative and new solutions. The conservators in the United Kingdom are advocates of more non-interventive treatments, but they are less often faced with the request to conserve for continuous use.

- To establish if there are any special considerations relating to the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles imposed by their function and if they are recognised by textile conservators.

There are no special considerations related to the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles. The vestments are considered sacred in the Christian tradition only due to their purpose and function. The status of sacred ensures their use solely in the liturgy and prevents inappropriate utilization of the object. The vestments do not require deconsecrating when entering the museum collections because they do not constitute the holy object on their own. The limitations are imbued if the textile is considered to be a relic or an item associated with the saint. The literature has showed conservators are not always certain if any special considerations should be given when handling Christian heritage therefore it is hoped this record will help to clarify the issue.

- To assess clients' expectations, existing attitudes and guidelines within the Christian Church in both Poland and the United Kingdom related to conservation of ecclesiastical textiles as well as to identify how these are met and considered by conservators.

The members of clergy express the wish to continue use of historical textiles but the Church also has expressed intention to preserve and restore the heritage. Every member of clergy interviewed during this research has demonstrated different level of awareness depending on their education and experience when discussing their efforts into preservation of collections.

It has been an interesting research project allowing to identify that the conservation of ecclesiastical textiles, vestments in particular, fits into the general concept of textile conservation. It requires, typical for conservation, individual approach with respect and comprehensive decision-making process enabling to provide creative solutions compatible with ethical framework despite, what could be seen as, unethical request. Textile conservators can undertake successful conservation of objects in use, but its preservation requires cooperation from the user.

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# APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX 1.** Glossary

**Alb** - usually a long white tunic reaching to the feet, made of linen, and belted with a girdle or cincture at the waist. It has close-fitting sleeves and is collarless. It is worn by all who serve at the altar. Worn under any other liturgical vestments or on its own.

**Amice** - a rectangular piece of white linen which originated as a neck scarf, or possibly as head covering. Its purpose seems to have been to fill the gap at the neck created by the wide neck of the chasuble, and also for hygienic reasons to protect the fine material of stole and chasuble from contact with the hair or skin.

**Chasuble** - the outer vestment worn by the celebrant at the mass. The chasuble comes in a variety of shapes.

**Cincture** - a long cord used as a belt over the alb.

**Cope** - a half circular garment held together at the front by fabric or metal fastener. Worn for processions and services.

**Corporal** - a square white linen cloth upon which the smaller hosts for the Communion of the congregation are placed during the celebration of the mass.

**Dalmatic** - a long, wide-sleeved tunic, usually worn by a deacon at mass or other services.

**Dossal** - ornamented cloth suspended behind an altar.

**Maniple** - a strip of material some two to four inches wide (6-10cm), varying in length up to three feet (1m) or thereabouts, it is looped over the left

wrist with some sort of fastening beneath. The maniple usually matches the stole both in material and decoration. Its use is now discouraged in the RC Church and it is not even mentioned in new missal.

**Mitre** - headress for bishops.

**Monstrance** - a vessel to display the consecrated Eucharistic host.

**Orphey** - decorative bands on chasuble, cope and dalmatics and tunics with decorative purpose.

**Pall** - a piece of cloth used to cover the corpse during a funeral service.

**Purificator** - a white linen cloth, which is used to wipe the chalice after each communicant partakes. Also used to clean the chalice and patent after the ablutions that follow the Communion.

**Stole** - a strip of material about four inches (10 cm) wide and up to 26 feet (8m) long. It may be made of white or coloured textiles and may be plain or embroidered. It is worn over one or both shoulders in distinctive ways by bishops, priests and deacons. It is normally worn immediately over the alb and under any other outer vestment, though there are some exceptions.

**APPENDIX 2.** Excerpts from interview with Fr Tomasz Grabowski OP.

Interviewer: Maria Grabowska

Interviewee: Fr Tomasz Grabowski OP

Date: 30/06/2014

Place: Holy Trinity Church,

Dominican Order

Cracow, Poland

Maria Grabowska (M. G.): What are liturgical vestments?

