

The Dress of a Saint?

A Medieval Textile Find from Turku Cathedral

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Introduction

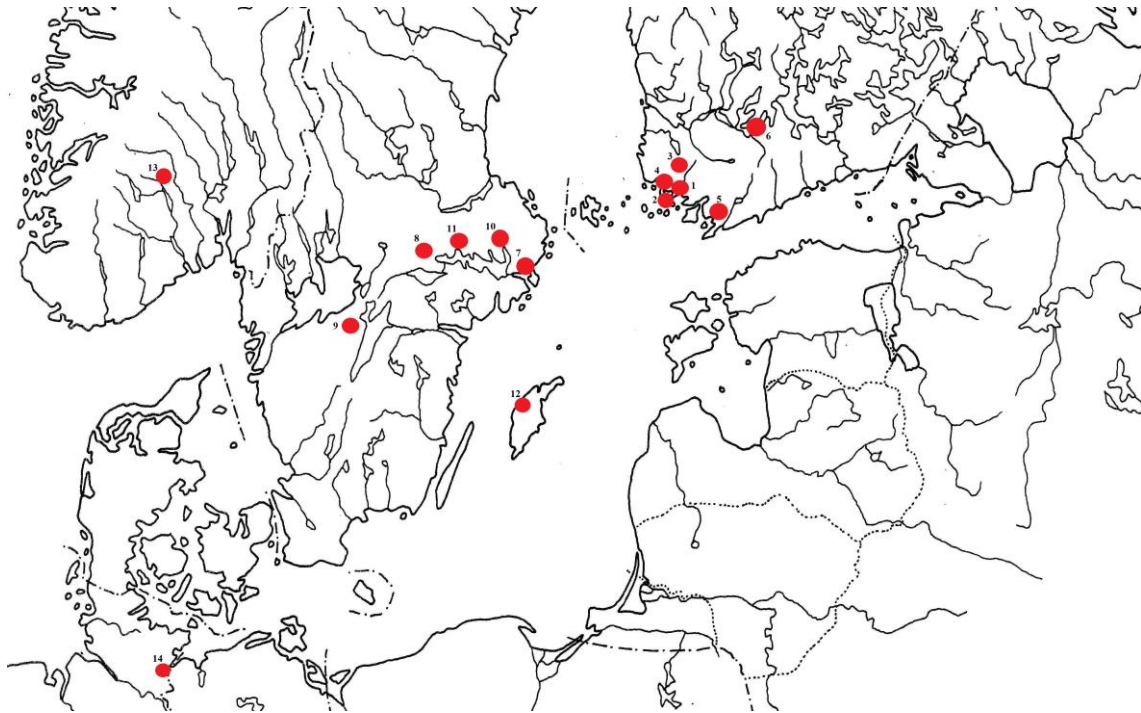
The article presents a piece of a dress which presumably belonged to a statue of the Virgin Mary or another unknown saint in Turku, Finland (see Map 1) during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period in the light of available evidence. The custom of dressing the saintly statues can be traced through historical documents and some artworks in Finland.¹ The piece of garment was ‘found’ during the renovation of the Turku Cathedral in 1929. It had been placed among several bones, relic pouches, pieces of fabric, wax and a piece of a wax seal, wood chips, seeds, paper and a coin in the wooden relic casket of Bishop Hemming. The cist should have contained only his bones and probably remnants of his liturgical attire. It is uncertain when those miscellaneous but holy things were deposited in the casket.²

Otherwise, none of these finds could be associated directly with the piece of dress, which is so unique that I have not found other equivalents

¹ This paper is partly based on my two articles published in 2013 and 2014; ‘Neitsyt Marian villamekko?’ (‘The Virgin Mary’s Woollen Dress’), *SKAS* 4 (2012), 46–56 and ‘Pyhimyksen villamekko – Pyhimysveistosten pukeminen keskiajalta lähtien’ (‘A dress of a saint – Clothing of saintly figures from the Middle Ages’), *Arkeologia nyt!* 1 (2014), 17–19. They were submitted for the project ‘Medieval Relics in the Turku Cathedral’ conducted at the University of Turku. Regarding the project see e.g. Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen, ‘Interdisciplinary perspectives on the medieval relics and reliquaries of Turku Cathedral, Finland’, *Medieval Religion: the Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 7/3 (2011), 447–450. I wish to thank the *Turku Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (TUCEMEMS) for their travel grant to Rome, Italy on 3–9 March 2013.

