Eva I. Andersson

Written traces - wills in 13th to 15th century Scandinavia

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Introduction

The history of dress is a neglected area of research and the situation in Scandinavia is no exception. Though a significant amount of research has been done on archaeological finds of clothing and textile fragments, a lot remains to be done. When it comes to sources other than the archaeological they have in general been ignored. In this paper, I would like to draw attention to the possibilities, but also the limitations, that written material has for research in the history of dress.

Research of this kind, based on written sources, is very uncommon concerning the Nordic countries. The only work based on written sources that has dress in the Middle Ages as it's main topic is *Altwestnordische Kleiderkunde*, by Hjalmar Falk. It is a thorough investigation of different literary sources, mainly Icelandic and Norwegian sagas, but also documents like letters and wills, aiming to study mediaeval dress. Types of fabric and other materials used in dress are also treated, likewise which colours were used etc. The main goal of his work is to set a terminology for mediaeval dress in Norse sources, not to investigate the development of dress [Falk 1919].

A more recent example of historical research where the study of dress has a natural place is in the Norwegian historian Hanne Monclair's treatise of the image of the king in Norse sagas [Monclair 1995]. It is an example of recent research into the history of dress, where the symbolic and social function of dress is in focus, rather than exactly how it *looked.*

If you leave the Nordic countries there are some examples of scholars who discuss mediaeval dress from new angles. Both E. Jane Burns and James. A. Schultz discuss how clothing is the very thing that creates gender in mediaeval courtly literature [Lochrie, McCracken, Schultz 1997] and Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane employ the use of several different types of source materials in the book *Dress in the Middle Ages* and study the whole life-cycle of the garments as well as their social functions (Piponnier and Mane).

I will not discuss the symbolic values of dress in this paper. It is instead an attempt to show the written material's usefulness when one addresses the subject of how mediaeval dress looked. This is a small part of the topic of research on dress and not necessarily the most important for a historian. In my coming thesis I will also discuss the social functions of clothing, especially concerning the creation and preservation of gender in mediaeval society. More certain knowledge of how people were dressed in the Middle Ages is a necessary basis for addressing the problems mentioned above. This is an area where collaboration between scholars in the fields of art history, history and archaeology can be very fruitful. By systematic comparison of text, image and textile finds a more accurate notion of mediaeval dress can be achieved. Hopefully my work will contribute to this.

The paper consist of three main parts: First I present the source matter I have used in this paper. Then a discussion of terminology and other problems concerned with the use of written sources follows. Lastly follows a section with examples of both methods and results from my study of mediaeval documents.

The sources

In my thesis I will be using a variety of written documents, such as wills, bills of sale, inventories, agreements on dowry, evaluation of loose property, lists of stolen goods etc.

I will not, on the other hand, or to a very small degree make use of literature. In any case I will not undertake to make any new investigations of Scandinavian mediaeval literature. In this area I will have to lean on Falk, whose main material is the Norse sagas.

In this paper I will use one of these groups. Wills are by far the largest and most valuable group of documents concerning dress. It is very common to bequeath items of clothing in wills. In Swedish wills, from the period 1200-1420, as many as 1/3 of wills contain items of dress or fabric intended for such. Then wills with other types of textiles, like hangings

and beddings or fabric and vestments intended for the church, are not included, in which case the percentage would be much higher. In Norway the amount of wills is smaller, both as a whole and concerning wills which contain cloth and clothing. Other types of documents with information on clothes and clothing are common though. In the wills not only colour and type of garment is mentioned, but also which type of material it is made of and even which town or area the fabric was manufactured in. We also get other information about the garments such as who owned them, to whom they were bequeathed, and sometimes also the value of them. It is mostly the upper segment of society which make their wills and therefore it is their dress we gain knowledge of. There are some exceptions to this: a couple of farmers and rural parish priests, who, to judge by their wills, didn't own much worldly goods. Helpful in getting an image also of the clothes of "common people" is the fact that it was common to set aside money for servants' and villeins' clothing and here we get some clues to the common, working person's dress. Very few testators are said to be burghers. A small tendency can be seen when it comes to bequeathing items of clothing, namely that the most aristocratic of the worldly testators in most cases only list farms and sums of money and no chattels, like clothing. These wealthy men probably didn't see clothes as investments in the same way as others did. There is no sign that clothes were used as a kind of bound capital to be released by pawning when the owner was in need of cash, as can be seen in early modern England [Jones, Stallybrass 2000: 27-32]. This may have been due to the properties of the garment, affected by the current fashion. Upper-class clothing in renaissance England was, for example, adorned with "laces" of gold and silver which retained it's value even after the garment went out of fashion, and it may be that medieval Scandinavian clothing didn't have the same permanent value. If that was the reason, or if it was due to the lack of an developed urban culture, is hard to say and deserves further investigation. The difference between men and women is small, but in Sweden there is a somewhat higher percentage of men who list clothing and fabric in their wills. For Norway, I have not finished putting together my results yet and cannot tell what the distribution between men and women is.