Tomasz Grabowski OP (T. G.): This is a very broad question. First of all, the question we need to ask is: What vestments are we talking about? Historical or modern vestments? Historical vestments were made from natural materials: linen, cotton, silk, gold, silver etc. Why? Because in the Catholic liturgy there is this beautiful concept, which is expressed well in the prayers said during Offertory [also called preparation of the gifts, the part of Mass during which the bread and wine are placed on the altar]:

*“Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life.”*

So now, “earth has given“ as the fruit of the earth, whatever was created; “human hands have made“ for things which were re-created by our culture combined together “will become“ the sign of something spiritual. In the classic, former liturgy, before the Second Vatican Council there was a huge emphasis on using only natural materials, because they had been created, the human culture re-creates it in order

to turn them into the sign of the invisible reality. Therefore every textile made out of natural fibres can become the symbol of something heavenly. Each liturgical textile had its own symbolic meaning. Today, unfortunately, we are not paying attention to this anymore.

M. G.: What has been the reason for this change?

T. G.: Out of indolence. The symbolic awareness has disappeared. Surely, there is also the question of cost and availability of materials that contributed to this shift...

As a part of our heritage, we own the medieval treatise indicating the symbolisms of particular textiles, so-called *Expositio Missae*, e.g.

- o 'Chasuble', from Latin *casula*, the hut of God's love, therefore it was understood the priest was wearing the God's love.
- o 'Stole' was the symbol of hieratic power, therefore the bishop was wearing it straight, the priest tied in cross, because his power was limited and so on.
- o 'Alb' - purity.
- o 'Cincture' - the belt of truth, but also recognised as virtue, asceticism.
- o 'Amice' - the helmet of salvation.

Then we have more, such as copes and dalmatics, and then there is a group of liturgical paraments: the veil, purificator, corporal etc.

M. G.: What about banners?

T. G.: These were not strictly liturgical. They were treated as an addition and props.

Obviously, everybody: bishop, priest, deacon had their own set of vestments, differentiated from each other, but this is widely described in the literature, so I will not have to go into the details. And there were always symbolic meanings associated with every detail. Always! Today, this symbolic awareness and knowledge had disappeared

completely and people do not understand that the liturgy is a tangle of different symbols, but they rather treat it as a ritual that is supposed to be explained through itself.

M. G.: Like a theatre?

T. G.: No, definitely not. The theatre refers to another reality. You don't perceive the actors as the actors. The man stops being Mr Smith, he becomes Macbeth. It is then symbolic, but it is not referring to anything else than it is in reality. These days the ritual, in general, is being explained and expressed as closed within itself. It does not have any references and it is experienced as something without any narratives.

M. G.: So what is the meaning of ecclesiastical vestments for the liturgy?

T. G.: You can interpret it through two systems: symbolic or ritualistic. The man wearing these garments, he is not an ordinary Mr Smith, but he has a special, actual function to play. The celebrant, because he has the most of the vestments, is supposed to be the symbol of the Christ in the liturgy, particularly the Christ King, so the one who becomes the king through service.

M. G.: What about today? Are all these connotations gone whether it is a historic or modern vestment?

T. G.: These days, it is clearly treated as a ritual garment. You acquire the role in the community through wearing this vestment. It does not have the symbolic references. And also, a correlating concept, through the loss of this symbolic layer and the understanding that the ritual is something that sends me to the other world, we have lost the recognition of *sacrum*. *Sacrum* requires a different model than the daily, more than average. It requires respect and adoration, not common attitude. The contemporary liturgical vestments have become cheap and poor, as if simplicity has been mistaken with mediocre.