² See Jakob Tengström, *Handlingar till upplysning i Finlands kyrko-historie* 2, Bibel-sällskapets tryckeri: Åbo 1822, 1–12; Adolf Lindman, *Bidrag till Åbo stads historia* 1, Frenckellska boktryckeriet: Åbo 1869, 92; Emil Nervander, *Kirkollisesta taiteesta Suomessa keski-aikana*, (Kansan-walustusseuran toimituksia LXIII), Kansan-walustusseura: Helsinki 1888, 63; also the edition of the Latin version of Daniel Juslenius’ *Aboa vetus et nova*, (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia 1043), Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura: Helsinki, 2005. According to the aforementioned authors the remnants were deposited in the sacristy and/or the chapel of the Tott family where Saint Lawrence’s altar was situated in the Late Middle Ages. A summary of these historical events concerning the bones and relics of Saint Henry can be found in Juhani Rinne, *Pyhä Henrik – Piispa ja marttyyri* (Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia 33), Otava: Helsinki 1932, 382–391.

deposited in Finnish churches – or museums – so far. However, pieces of medieval garments and attires for the sculptures of saints have been preserved and deposited especially in churches, monasteries, and museums elsewhere in Europe.³



Map 1. Places mentioned in the article: 1. Turku, 2. Rymättylä, 3. Nousiainen, 4. Naantali, 5. Perniö, 6. Vanaja, 7. Stockholm, 8. Västra Skevdi, 9. Hjalsta, 10. Uppsala, 11. Västerås, 12. Visby, 13. Uvdal, 14. Lübeck.

There are some written documents surviving from the medieval and Early Modern period describing textile garments meant for holy statues in Finland. The most important one for this study is the inventory of the altar of Saint Lawrence in Turku Cathedral in 1515.⁴ It describes a tunic belonging to a statue of the Virgin Mary. Another source for tracing the clothes of saintly sculptures is Olle Källström's *Medeltida kyrksilver från Sverige och Finland förlorat genom Gustav Vasas konfiskationer*.⁵ He explored the sixteenth-century confiscation lists of church silver in Sweden and Finland. Occasionally the lists referred to clothing belonging to the statues

³ For example Charlotte Klack-Eitzen, Wiebke Haase & Tanja Weißgraf, *Heilige Röcke: Kleider für Skulpturen in Kloster Wienhausen*, Schnell & Steiner GmbH: Berlin 2013, 7–8. Also the exhibition catalogue, *Madonne al Museo Diocesano di Venezia*, Museo Diocesano di Venezia: Venezia 2013. I wish to thank associate professor Kirsi Salonen (University of Turku) for her translation of the Italian version of the catalogue.

⁴ Facsimile edition of *Registrum Ecclesiae Aboensis (REA) or The Black Book of Abo Cathedral*, R. Hausen ed. The State Archives of Finland: Helsinki 1996, no. 723.

⁵ Olle Källström, *Medeltida kyrksilver från Sverige och Finland förlorat genom Gustav Vasas konfiskationer*, Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelse: Stockholm 1939.

of saints, most often the Virgin Mary or Our Lady. These few garments were decorated with silver ornaments. Also jewellery and crowns were mentioned as belonging to the saintly sculptures. Besides the piece of dress and historical documents there is a third group of evidence, namely sculptures from Perniö and Vanaja, which imply that the custom of dressing the statues of the saints was already practised in Finland at the beginning of the fourteenth century. After a discussion of the remains of the dress, these other categories of evidence will be reviewed in order to contextualise the object.

'A Piece of Rag'

The piece of dress was preserved among the relics in the relic casket of Beatus Hemming found in 1929 during the renovation of Turku Cathedral.⁶ Archaeologist Juhani Rinne was the first to study the dress. He thought that the 'rag' – as he called it – was for dressing up the bones and it was not meant for a living person to wear.⁷ He did not know at the time that the sewing was done in several layers over a period of two hundred years, as the analyses of the radiocarbon dating (AMS) later indicated. Furthermore, some badly worn parts proved that the dress was worn often, showing traces of everyday wear.

It is a piece of the upper bodice of the left part of a woman's dress (Figs. 1–2). The neckline is V-shaped at the front.⁸ There are two parallel lines of running stitches gathering the front part together. Two triangular pleated parts are fitted in the middle to give width to the dress. This type of pleating in different forms was fashionable during the fourteenth century. Although there are archaeological finds of pleated dresses from elsewhere in Europe and Scandinavia, none of them seems to be similar to the piece found at Turku Cathedral. The use of a similar technique for pleating was noted in three fourteenth-century graves in the church of Uvdal, Norway.⁹ And two more pieces originated from Herfjolsnes,

⁶ Rinne 1932, 313–315. An error has occurred in Photo 165 on page 313; B1 should be the back part and B2 the front part. The piece of dress (KM 52090: 8) was cleaned and straightened at the conservation unit of the National Board of Antiquities in the 1970s when the dress was deposited temporarily in the museum collection. The shape and appearance of the dress changed drastically during the cleaning process.