When investigating dress and fashion, wills share a problem with inventories, in that you usually don't know how old the clothes are, or if they're new or reflect an older style. Clothes made of imported woollen cloth, which is the most common material in the wills, were of a high quality and it's not improbable that they were in use for around a decade, at least for festival attire that may not be used so often. Therefore the results one gets from wills has a margin of uncertainty of at least a decade. That wills perhaps were made up a good time before the person's death is of less consequence, since the date of the will and not the date of the death of the owner is of interest to us. If it took a while between the writing of the will and when the gifts were distributed the clothes might have been a little old-fashioned by that time, but since larger changes in the style of dress didn't occur more often than maybe every 30th year and bequeathed clothes probably were changed to fit the new wearer anyway, the gift kept it's value.

But what can written material, more specific documents of this kind, add to the study of the development of dress? It is obvious that we never can find out exactly what a garment looked like from written sources. That kind of information only archaeology can give, since we then have access to an authentic, preserved garment. Preserved clothes are, on the other hand, usually unique; without comparison with contemporary art and historical sources we can't say whether the finds are representative of the common style of dress. Art and written sources provide the variety and multitude. Especially in the later Middle Ages clothes are painted in such detail that you even can see the seams. In art the brown colour of archaeological finds is replaced with the clear colours the clothes originally had. At least we think that they depict the clothes accurately, but art cannot tell us if this really is the case. It is also hard to conclude which material the clothes were made of solely by studying art. Here, wills and other documents can convey a lot, since we here have a large amount clothes that really existed, or were to be made up by the request of the donor. The idealization of art and literature does not exist in these documents. What one mostly finds data on is which colours were the most common, which materials were in use, and often which garments were meant to be worn together. This material can of course not stand alone, it is by far not descriptive enough for that, but must be used in corollary with other sources, written and other. However, the disadvantage of the lack of descriptions in this source material is counterbalanced by the great amount of clothes and textiles that one finds in the material. There are in the periods 1200-1374 and 1400-1420, 130 Swedish documents that contain clothes or fabric intended for clothing. The majority of these contain several items of clothing. I am far from ready with the analysis of the Norwegian material and yet I have noted that different pieces of clothing are mentioned 958 times, which makes a quantitative survey possible. Such a study can, among other things, answer questions about material, colour, how common a certain garment was, the composition of dress, and changes over time in all these aspects.

Problems concerning Terminology

When discussing and researching mediaeval dress there is always a big problem of terminology. In the ideal case we would have both a preserved garment and pictures from period art and also words that denote clothing and if we're lucky descriptions of the garment from literature and chronicles. Not even in this ideal case is it easy to couple a certain garment with a certain word and different scholars have different opinions on the meaning of almost every term. The fact that the same word can be used for pieces of clothing with very disparate appearances doesn't make it easier. For example the word *kjortel* (tunic, cotte) is used in Norwegian documents from late 13th century as well as in documents from late 15th century, despite the fact that the male dress has changed significantly during this time (DN 2 p 40 nr 45, DN 21 p 497 nr 659).Yet, if we stay within the same period in time we must assume that the different terms had a significance for the person/s who wrote the documents. If both *surcoat* and *collobium* are mentioned in the same will, we can thus come to the conclusion that there was a substantial difference between them. The fact that there are great difficulties in connecting a certain term with a certain garment, as it is seen in contemporary art, is by no means a reason to give up, just for the sake of caution. Consequent comparison between written sources, contemporary art and preserved garments can hopefully be the means to reach a greater certainty.