M. G.: Then it is worth getting the historic vestments out?



T. G.: Absolutely. It is even recommended to make them usable.

M. G.: Can we define the character of the vestments? Are they sacred? They are blessed, are they not?

T. G.: There are two meanings of the word “sacred.” From the Hebrew word “*kadosz*” - separated. Separated, different than profane, different than from this world. In this meaning everything that is used in the liturgy is sacred; the building is sacred because is consecrated, because is offered to God, the chalice is sacred, altar is sacred, and vestments are sacred. They do not constitute the daily stuff, they are not used for daily activities, they are only used in the cult, for God’s glory. This thinking is strictly Biblical. Something is dedicated to God, e.g. this day is assigned to God, so you will not work on this day, it will be different from other days in the week. In this meaning vestments are sacred. The other meaning of “sacred” is associated with the moral category: it bears a semblance of God. And in this meaning vestments are not sacred, because the human is the only subject meeting this requirement.

M. G.: So the vestments are restricted to the cult and they are devoted to God. What happens if they are taken to a museum? Do they lose their attributes through discontinuity of usage?

T. G.: This is quite an interesting topic. If you take an icon to a museum and the visitor is of the Orthodox faith, he will bow in front of it. The icon has not stopped being an icon by changing location. The same case happens with vestments. In the intention of those, who created them they are still allocated solely for the cult. Not for any other purpose.

M. G.: But they stopped being used. Does this not change their character?

T. G.: No, because you could come in at any moment, get it out of the case and they are ready to be used. Nothing else has to be done. The museum is not their natural eco-system. Their natural context is a cult. Obviously, if the cult disappears, they become an artefact, remnant of something past. The canon standing in the museum is still a canon, isn’t

it? The only difference about it is that it is not used. All the sacred paintings, accessories etc, they lose their primary context, only because they stopped being used, not because they had changed. In the liturgy, whatever is being discontinued from use should actually be destroyed burnt or buried. It is only these days... I mean this trend has lasted probably for about 200 - 300 years... when we started using museums, treasuries, where objects are collected to be seen and admired. But this can be easily explained: when an object is damaged, we decide not to burn it, because we appreciate its value.

M. G.: I guess they also lasted because their value was actual. It cost a large amount of money...

T. G.: Yes, but it is also a different kind of value. For example to wash a corporal or purificator you first need to soak it, and this water needs to be poured into the soil. In every church there has to be a drain directly connected with the soil for the disposal of this water. Only then you can continue with washing. It is done because these elements are in direct contact with the Eucharist. This is what constitutes their significance.

M. G.: Can I assume there are no limitations for the work of conservator?

T. G.: No, they are not.

M. G.: But if a historic corporal was given for conservation, which sometimes includes cleaning, would you command a special treatment of soaking it first?

T. G.: No, the appropriate person would prepare this before presenting it to a conservator. I would assume the objects for conservation would be old and historic, which are not being used. We [the Dominican order] own a corporal dated 16<sup>th</sup> century and it is treated as a relic. Mostly because it belonged to Pius V [saint of the Roman Catholic Church].

I think it has to be said we are not living in a culture when there is a differentiation between the sacred and the profane. It has almost

completely disappeared. Some time ago, it was unthinkable that the space of the church could be used for other purpose than celebrating the liturgy. Today, it is possible, thinkable. There is a decline in various practices of separation, when only consecrated people can do some things, others could be done by lay offices, and then others cannot be undertaken by women etc. It is still present in Judaism or Islam. In Christianity, because God became a man, it enabled a sort of intimacy with the sacred. And, however in the Middle Ages, there were a range of laws, e.g. if mice ate something at sacristy, you should accept a punishment, now it is all gone. And it is a loss! The ritual protects what is sacred.

M. G.: Speaking of sacred, there is a difference in the choice of words when describing vestments in different languages. In English the vestments are described as “sacred,” while in Polish as “liturgical.” Does this mean two different things?

T. G.: No, this is only a question of specifics of the language. “Sacred” is used to indicate they are consecrated. “Liturgical” indicates it is solely used for the liturgy. It describes the same.

M. G.: You never really answered my question regarding blessing? Are the vestments blessed?

T. G.: Vestments are blessed. It is not obligatory, but it can be done. Blessing means they are devoted to God. It is more a consecration than a blessing.