⁷ Rinne 1932, 314–315; Kirjavainen 2013, 51.

⁸ I was kindly informed by my reviewer that the V-shape could have been used also at the back part. At this point, I hold on to my own interpretation because the cut of the sleeve is more fitted at the back and not in front part.

⁹ Marianne Vedeler, *Klær og formspråk i norsk middelalder*, Kulturhistorisk museum: Universitetet i Oslo 2006, 118–119. Cataloguing numbers for the textiles are Uvdal C. 34866/2849 grave 3, 34866/1989-90 grave 16 and 34866/2851 grave 33. There are quite a few medieval remnants of pleated dresses excavated

Greenland, which were excavated in the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁰



Figs 1 & 2. The piece of woollen dress (52090:8), front and back. Photos Heini Kirjavainen.

However, a piece of an upper part of a dress excavated from an archaeological urban site not far from Turku Cathedral (the Åbo Akademi site) also displays the same kind of pleating technique, although the fashioned front piece has a different type of cut.¹¹ Similar dresses with pleating of square or rectangular form in front and/or back parts were in fashion at the end of the fourteenth and in the beginning of the fifteenth century. Although there are no archaeological finds similar to the Turku Cathedral dress, comparable triangular pleated parts are depicted in

in Norway and Sweden but their construction and pleating technique were made in a different manner. See further e.g. Karin Gjøl Hagen, *Soplissé – En reminisens av middelalderens draktutvikling. En komparativ studie i plisserte stoffer fra Birka, Vangnes, middelalderens Trondheim, Uvdal og Setesdal*, (Varia 25), Universitetets oldsaksamling: Oslo 1992; and Marianne Vedeler, 'Plisserte tekstiler fra middelalderse draktplagg', *Universitetets kulturhistoriske museer: Skrifter nr. 1* (2002), 221–228.

¹⁰ Else Østergård, *Woven into the Earth: Textiles from Norse Greenland*, Århus University Press: Århus 2004, 185–189. Garments No 58/D10590 and No 59/D6473.

¹¹ The piece TMM 21816: TE50429 was found during the Åbo Akademi Main Building Site excavations conducted by the Turku Provincial Museum (now the Museum Centre of Turku) in 1998 and 1999. Heini Kirjavainen, *Åbo Akademin päärakennuksen arkeologisten kaivausten tekstiililöydöt*, Archaeology, University of Turku. Forthcoming doctoral dissertation.

medieval wooden sculptures of female saints preserved in Finnish churches, and elsewhere in Northern Europe and Scandinavia.¹²

Furthermore, the construction of the weave and the colour effect in both yarn systems of the cloth are similar to the garment from the Åbo Akademi site, which was also the height of fashion at the time. The fabric of the Turku Cathedral dress has a red warp and a green weft made of woollen yarn.¹³ The red colour was obtained from madder (*Rubia tinctoria* L.) and green from a combination of yellow weld (*Reseda luteola* L.) and woad (*Isatis tinctoria* L.) dyes.¹⁴ All the colorants used were trade commodities, and dye substances were utilized by professional dyers all over Europe and Scandinavia. In addition, the wool fibre used for yarn is of finer type than the Finnish medieval wools.¹⁵ Cloths made of these fine and long fibre wools were called *worsted*s. The cloth type was already manufactured during the thirteenth century in England, but the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were its heyday.¹⁶ The fabric type is fine and unique compared with the other medieval woollen textile material excavated from Turku.¹⁷

Five gussets were sewn at the back of the sleeve. This type of sleeve is very rare among archaeological and historical garments. There are some pieces preserved with a similar type of cut. Sleeves with several gussets were variations of the so-called *aux grandes aussiettes* -type of cut, which

¹² In Norway, a comparable notification about the cut of a dress in the medieval sculptures depicting the Virgin Mary was made by Dr. Marianne Vedeler (2006, 217–218). For example, the sculpture of Madonna of Kors first dated to the thirteenth century was modernized in 1400. The Madonna's dress got a fashionable pleated part in front. See Martin Blindheim, *Painted Wooden Sculpture in Norway c. 1100-1250*, Scandinavian University Press: Oslo 1998, 84–85.

¹³ Warp and weft yarns are both z-spun. Density of 2/2-twill fabric is 23-26 yarns per cm in warp and 10-12 yarns per cm in weft.