Terminology creates yet another problem for the historian. It is not only the mediaeval terminology and the possibility of coupling term and garment that causes trouble, but also his/her own use of terminology. The first choice one has to make is whether to use modern terms, with the advantage of exactness and consistency in one's own text, or to use contemporary terms. If one chooses the latter a gap of problem areas opens up, as we've seen above, but for the historian, whose sources are contemporary texts, that is an unavoidable problem. The question how useful period terms are in a presentation of results or analysing text must still be answered.

For the time being I will primarily use mediaeval words, but since my sources are written in several different languages; Latin, Norwegian, Swedish and in a few cases Low German, it is of course impossible to use all the terms used in every single text in a discussion without consideration. Identical garments would then have widely different names, which would not only confuse the reader but also myself. So I must choose *one* term, if it's reasonable to assume that they have the same meaning. Here the documents themselves lends some assistance, since it is common in Latin text, especially during the later Middle Ages, the 14th and 15th centuries, to elucidate exactly which garment is intended by adding a word in the vernacular.

One example is the will of Walborg Jonsdotter, from 1328, were she leaves "...togam meam dictam aermakapae..."(SD 4 p 81 nr 2685). Then we know that *toga* and *ærmakapæ* are words in Latin and Swedish that mean the same thing. Which of the terms I choose, varies from case to case, depending on which word gives the best description of the garment, is used in academic literature etc. If this kind of connection is missing we'll have to treat the different terms as separate garments, for the time being. To combine terms can only be done after thorough analysis and with caution, since the results otherwise will be misleading and complicate further research. As a tool for analysis I've also chosen to classify the clothes according to their function, with wholly modern terms as under garment, middle garment, outer garment, outside garment etc.

Examples

Wills are, together with inventories, the kinds of documents that give the greatest amount and also the most detailed data about clothing. As examples I will discuss some wills from different points of interest. Firstly, I will show and discuss two wills with an unusual amount of detail in their account of the bequeathed clothing. These two wills with their richness of detail is then contrasted with the next section were I use more typical wills. The focus here is how, by studying wills and other documents as a whole, one can reach a more certain knowledge of the pieces of clothing mentioned in them, by analysing separate garments together, in their context, to produce information that isn't given in any individual case. Lastly, in the final section, I give an account of the results of a quantitative study of the garment *kjortel/tunica* in Swedish and Norwegian documents.

The wills of Katarina Knutsdotter and Arvid Ingelsson

Even though most wills are not especially detailed concerning dress, there are exceptions. As an example I've chosen the two wills mentioned in the title. Katarina Knutsdotter was the widow of the knight Ulf Håkansson and made her will in Linköping in 1369 (SD 9 p580 nr 7955). Her will lists, apart from clothing and other chattels, land and textiles for furnishing. With one exception the gifts of clothing are intended for women. Two of these are noted as servants, one her own, and the other the servant of Ingeborg Boodotter. The relation between Katarina

and the other receivers is not mentioned. If we turn to the contents, she leaves the following items of clothing:

To Aargunne, my cloak (mantellus) and a peplum that is called glissing.

To Nicholaus Thørnsson a cloak (mantellus) of brown scarlet with ermine trimming and also lined with ermine.

To Sigrid, the servant of Ingeburg Boodotter, a circlet and a "caposkala"

To Margarete in Stang, the fur lining of my cloak (mantellus)

To my servant Sigrid, who has been the wet nurse of my sons, a blue tunic with the silver buttons that my daughter has in her hood.

To Margarete Jønsdotter, my cloak (cappa)

The first thing one sees is that the same will mentions both *cappa* and *mantellus,* which both means a kind of cloak. In modern Swedish the word *kappa* means a woman's coat, but this is not what *cappa* means, for a sleeved coat they used the words *ærmakapæ* or *toga*, as mentioned before (SD 4 p81 nr 2685). The difference between mantellus and cappa is hard to discern, Margareta Nockert writes that the *cappa* originally had an attached hood, while the mantellus lacked this [Nockert 1997: 101]. It is unclear on what basis she makes this assumption. Since representation of cloaks with hoods attached is very scarce and the preserved medieval cloaks also are without hood, this explanation lacks foundation and is improbable. What the difference exactly was has to remain a puzzle for now. That it was hard even for people in the Middle Ages to draw a line of distinction between these two can be seen in a document from 1293, where a *mantolkapa* is mentioned. That only examples of mantellus have fur linings in this will is a coincidence, since it is common both with fur-lined mantellus and fur-lined cappa. The two terms occur together in only ca 10% of the wills, which leads me to assume the differences were small and the words also could be used interchangeable. In wills where both sexes are represented there is a clear division between them, as far as it is mostly, but not exclusively, women that get a mantellus, while the opposite is true for cappa, although it doesn't hold true for this will. The cloaks in Katarina's will were, as we can see, lined and edged with fur or had other decorations (*caposkala*).