M. G.: In the 1913 edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia* it is said: “Vestments that have been blessed lose their blessing when the form is essentially altered, when they are much worn (...), when very greatly repaired.”

T. G.: There is always something like a secondary blessing. There are known examples when churches were re-consecrated, because it was not used as a church or something bad happened inside. E.g. there was a

murder, so this has to be re-given to God, to re-allocate it to a cult. And it is the same here, the blessing is lost in the sense that it stopped being devoted to the cult. It is in a condition that does not enable its use. And the second blessing is more of a consecration, it needs to be reconnected to the domain of the saintly, meaning God.

M. G.: Does it mean that whatever a conservator does, it will not have an effect on a vestments character, it will not result in the loss of the blessing of the vestment?

T. G.: No. I would suggest it is better not to invite pious people to the conservation workshop to prevent their possible disgust. If carpenter has to repair a retable, it is far from respectful to walk in his boots on the altar. But we agree with it, because we know his intention is not to profane the altar, but to repair or renovate it. In Christianity there is no perspective of this sort. We want an object to be respected, but we only require a good set of skills to make it worthy of the service for God.

M. G.: What is the practice of disposal?

T. G.: If it is not an artefact assigned to a museum, it is recommended to burn it. It is done to prevent disrespect and usage in any inappropriate way. For instance, making other items, such as cushion covers out of ecclesiastical textiles is wrong. The intention behind the creation of vestments is for the cult, so its usage is suitable as long as it is devoted for liturgy.

M. G.: How about vestment that were in contact with the Eucharist, e.g. spillage of the Christ's Blood?

T. G.: You need to soak in water to dissolve anything remaining. There used to be regulations, in the Middle Ages, you were supposed to soak, cut out the fragment and burn it.

M. G.: I wonder if it possible to find the examples of vestments with cut out fragments...

**T. G.: The spillage barely happens. It was mostly referring to the altar linens.**

**M. G.: What is the minimum set of vestments for the priest to celebrate the mass?**

**T. G.: You suppose to follow the existing discipline. You require alb, stole and chasuble. The mass will be valid if not all elements are present, but it should not be done.**

**M. G.: What is the attitude towards the collection stored in your monastery? Why do you keep it if you do not use it and the regulations used to be to dispose of the unused objects?**

**T. G.: It is a question of heritage. It is a heritage, which needs to be taken care of. If they were in a condition to be used, we would. I think there is a desire to bring them back into the liturgy, if there was an opportunity to restore these vestments.**

**M. G.: Do you think you are alone in your opinion?**

**T. G.: I am sure everybody in my community thinks the same. If there were possibilities to use them, we would love to. They are stunning!**

**APPENDIX 3.** Excerpts from interview with Wendy Toulson.

Interviewer: Maria Grabowska

Interviewee: Wendy Toulson

Date: 24/06/2014

Place: Leominster

Maria Grabowska (M.G.): Can I just confirm, you are private textile conservator with clients from both public and private sector.

Wendy Toulson (W.T.): Yes, that is correct.

M. G.: What is your attitude towards restoration within textile conservation?

W. T.: I have no problem with restoration, which aims to shore up what is there, and aims to make an object comprehensible by someone who is looking at it. But I draw a line at deciding if the bit is too faded and put something new... even if its distressed to look old. Unless somebody says this is one of several hundred known in the world and I would like to use it as a golfing bag or whatever. If people know what they want to do it with something, and are prepared to take the consequences then that has to be spelt out. There's no going back from that. I tend to get more requests like that from dealers and it tend to say, thank you I rather not.

M. G.: In your practice, have you ever undertaken treatments that could be categorised as renovation, reconstruction and reproduction?

W. T.: I have on one occasion, recently done a complete reproduction of a book marker of embroidered ribbon that went into a bible because the church concerned had lost one and so I made a reproduction of it using the instructions from an 1876 manual, using all the correct materials. I made it clear to them that this is what it was. They said that anything else would clash with the whole church but it is quite clear to anyone who examines it closely that it is a reproduction and not the original.