¹⁴ Dye substances were analysed by Ina Vanden Berghe, *Medieval Relics of Turku Cathedral – Organic colorant analyses*, Koninklijk instituut voor het kunstpatrimonium: Brussel 2013. Unpublished report. Similar finds of dye substances have been studied in Heini Kirjavainen, 'Medieval Archaeological Textiles in Turku', in Guido Helmig, Barbara Scholkmann & Matthias Untermann (eds), *Centre, Region, Periphery: Medieval Europe Basel 2002*, 2, Folio-Verlag Dr. G. Wesselkamp: Hertingen 2002, 346–351. Published also in Finnish: 'Åbo Akademin tontin keskiaikaiset tekstilityypit', *SKAS* 1 (2003), 4–18. The articles deal with 150 pieces of textiles found during the Åbo Akademi excavations in 1998 and 1999. The textile collection of c. 800 pieces is the largest medieval archaeological textile assemblage in Finland, and it is deposited at the Museum Centre of Turku.

¹⁵ Heini Kirjavainen, 'The Fleece Types of Late Medieval Textiles and Raw Wool Finds from the Åbo Akademi Site' in Sari Mäntylä ed., *Rituals and Relations – Studies on the society and material culture of the Baltic Finns*, The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, *Humaniora* 336: Saarijärvi 2005, 131–146. See Table 1 on pages 136–137, in which similar type of textile TE13029 with medium type of fibres differs from the fibre distribution of coarser fabrics in hairy types e.g. TE2091.

¹⁶ Elisabeth Crowfoot, Frances Pritchard & Kay Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing c. 1150–c. 1450* (Medieval Finds from Excavations in London 4), Museum of London: London 2006, 39.

¹⁷ Kirjavainen 2002, 346–351; 2005, 136–137.

was first used in men's jackets.¹⁸ The gussets form together a round 'plate' at the back. This style was fashionable among the upper stratum of society during the latter half of the fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century. The nearest example of its kind is the golden gown of Queen Margaret, now deposited at Uppsala Cathedral in Sweden. It is dated to the first half of the fifteenth century.¹⁹

Blue linen yarn and bleached white yarn were used for sewing the dress.²⁰ First, the dress was sewn carefully in running stitches with blue yarn. After a while, the seams were taken in to make the dress smaller. The second phase of sewing was done hastily with crude whipping and running stitches in white yarn. A few stitches of yellow s-ply silk yarn are still preserved at the back of the dress and I interpret it as sewing yarn for a gilded silver mount. In Catholic liturgical textiles yellow silk yarn was used in the medieval times – as it is at the present – to attach golden or gilded ornaments onto fabric or for the embroidery of yellow/golden silk fabrics.²¹ Garments were embellished all over with small round silver or gilt silver mounts. For example, a mantle of the Virgin Mary preserved in the Halberstadt Cathedral, Germany, is decorated with several small silver mounts.²²

Altogether, twelve samples of yarns used for sewing and two samples of fabric itself were taken for radiocarbon dating (AMS) to date and outline the alterations made for the dress (Table 1).²³ Some blue sewing yarns and a yellow silk yarn were dated as early as the thirteenth century. These yarns were considerably older than the fabric, which was dated to the end of the fourteenth century. This indicates the use of one-hundred-year-old material in sewing. It is possible that yarns were re-used material from older disposable garments. At least silk yarn was an expensive commodity worth storing for a long time. Also a blue-dyed linen yarn must have been rather valuable. In this first phase, the garment may

¹⁸ See e.g. Katrin Kania, *Kleidung im Mittelalter: Materialien, Konstruktion, Nüchtechnik, ein Handbuch*, Böhlau Verlag GmbH & Cie: Köln 2010, 306–307.

¹⁹ Agnes Geijer, Anne Franzén & Margareta Nockert, *Drottning Margaretas gyllene kjortel i Uppsala domkyrka*, Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm 1994, Fig. 29, 48.

²⁰ Both of them are s-ply yarns.

²¹ See e.g. Magda Tassinari, *Bianco-argento, giallo-oro. Lo splendore della festa*, Words Publisher: Genova 2013. Exhibition catalogue.

²² Hans Wentzel, 'Bekleiden von Bildwerken' in Otto Schmitt ed., *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte (RDK)*, 2, Stuttgart 1948, 219–225. The mantle is dated to the end of the fourteenth century. This and many other mantles and pieces of clothes belonging to the saintly sculptures in the convent of Wienhausen, Germany have been published in Klack-Eitzen, Haase & Weißgraf 2013.

²³ Göran Possnert, *Result of ¹⁴C dating of textile from the Medieval Relics of Turku Cathedral project*, The Ångström Laboratory/Tandem Laboratory: Uppsala Universitet 2012. Unpublished report.

have been used daily. Although the dress was larger before the alterations of the seams it could not have fitted an adult female, and it was most likely worn by a child.²⁴ There are many worn out parts which imply the everyday wearing of the dress. It was later reduced in size by cutting it narrower in the middle. It is difficult to reconstruct the original size of the dress because of that straight cut in the middle of the back.