The blue tunic of the servant woman Sigrid also provides more data than what immediately meets the eye. First we get proof of the rather natural re-use of silver buttons and second the buttons have something to say about the construction of the tunic. Buttoned hoods, constructed similar to the Bocksten man's hood but tighter and with buttons were part of late 14th century continental fashion. This hood had a fairly small shoulder piece and depending on the size of the buttons there would have been between 8 and 15 of them. If the same buttons then should be used for a dress they logically should be placed on the sleeves. It is not likely that they were used for fastening a tight cote-hardie, which for example can be seen on this English funeral brass from the 14th century [Druitt 1970: 250].

The funeral monument of Sir John de la Pole and his wife Joan, c 1370. From: Druitt 1970.

A tight cote-hardie must be open to below the waist and the buttons must be fairly close to each other to keep the front smooth and the fabric lying flat when the dress follows the curves of the body, and the amount of buttons needed for a hood is simply not enough for this.

The tunic must therefore have been loose enough to put on without a closure, a style that hadn't been

"in fashion" for 25 years, or laced, with buttons on the sleeves. The buttons would not have been many and were divided between the sleeves as well so we may assume that this dress is not "high fashion", especially since it is to be worn by a woman who might not be old, but certainly isn't young. The will also contains feminine headwear: There is a circlet ("kranz") and a *peplum*, also called *glissing*. The word peplum comes from the Greek *peplos*, which was the classical Greek female dress, a rectangular piece or cloth that was fastened on the shoulders with pins or brooches and was open along one of the sides [Boucher 1987: 109]. This garment was not worn in the Middle Ages and it is clear that there has been a change of what the term signifies. Glissing is said to be a kind of veil, according to *Ordbok öfver svenska medeltidsspråket* [Söderwall 1925-53], and we'll have to do with this explanation for now.

The will of Arvid Ingelssön, which contains bequests for the well-being of the souls of him and his dead wife Ingrid Simonsdotter has even more detailed description of clothes. It is written in Nidaros (Trondheim) 1434 and it's his second will (DN 5 p 450-2 nr 640). The first will, from 1430 has only one piece of clothing listed in it: a black tunic reaching to the feet, made of sayan and with an unspecified lining. His last will, on the other hand, offers a wealth of data on dress in Nidaros in the 1430s. To his niece Ingeborg Bengtsdotter he gives a pair of big, gilt silver buttons, two "head-silvers", an unidentified silver decoration, a Russian belt with gilt silver buckle, an "up-high" ornamental shield for a hood (probably an ornament with a coat of arms), a rosary of coral and gilt silver pearls, a silver cross with a large chain, a brooch with his coat of arms, a gilt silver clasp with an inscription in German and his wife's betrothal ring. Then follows several gifts of tunics to his servants. We have here a black tunic whose sleeves are lined with green and which has 15 small, gilt silver buttons and 3 pairs of clasps, a blue tunic with 7 silver buttons, one black with 5 silver buttons, a green tunic which is described as "pretty" with 7 pairs of clasps, a tunic of sayan with 12 silver buttons and a pretty black tunic with 8 silver buttons, all given to his maids. Besides we have three *vaaskiortill*, one black with 5 silver buttons and 3 pairs of clasps, one brown with 5 pairs of clasps and one green with 3 pairs of clasps. According to *Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog* The prefix "vaas" means that the garment is intended to be worn in rough weather and for hard work [Fritzner 1972]. The other part of the word simply means "tunic", so it should be interpreted as tunics for rough use. I, however, think that the amount of buttons and clasps in silver on these tunics contradict this interpretation. The word *vaaskiortill* occurs for the first time in 1381(DN 2 p 364 nr 468), then as a masculine garment, and is consequently a rather late phenomenon. A *vastabærd* is on the other hand mentioned as early as 1343 (DN 2 p212 nr 255). The black tunic with sleeves lined with green, probably had sleeves that were wider at the wrist, which was common in this period, to show the contrasting lining. Another possible variation would have been sleeves that were closed at the cuff but had a slit along the upper side of the sleeve, where one could see the sleeve of the middle garment and also a little of the lining of the outer sleeve. In this case either the buttons or the clasps could have been placed on the sleeves, at the wrist. A male servant is also given a blue tunic of sayan and one grey of "mixed" cloth. "Mixed" can indicate both the material and the colour, but since the material is given as cloth, which in this context has a fixed meaning, I assume that it is the colour which is mixed. This could mean either medley or patterned with for example stripes [Hodges 2000: 87] Other gifts to his servants are made up of an unlined cloak with four pairs of clasps, a pair of black, Flemish hose to the male servant, a couple of brooches and clasps and to a small servant girl: two small *harbandzknøpa* (literally: "hair ribbon buttons"). What the last means is hard to say.