M. G.: Do you prepare guidelines for future recommendations and how do you ensure they will be acknowledged?

W. T.: I put it at the end of the report after treatment and then I put in heavy type NB: recommendations for storage, and handling, whether you need two people or what have you. I remind the, if they've had a grant, what the terms of the grant were. Its often quite useful if they've had a grant, because the documentation will then have two copies and one will go to the funding body and therefore, technically, they could check up on whether the regulations are being follow. So, that's what I do.

M. G.: How do you perceive ecclesiastical textiles?

W. T.: I am particularly fond of the pre-Reformation ones because they're among the few textile which exist in any quantities from before the reformation, simply because they had been looked after. Prior to about 1600 most of the fabrics that are used in vestment are similar or identical to fabrics that would have been used in everyday clothing. There is a link there then to the ecclesiastical.

I suppose I see ecclesiastical textiles as decoration, unless they are associated with a saint or some other notable individual. They are not required to be consecrated when they are given to the church so they are not like altars, considered to be items that have a firm place in the church. They are to be used and there are regulations about how they are to dispose of, particularly anything that has been splashed with communion wine. There are certain procedures that one has to go through with those, with anything that's been splashed with consecrated wine is not to be thrown away. It has to be burned and the ash retained. Generally speaking I think I adhere to the sort of ideas that people in churches have felt. That they are props to the theatre of church. As such, when they cease to be splendid and amazing and shiny they are ultimately expendable. Unless somebody decides that this particular item is of particular historic or art historic interest and they wish to preserve it.

M. G.: Is there anything different in terms of treating ecclesiastical textiles?

W. T.: I suppose I approach it as any other object, guided by the wishes of the person who has asked me to intervene. I do find it very important to speak to all of the church wardens because quite frequently the newest church warden, who often is the newcomer in the village can get the bit between their teeth and decide that this is the project. If other people around are less than happy about it, then they're unlikely to carry on looking after it properly when it comes back.

M. G.: Is there a common pattern for deterioration of ecclesiastical vestments?

W. T.: There are some similarities and differences. There are chasubles they tend be rubbed in the area of the stomach because the priest will stand with his hands clasped in front of it. You find that, if communion or mass is celebrated with the priest behind the altar, looking at the congregation, that's' better for the altar frontal. If a priest stands in front of the alter with his back to the congregation when he's elevating the host or distributing the bread and wine, you often find that the centre panel of the altar is rubbed. Because it happens every Sunday and its only a small amount but, as items get older the threads that hold metal threads or pearls in place become weakened and if every Sunday the same thing happens then they get damaged in that way. I had a nice example when a church that I had visited first twenty-two years ago and did a report for. I think the church warden on that occasion moved away suddenly, or perhaps died, I heard no more. Then a couple of months ago I had a phone call from a new church warden enquiring about whether I would like to go and see their frontals and I was able to say: Is this the red frontal that had a mouse eat it twenty-two years ago? And she nearly dropped the telephone: 'How did you know about the mouse?'

In fact, they didn't know it was a mouse. Clearly somebody had put a large patch over it. This was an occasion when a mouse got into the altar frontal chest when it was open and worked its way through all the



frontals. Sometimes you can get unexpected things like that but most of these are carpet beetles and wax...

M. G.: Apart from those situations we discussed earlier, what would be the situations when you are not happy with undertaking the treatment on ecclesiastical textiles?

W. T.: There are occasion when, particularly to do with vestments where I do say that if they don't improve the storage, it's pointless spending money on conserving their vestments. I think quite often storage is not glamorous and people much rather fundraise or ask for a grant to conserve an item that looks slightly different in their eyes, after its been done. They're not seeking to spend money on storage. If, for example, their roof is leaking, I will say I'm really not happy conserving the vestments while you've got buckets on the floor. There was a famous architectural historian, Alec Grifton-Taylor. He used to say: 'Every building needs a good hat and a good pair of shoes.' And it is absolutely a case with churches.