Lab number	¹⁴ C age		Date I	Date II	Sample
	BP				
Ua-44673	786 ±37		1180-1285		blue back stitch, pleated part in front
Ua-44676	749 ±36		1210-1295		yellow silk yarn, back light running stitch row,
Ua-44678	719 ±37		1220-1310	1360-1390	front
Ua-44671	643 ±35		1280-1400		blue overstitch, sleeve end
Ua-44672	633 ±33		1280-1400		blue running stitch, seam at back
Ua-44680	575 ±30		1300-1370	1380-1420	green weft yarn (fabric)
Ua-41835	568 ±30		1300-1370	1380-1430	blue running stitch, front pleated part
Ua-44679	557 ±30		1380-1430	1300-1370	red warp yarn (fabric) white running stitch,
Ua-41834	518 ±30		1390-1450	1320-1350	neckline
Ua-41833	499 ±30		1390-1450		linen fabric, neckline
Ua-44675	426 ±33		1420-1520	1590-1620	white stitch, seam at back
Ua-44670	365 ±34		1440-1640		blue running stitch, gusset at back white drawing yarn, pleated part at
Ua-44677	354 ±33		1450-1640		back blue supporting stitch, pleated part at
Ua-44674	291 ±33		1480-1670		back

Table 1. Radiocarbon datings of the dress (52090:8), The Ångström Laboratory/Tandem Laboratory at Uppsala University, Göran Possnert. Datings in 95,4 % probability.

The second alterations were made around the 1450s. It is definite that it was not sewn by the same seamstress. The sewing is very crude and some changes were made around the neckline. The back part was cut narrower at the sides. Unbleached linen facing around the neckline was stitched in crude running and whipping stitches with bleached white linen yarn.²⁵ As stated earlier, Juhani Rinne referred to this second phase of sewing when he meant that the dress could not have been made for a living person to wear.²⁶ There are no marks of wear on the facing, and the other seams are

²⁴ The measurement around the bust is approximately 82 cm and around the neck approximately 40 cm.

²⁵ The facing was made of fabric woven in plain weave. It's warp is 20-22 yarns per cm and weft is 18-20 yarns per cm.

²⁶ Rinne 1932, 314–315; Kirjavainen 2012, 51.

so bulky that it really could not have been worn against the skin. These alterations made the dress even smaller than earlier. There were no modifications under the armpit nor traces of lining inside. It is most likely that the dress was open at the back although no traces of sewing or fasteners remain. In this way, the dress was easier to put on a statue.

The last alterations were made at the back of the dress during the sixteenth or at the turn of the seventeenth century. The sewing of the pleated part at the back is very skilful, and it was done in a different technique than the front pleat. This third alteration was carried out by another skilful seamstress. All this indicated that the dress was in use for over two hundred years. A possible interpretation could be that it was a bequest of clothing to the church. In the second phase around the 1450s, it was altered to fit a statue, but unfortunately by a somewhat unskilled seamstress. The quality of sewing, however, is of quite a typical standard for medieval sewing. Stitching of similar quality can be found not only among secular textiles excavated in medieval urban contexts but also in high-quality garments.²⁷

Medieval Documents as a Source on the Clothing of Sainly Sculptures

An inventory of the altar of Saint Lawrence verifies the tradition of dressing a saintly sculpture at the Catholic Turku Cathedral. This historical document dated to 1515 shows that a tunic decorated with gilt silver mounts belonged to the altar of Saint Lawrence. The tunic was for the image of the Virgin Mary, which also had a gilt silver crown.²⁸ This indicates that Turku Cathedral must have had at least one statue of Mary that could have been clothed. Rinne estimated in his studies that 42 altars may have existed in Turku Cathedral during the Middle Ages.²⁹ It is possible that there were several side altars dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the cathedral. How many of them had a sculpture with clothing, crown and decorations can no longer be established.

The confiscations of church silver carried out by King Gustav I Vasa of Sweden in the sixteenth century verify that some of the silver, gold or gilt silver decorations, mostly mounts in rosette or lily shapes, were

²⁷ Kirjavainen, forthcoming doctoral dissertation.

²⁸ REA no. 723: '...Item vna parua tunica pro ymagine beate virgines,...item vna parua corona argentea deaurata in capite ymaginis beate virginis cum aliquibus frvsticulis argenteis deauratis in tunica eiusdem ymaginis beate virginis...'