Garments in context – examples of outer garments

Not only the actual description of a garment in a will provides valuable information, but also which garments it occurs together with. In the following two wills from the second quarter of the 14th century one can observe how several different terms for outer and outdoor garments are used in the same document. As I see it, this should be interpreted to imply that there was (at least for the people in the period) significant differences between these garments. (Exceptions could of course exist, for example when a newer term not wholly has substituted an older term for the same garment).

The wills are from two men, Guttorm Haavardsson from Oslo (DN 3 p147-9 nr 160) and Henrik Ludvigsson, canon in Uppsala (SD 5 p 571 nr 4074), with one of the wills in Norwegian and the other one in Latin. In Guttorm Haavardsson's will the following terms for outer garments are found: kyrtil, surkot, kochardi, træiu och "sorkot medr langum ermum", that is: tunic, surcoat, cote-hardie, jacket and surcoat with long sleeves. Further there are three different outdoor garments: kapo, tabært och klukku.(cloak, tabard and possibly a short, circular cloak, for this) [von Wilckens 1988: 54]. Usually, with only one exception, garments are given in combination with other pieces of

clothing. They are often of the same material and are most likely seen as an ensemble, to be worn together: "vnum par vestimentorum"(a set of clothes). Most common is a gift of an outer garment, an outdoor garment and a hood, but sometimes only outdoor clothes and hood are given. The following combinations are found in this will:

– Tunic, surcoat and tabard plus two *kaprun* i.e. a type of hood, how it differs from *hættu*, which I here translate as just hood is unclear.

– Tunic, tabard and hood.

– *Klukku* and kaprun

– cloak, cotehardie and hood

– tunic and klukku

– tunic, surcoat with long sleeves and hood

Tunics are, as seen above, sometimes given together with another outer garment and are sometimes the only outer garment. In the first case the tunic then probably functions as the middle garment. Surcoats in Norway at this time have at least three possible "looks", long-sleeved, with short sleeves, or without sleeves. The long-sleeved type is the exception, since it needs to be specified. In the Swedish will the following outer garments occur: surcoat and tunic, and the following outdoor garments: sleeved cloak and tabard: the combinations that we find are:

– A fur lining of marten and/with a hood

– A lined surcoat. Tunic, hood and sleeved cloak.

– Surcoat and/with hood

– Tabard and/with hood

– Tunic and linen clothes.

Tunics are given both together with other outer garments and alone, and this is also the case with the sleeved cloak. The combination of tunic and linen clothes is common. In this will the combination of surcoat and hood, which occurred frequently in Guttorm Haavardsson's will, is missing. Instead an ensemble seems to be made of tunic, hood and sleeved cloak, while the other combinations aren't complete ensembles. The most common among these is surcoat and hood.

From these wills the following conclusions about male dress in the first half of the 14th century can hence be drawn:

– The tunic can be worn both as the sole outer garment but also as a middle garment together with a surcoat.

– Surcoats could be long-sleeved, but this was not the general case.

– The French term cotehardie had reached Norway in the 1330s and a clear difference is perceived between tunic, cotehardie and surcoat.

– Both cloak, tabard and sleeved cloak were used as outdoor garments together with a hood and a tunic under. There were apparently several different outdoor garments to choose from and in addition to these there was also the klukku. If we look at a wider selection of wills we can also see that all these could be used by both men and women.