M. G.: Do you offer any cleaning of ecclesiastical vestments?

W. T.: The only cleaning I tend to undertake is vacuum cleaning.

M. G.: Have you ever wet cleaned any church textiles?

W. T.: I have. My third year project [at TCC at Hampton Court Palace] I wet cleaned a pall, a coffin cover, made from pre-Reformation vestments cut into squares and oblongs from the church in Norfolk. Because the repairs in it, seemed to me, had distorted the fabric. It would not lie flat. It was very difficult to imagine supporting it, because it was so bumpy. It was wet cleaned. I am not sure I would do it again, because the velvet was quite stiff once it had been pinned out to dry. And not only it was very difficult to stitch, but the fact that what had been very faded green velvet on some of the panels was quite clearly dark blue velvet once it had been wet cleaned, suggested to me the what had happened was that faded tips of the velvet had probably been washed away. It was quite

interesting seeing they had initially been blue. It made much more sense in the context of the colour scheme. It was quite a hair-raising operation. It was done on one of the big washing tables, but it was phenomenally heavy when it was wet. And because it was a pile fabric it could not be rolled. So an enormous mesh which had to be man-handled up and down. From logistical point of view I wonder if I would do that again.

M.G.: Would you ever consider dismantling the vestment for wet cleaning? Do you think it can be justified? Do you regard this as highly interventive treatment?

W. T.: Well, it is. I just wonder if it is necessary. Because it is astonishing how very careful surface cleaning with a tiny brush and taking age with your very low power vacuum, it is astonishing to what extent you can dislodge what is clearly the everyday dirt/ soiling. I can see why people take it apart, because you got silk, velvet, perhaps linen as a backing to the orphrey and they all going to respond differently. My concern with the linen orphrey would be that they're often decorated with silk embroidery, most often floss silk which is very, very delicate when it gets wet and linen will swell much more than silk and I wonder if it is a terribly good idea. I know the Abegg [Abegg-Stiftung Foundation] are very interventionist and everything is absolutely, absolutely clean and really, really flat! They do look wonderful but I am intrigued what it does to the object.

M. G.: In your practice are the clients aware of what conservation does?

W. T.: I usually try to make them very aware of what they can expect. That no matter what sort of cleaning is involved the faded fabrics are not going to regain their colour. With regard to some other aspects such as loss of gold thread we are looking what visual impact it has from the point of congregation. I think it is also important sometimes to watch how churchwardens handle things because that gives you some sort of idea as to which bits of a frontal, for example, may need to be

reinforced slightly, may need to have a layer of net over it, where the fabric, perhaps, if it was in the middle of the frontal, wouldn't warrant being netted but at the edge you may feel a 'sacrificial' layer of net might help to keep things going rather longer.

M. G.: Do you think when we are conserving the objects to be worn are we still undertaking the conservation knowing that "conservation-restoration is distinct from related fields in that its primary aim is the preservation of cultural heritage, as opposed to the creation of new objects or repairing objects in a functional sense." [quoted from Icon "Professional Guidelines"]

W. T.: I think it is always worth pointing out that anything that worn is likely to last less long than something that is kept in ideal conditions. It has to be a dialogue with the owner and the curator or the guardian as to what action they take. I feel as long as I've made the point that this will shorten its life. Given that we are working with mostly organic materials, which do have a finite life, I think the handing over of that information and the treating of the client as a grown up who can take decisions is the way I approach it.

**APPENDIX 4.** Excerpts from interview with Teresa Heady.

Interviewer: Maria Grabowska

Interviewee: Teresa Heady

Date: 25/06/2014

Place: St. Paul's Cathedral  
London

Maria Grabowska (M.G.): Tell me what is your role is at St. Paul's Cathedral?