²⁹ Juhani Rinne, *Turun tuomiokirkko keskiaikana*, 2, *Altarit ja kirkolliset toimitukset*, Turun tuomiokirkon isännistö: Turku 1948, 2.

collected in a similar way as the crowns, brooches, necklaces, rings among the other church objects made of precious metals. Even buttons were confiscated.³⁰ The Virgin's mantle from Halberstadt³¹ may be of a similar type as those mentioned in the church accounts and confiscation lists from the sixteenth century in Finland and Sweden. For example, gilt mounts belonging to the gowns of Our Lady and Saint Anne were confiscated in Rymättylä Church in 1558.³² In many cases, confiscated silver was not itemised at all, covered only with a simple note like this one from Gotland noting that 'silver was taken from Mary's mantle'.³³ Also a mistake could save a saintly garment, like in the case of a small mantle of red brown silk velvet belonging to a saint's statue. It was sent by mistake with the other liturgical chasubles for mending.³⁴

These few examples show that there were statues of the Virgin Mary and other saints, e.g. Saint Anne, dressed in gowns of valuable cloth or with mantles decorated with silver or gilt silver mounts. To summarize, in the documents from Sweden and Finland from the late Middle Ages, Mary had at least two garment types, a gown and a mantle to wear, in addition to a tunic mentioned in the inventory of Saint Lawrence's altar in Turku Cathedral. A head cloth or a veil to cover her head was found in the accounts of Hjalsta Church in Sweden.³⁵ Besides the clothing items of saintly statues, there are several references to crowns belonging to the Virgin Mary and other saints in the medieval accounts and the confiscation lists of church silver in Finland and Sweden.³⁶ They are not, however, included in this study since they do not refer to any specific piece of garment on saintly sculptures. Silver or gilded pins and needles were used to attach veils and pieces of garments but they are not mentioned

³⁰ Källström 1939. The confiscations of church silver were executed in three stages, the first in 1522–1524, the second in 1527–1533, and the third in 1539. The information about the clothing of the saints is sparse and found usually in the references.

³¹ Wentzel 1948, 219, 225. Mantles for the Virgin Mary were called *Mariamänteln* in German.

³² Källström 1939, 321. "Besättningsstycken", "spänger" och "knoppar", 76 st., förgyllda, till "Vår frus kåpa", 'Ten pieces of gilded mounts (*spänger*) which belonged to Saint Anne's gown were also confiscated'.

³³ Sune Ambrosiani, *Gotländska kyrkoinventarier*, Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien: Stockholm 1912, 15, 17. A notification from the church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Visby: '...silfver från Marias mantel tagit vägen.' Another reference from the same church, but concerning the altar of Saint Lawrence, mentions some gilt brooches taken from Mary's mantle.

³⁴ Källström 1939, 299–300. This information was documented from Västra Skedvi Church in Sweden: 'en liten mantel som haffr sithi på belete, aff gammel rödhbrun flogeld, bleff ärnat till lappa Messehaklar medh'.

³⁵ Åke Nisbeth, 'En medeltida räkenskapsbok från Hjalsta kyrka', *Fornvännen* (1956), 110–122, 121. In 1503, a head cloth was bought in four *örtugar* for the Altar of Our Lady in Hjalsta Church, Sweden.

³⁶ Olle Källström, 'Finlands offer av kyrksilver under Gustav Vasa', *Fornvännen* (1940), 207–216, 211, 212. For example fourteen crowns were confiscated from various churches and monasteries in Finland during the sixteenth century.

specifically in the lists. While they were taken into account in the total amount of confiscated silver, they cannot be traced to a specific piece of clothing anymore.

In addition to the medieval church accounts and the sixteenth-century confiscations of church silver, the medieval wills and bequests made for the church and the altars of saints provide information about the clothing of saintly sculptures. In 1455 Lucia Olofsdotter donated in her fourth will 'her best silver decorated gown' to the altar of the Virgin Mary in Nousiainen Church.³⁷ This statement, however, does not reveal whether or not the gown was for the image of the Virgin Mary. This donation could have been used either for making an altar cloth or a chasuble as well. Similar contributions were made elsewhere, as in Lübeck, where the inventory book of the Marienkirche in 1367 mentions 'a widow who donated her scarlet red gown for the image of Mary'.³⁸ The bequests of clothing for statues of the Virgin Mary or other saints were made of either the donator's own clothing or a new piece of garment intended for the image.

Young fair maidens and respectable ladies took care of Mary's clothing by sewing new pieces and mending old ones. In Westphalia, Germany these ladies were called *Bildmädchen* (image maidens).³⁹ It was regarded as an honorary duty to sew clothing for the Virgin Mary or other saints, and also a suitable task for nuns in the convents. No documents survive to tell how this may have been in Finland in the Middle Ages. The nuns of the Bridgettine Monastery of Naantali were famous for their sewing of precious altar clothing and mending of church garments.⁴⁰ They

³⁷ *Finlands Medeltidsurkunder (FMU)*, Diplomatarium Fennicum database, <http://extranet.narc.fi/DF/df.php>, nos. 2818, 2886 and 2970 (last consulted 25 April 2014). In her last will (no. 2970) she stated, 'jtem gifuer iac til iomfrv Marie altare i Nowsis myna bætzsta kopa met silff ther til hörer'.