**Teresa Heady (T.H.): I am a conservator. I moved away from textile conservation to object conservation, because I was mainly dealing with objects that had textiles. There was one person before me [working in this position] and she started rationalizing the collection. She aimed to create a single storage space as the objects were placed in various locations around the Cathedral.**

M. G.: Do you then undertake textile conservation?

**T. H.: I am providing both interventive and preventive conservation. I undertake surface cleaning. When it comes to more complex treatments, I am responsible for contracting outside conservators. I am creating a detailed inventory of the collection along condition assessments. We do have a group of embroiders who make new vestments for us and I have a great working relationship with them. I also send them vestments when the embroidery threads are pulled out and need to be couched. My job involves training the clergy in how to wear and care for historic textiles in order to prolong their existence. Every year I have a talk about how to handle and care for the collection.**

M. G: What are ecclesiastical textiles? Do they require any special considerations? I am interested in this topic since, in conservation, we have become very conscious of sacred, religious items within various cultures, but at the same time it seems that we treat ecclesiastical textiles as ordinary

artefacts. I wonder what is the reason.

**T. H:** I think, most likely, the reason that ecclesiastical textiles are treated a little bit more like everyday objects is because in the Christian faith, within the Anglican Church, not necessary the Catholic Church, but in England there is no idolatry of objects, so adornment is forbidden so to speak. It is considered not to be a part of true Christianity. I think treating them as rarefied, special objects is. That's the reason why they are not [given special consideration]. **But then we have got objects like the Jubilee Cope** [designed by Beryl Dean and made for the Bishop of London to mark the Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth in 1977], **which, because of who made it, is a significant object and it is treated differently. Although we have things associated with coronations, those all have historic significance, so they have been treated differently than an everyday object. This might be because of the Anglican attitude towards opulence. It is a tool, not something imbued with power, as in some other cultures. For me, as a conservator, everything is special. I treat them with respect because they are in my care. I treat them as tools of the Cathedral.**

M.G.: In your opinion is there anything, which makes ecclesiastical textiles special, which might influence a textile conservator to use a different paradigm when treating ecclesiastical textiles?

**T. H.:** I use the same set of thinking. For me, personally, everything is the same. I use the same ethics, the same criteria for absolutely everything. This is why I had to retire the Jubilee Cope for only very special uses and they [clergy of the St. Paul's Cathedral] conceded and agreed to retire it.

M.G.: Is there a common pattern of deterioration of ecclesiastical textiles?

**T.H.:** Yes, absolutely. In the new vestments they are making we discussed what are the best materials to use, we discussed putting support on the neckline, because the pattern of deterioration is serious here, building up dirt on the collar, which then deteriorates and, consequently, cleaning it costs large amounts of money. I am looking at the development of vestments so as to see what can be done to prevent

deterioration. I am working with embroiderers who are developing new vestments and I have a good relationship with them in this respect. They do come up with good ideas, e.g. introducing bands around bottom of copes, because this gets dragged on the floor because not everyone is the same size. We are trying to make it so they are extremely usable and trying to prevent any kind of damage to them. Similar solutions are used when it comes to old ones, we are tacking cotton on the bottom of the vestments, and so if the cope is dragged on the floor is the cotton, which becomes dirty. So again we are trying to reduce wear and tear.

M.G.: What kind of conservation is employed here on textiles in use?

**T.H.:** Conservation only happens on the static objects, such as altar frontals, but then when it comes to things that are worn, it is a fusion of conservation and restoration. I was mentioning that I am putting heavy cotton bands on historic textiles and we are attaching this into the seam rather than into the textiles. Right now we have this serious problem. We have a set of copes, made in the 70's, out of Lurex® I am having them sandwiched between crepeline and a backing fabric because they have these long flame like things and they all come off. But they use them and they want to keep using them. So, in order to keep them whole, we had to come up with a plan. The embroiderers [from the Royal School of Needlework] are more than capable of achieving this. They take all these conservation courses, but we have an understanding that they are not conservators. They do a really good job and I am happy to work with them. They do understand our goals and they know the materials, and we discuss what they are going to use continuously.

M.G.: Do you then distinguish between conservation and restoration? Do you agree that the line between conservation and restorations is blurry?

**T.H.:** Absolutely, yes. Because it is not static... If it is functioning you cannot do a conservation treatment, because a conservation treatment is meant to stabilise and hold it in place, not give it... I mean, yes, there is structural conservation. It is all absolutely dependant on the object and so, if you are in the museum and you have got a costume that has

to go onto a mannequin, you need to do a construction underneath it to be able to support it. My idea of conservation is that you support the object, you do not necessarily add structure to it. I moved along with other people to be a very non-interventive conservator. Here, it is very interventive.

M.G.: How far do you think you can go to facilitate the wish of the client when it comes to interventive treatments?

**T.H.: I do not have really a choice in this matter. If they are going to wear it, I have to make sure it will be supported in the best fashion to keep it. The client dictates to me. I can come back with arguments and they do listen to me. The Jubilee Cope, it was a long discussion when we had to agree that it will be worn only on very rare occasions.**

M. G.: Are they in agreement with the retiring of objects?

**T. H.: They make those decisions themselves as well. They retire vestments but it is dependent with fashion, style and function. They also start realising that if they keep wearing it, the vestments will not last for long time.**

M.G.: Do you think it is important to use these textiles or would you recommend making a replica?

**T.H.: Using them is absolutely fine. This is what they were made for. They lose their context if they are put away in a box. They are meant to be used, but when it comes to historic or significant objects I am always more inclined to suggest a replica. There are things like this Jubilee Cope, which just cannot be replicated. It is completely embroidered. It is such a complex object with multiple layers and stitching that to replicate it would cost more than we could afford... and it would also be difficult to find people able to recreate it.**

M.G.: What cleaning methods do you offer on ecclesiastical textiles?

**T. H.: Vacuum cleaning mostly. I don't have solvent cleaning facilities here therefore I need to send them to other conservators.**

M. G.: Would you ever consider dismantling the vestments for wet cleaning?

**T. H.: No,... but I would not rule it out completely, because this is something I have to face when I am working freelance with thangkas. To enable treatment on paintings I need to take away the textile border. So it is very difficult. I know that it is often done, people wet clean the objects. I would never dream of this treatment. I am actually really against wet cleaning of any form for textiles because it changes the textile forever. It swells the fibres, it swells the twist. When you do it on carpets you lose the twist of the fringes. It is very difficult and I am very cautious.**

M. G.: In discussions with other textile conservators I have heard wet cleaning is not necessary for church vestments and that surface cleaning is often enough because they are stored in closed spaces and worn only for a limited time. Have you noticed similar cases?

**T. H.: Yes, they are not hung out, they are not worn in,... I mean they are worn here... One of the problems with this particular Cathedral is Ludgate Hill, the road that runs alongside, is a wind tunnel. And so it is coming from that direction through two front doors, which often get broken. We have got over 5000 visitors a month, they bring in lots of debris and they often break the doors. Revolving doors were introduced to reduce the dirt, but when they get broken they are left open. At the end of the day you have a pile of dirt at the end of the Cathedral. So there is a real problem with dust. But yes, vacuuming is the thing I would consider to be the best. The problem with the soiling of the necks is the cleaning issue and we are trying to resolve that by having them wear collars that cover the area. That or actually putting on temporary covers for the collars, which we can then remove, clean and replace. And also because of that we have a lot of degradation on the neckline. The factors accelerating it are e.g. wearing excessive amounts of hair gel.**

M. G.: What is your practice for documentation?



**T. H.: Documentation, if I do it, or if I have any control over it, is a normal conservation documentation including the condition report, treatment proposal and full report.**

M. G.: Is this your requirement or does it come from the expectations of the clergy?

**T. H.: No, it is my requirement. It is completely for me. There has been no documentation historically.**

**APPENDIX 5.** Excerpts from interview with Tuula Pardoe.