³⁸ Wentzel 1948, 219. Hans Wentzel went through the medieval documents at the city archives of Lübeck dealing with the clothing of saintly sculptures. This research was carried out in the 1930s. – There are quite a few articles published in German and Italian on statues of the Virgin Mary and her clothing and the tradition of dressing them. The emphasis of the present article is on the Finnish and Swedish sources, and the European sources are not discussed in depth. Also Anu Mänd's *Kirikute hõbevara: altariüstad keskaegsel Liivimaal*, Muinsuskaitseamet: Tallinn 2008 introduces some medieval documents concerning the Virgin's and other saints' clothing, crowns and jewellery. However, these few examples are included for elucidating the text.

³⁹ Stephan Beissel, *Wallfahrten zu Unserer Lieben Frau in Legende und Geschichte*, Herdersche Verlagshandlung: Freiburg im Breisgau 1913, 166. Beissel was a German Jesuit († 1914) who thoroughly studied the veneration practises of the Virgin Mary in the Catholic Church. Although his publication is over 100 years old, it still has some relevant information about the customs and traditions concerning the veneration of 'Our Beloved Lady'.

⁴⁰ C. A. Nordman, 'Naantalin nunnien käsitöitä: Kirjontaa ja kudoksia luostariajalta', *Muistojulkaistu Naantalin 500 vuotisjuhlaan elokuun 23. päivänä 1943*, Oy Suomen kirja: Helsinki 1943, 165–198. It is also published in Swedish; 'Klosterarbeten från Nådendal', *Finskt Museum* 50 (1943), 1–31.

may also have taken care of the Virgin's clothing. Nonetheless, the second phase of the sewing of the dress from Turku Cathedral was not so refined, and other still unknown sources for sewing can be suggested.

Sometimes the garments of the Virgin Mary were stolen, cut into pieces, and sold as relics.⁴¹ The dress of Turku Cathedral has also neatly cut edges in the front and back. It seems that pieces were cut off from the dress – maybe some of them for relics? This is most likely when considering the context of the dress, a cist filled with holy bones and relics of all kinds. Certainly, it is a part of the textile brandea now. Not only garments but also crowns, crosses, jewellery and rosaries were stolen from the holy statues.⁴²

Saintly Sculptures as Evidence of Clothing

A clothed image of the Virgin or another saint was a materialized embodiment come to life. It was easier to clothe and decorate a three-dimensional sculpture than a two-dimensional image.⁴³ The medieval devout venerated a divine being and not just an image. And by showing their love and faith to the Virgin Mary or other saints, they dressed her or him with garments and jewellery made of expensive and valuable materials. According to an old pilgrimage song, 'Mary was dressed in fine clothing and dearly painted'.⁴⁴ Especially the clothing of wooden saints' sculptures in the Late Middle Ages was depicted in an antiquarian manner which differed from the ordinary everyday type of dress and being somewhat old fashioned.⁴⁵ It is possible that the dress from Turku was cut in the same manner to give the impression of being older and more authentic. In most cases, the cut of the dress is equivalent to some cuts in

⁴¹ Beissel 1913, 164.

⁴² FMU 3947; In 1482, the statue of Virgin Mary belonging to the Dominicans was assaulted in Västerås, Sweden: '...ath han stal jomfrv Maria belete aath swartbrödra i Westeraars ok tog ther aff bade silff, korelleband och korsset...'. Also Saint Anne's saintly figure placed in Stockholm Cathedral (Sw: *Storkyrka*) was stolen by a Danish student (Sw: *djäkne*) in 1484. She lost her 'head silver' i.e. crown in the incident. The theft is depicted in Frans de Brun, 'En vandring genom det medeltida Stockholm', *Sankt Eriks årsbok* (1912), 141–186, 178; see also Källström 1939, 254.

⁴³ Elina Räsänen, *Ruumiillinen esine, materiaallinen suku: Tutkimus Pyhä Anna itse kolmantena -aiheisista keskiajan puuveistoksista Suomessa*, (Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistyksen Aikakauskirja 116), Vammalan Kirjapaino Oy: Helsinki 2009, 71.

⁴⁴ Beissel (1913, 161) refers the poem: 'Maria von Reßbach in schönster Gestalt, Ist zierlich gekleidet und kostbar gemalt. Wie die schönste Rose du stehest alldar, In der schönsten Glori beim hohen Altar', in Philipp Wackernagel, *Das deutsche Kirchenlied*, Teubner: Leipzig 1867, 55.

⁴⁵ Eva Andersson, *Kläderna och människan i medeltidens Sverige och Norge* (Avhandlingar från Historiska institutionen i Göteborg 47), Göteborg 2006, 31. See also Piia Lempiäinen, "'Ena silkes tröya' –Clothing bequests in Finnish medieval wills', *MASF* 3 (2014), 26–39, 26.

dresses worn by medieval saints' figures in Finland but also elsewhere in Scandinavia and Europe.

The donated garments were usually altered for the sculptures, which meant that there was someone to sew the clothing. It is likely, however, that the statues were also altered. The arms and the head could have been detachable. In that way, it was easier to dress and disrobe the garment. Wooden sculptures from Perniö and Vanaja in Finland can be associated with the Virgin Mary, the Infant Jesus, and clothing. The sculptures are dated to the first half of the fourteenth century. It has been noted that both of the images may have been dressed with a garment or a veil which was glued or otherwise attached to the sculpture.⁴⁶ The antiquarian Emil Nervander stated already in 1887 that the Madonna with the Infant Jesus from Vanaja may have had some clothing.⁴⁷ This may well have been the case if we look at the shoulders of both figures of the Infant Jesus. The arms may well have been detachable and the figure of Jesus could have been easily dressed. Even the position of the Infant Jesus could be altered in some statues. Alterations were also made for easier handling of the statue in the processions or at the altar. Almost human-sized statues which could be clothed and adorned like dolls began to appear from the beginning of the sixteenth century, and their hands and legs were completely movable.⁴⁸

Conclusions

Sculptures of the Virgin Mary and other saints dressed and decorated with jewellery and crowns began gradually to disappear from the interiors of churches and cathedrals during the Reformation in sixteenth-century Finland and Sweden. The change, however, was not so drastic and Lutheran influences did not appear in the decoration and furnishing of the churches until the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁴⁹ The most radical

⁴⁶ Katri Vuola, *Seisovat ja istuvat figuurit ns. Liedon mestarin tuotannossa*, Unpublished MA thesis, Taidehistoria, Turun yliopisto 1997, 72. In this case she refers to Emil Nervander, *Kirkollisesta taiteesta Suomessa keskiaikana*, 2 (Kansanvalistusseuran toimituksia 63), Kansanvalistusseura: Helsinki 1888.

⁴⁷ On the Madonna of Vanaja, see Vuola 1997, 72, referring to 'Jesus-barnet på hennes venstra arm har varit utstyrdt i kostym av tyg' in Emil Nervander, *Finska Fornminnesföreningens IVe Konsthistoriska Expedition 1887*, Historian topografian arkisto: Museovirasto 1887, 41–59.

⁴⁸ Beissel 1913, 164.

⁴⁹ Hanna Pirinen, 'Keskiaikaisia jatkumojä luterilaisessa kirkkointeriöörissä', in Marja-Liisa Linder, Marjo-Riitta Saloniemi & Christian Krötzl (eds), *Ristin ja Olavin kansaa: Keskiajan usko ja kirkko Hämeessä ja Satakunnassa*, (Tampereen museoiden julkaisuja 55), Tampereen museot: Tampere 2000, 194–201, 196.

influence on the church was caused by the confiscations of silver.⁵⁰ But without the confiscation lists the important information about the clothing of saints' statues would be almost non-existent. According to the written documents, at least four types of garments – a gown, a mantle, a tunic, and a head cloth – can be pointed out for the statues of saints and the Virgin Mary. The inventory of Turku Cathedral from 1515 reveals that the tunic was used to dress the statue of the Virgin Mary at the altar of Saint Lawrence.

Furthermore, a piece of dress was preserved in the medieval relic casket of Beatus Hemming which could not be related to any bone remnants or the other relics in the cist. The dress was probably imported or at least its fabric was probably of English origin. Also the cut of the dress was unique and comparable with high fashion of the end of the fourteenth century. According to the C14 datings the dress was in use for about two hundred years from the end of the fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth century and/or the beginning of the seventeenth century. It appeared to be too small for an adult and it was probably a piece of child's dress. It may have been a clothing bequest for the altars in the Turku Cathedral.

When this data was compared to the information from the inventory of 1515, it could be assumed that the piece of dress belonged to the statue of a saint, probably the Virgin Mary, although other saints cannot be excluded. In Finland, no medieval wooden sculptures other than two Marys with the Infant Jesus from the churches of Perniö and Vanaja can be connected with the tradition of dressing the statues of saints. According to this information, the practice of clothing saintly sculptures goes back to the beginning of the fourteenth century in Finland. The first mentions of this tradition originate from thirteenth-century Northern Europe.

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⁵⁰ Hanna Pirinen, 'Reformaation jälkeinen kirkkotila – jatkuvuutta ja muutosvaatimuksia', in Nina Lempa ed., *Kirkko kulttuurin kantajana*, Kirkkohallitus: Vammala 2000, 65–75, 65.