– Fur linings occur separately, without the garment they were supposed to be lining (this is not something exceptional, separate fur linings are mentioned in many documents). This means that fur linings were made up separately and then were attached to the garment, something that facilitated the reuse of the fur, something that was common.

In addition to the above, we naturally get a lot of information about colours and materials.

The tunic – a quantitative survey

The wealth of detail concerning the look of clothes that I showed you in the first section, on the wills of Katarina Knutsdotter and Arvid Ingelsson, is unusual. Mostly the data is made up of the name of the garment, to whom it's bequeathed and perhaps the colour and material. By looking at them in their context, both within the same will and in the wills as a whole, it is possible, as shown above, to obtain further knowledge. Yet, the usefulness of written material, in my opinion, lies mainly in the amount of data, which makes a quantitative survey with reasonably certain results possible.

If we turn to one of the more documented garments in mediaeval Nordic dress, *kjorteln*, the tunic, as an example, we possess the following sources of knowledge:

– Preserved tunics, among others the tunic from the man found in the Bocksten Bog and the tunics from Herjolfsnes.

– period art, mainly from churches and the later Middle Ages.

– Written sources where clothing is mentioned or described.

I've already discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of source and will not elucidate upon the subject further. Instead we will see what a survey of medieval wills can add to the picture.

Material: Both the Bocksten man tunic and the clothes from Herjolfsnes are made of what appears to be locally produced woollen cloth [Nockert 1997: 112]. Concerning art, it is mostly impossible to deduce which materials the clothing pictured is made of. Exceptions do exist, such as late 15th century paintings from the Low countries, but for the Nordic countries no equivalent to the paintings of artists such as van Eyck and van der Weyden exist. There is also a more general exception to this rule: certain types of fur had a generally accepted way of representation, based on heraldry. Still, for periods before the middle of the 15th

century it is safe to say the contribution of art in this area is slight.

In my survey of Swedish and Norwegian wills imported cloth is the most common material. This is either stated with the word "kläde"/"pannus" or, more frequently, with the name of the town of origin. In as many as 89 cases it's not only mentioned that the tunic is made, or will be made up, of imported cloth but also where the cloth is manufactured. In this there is a big difference between Swedish and Norwegian material, since it is relatively unusual in Norwegian wills that the place of origin is mentioned. There is also a difference in where the cloths come from: In all the rather few instances where the place of origin is mentioned in Norwegian wills it is always English cloth, while the cloth in Swedish wills mainly comes from Flanders and Brabant, but also from Germany and Poland. Nine tunics are just said to be made of cloth. Other materials that occur are *silfar* and *sayan*, both lighter woollens. Stella Mary Newton translates silfar as sealskin [Newton 1980: 98] but since sayan and silfar are put together as one post in king Magnus regulation of prizes from 1347, it is likely that they are similar materials. It would be absurd to put furs in the middle of a list of textiles, especially to be sold by the ell (SD 5 p 637 nr 4142). In all, there are six tunics of sayan and three of silfar. About as common are tunics of scarlet, there are six of them. Frieze ("vadmal" or "burello") is mentioned eleven times, which is quite a lot if you take into account the predominance of the upper social strata in the source material, but little if you compare with the locally produced woollens' dominance in the preserved tunics from the Middle Ages. There are also singular tunics of leather and fur: wolf and marten.

Colours: It is well known that archaeological finds provide little information on colour since both the decomposition process and the acid environment that is usually the cause for preservation in the first place destroy colouring pigments. In some cases chemical analysis has been able to show which type of colouring agents have been used, but it concerns far from all textiles. Also art is exposed to decay in its colours, but keeps the original colouring to a much higher degree. The representation of colours in period art is on the other hand decided partly by which pigments attach themselves best to parchment, lime walls or whatever material the painting is made on, and also by conventions that regulate which colours are suited for certain subjects and which are considered the most "noble" colours (this of course also affected which colours people actually wore). The aesthetic whole also influences the choice of colour on the clothing in the work of art, for example people harvesting are often depicted in red clothes because it contrasts beautifully with the yellow corn [Turnau 1994]. Wills, inventories and the like, on the other hand, render information on garments that existed in reality and therefore reflect more exactly which colours were preferred and/or which were possible to produce.

The most popular colour for tunics, and also generally, is blue. Then comes, in declining order: red, white, brown, black, green, grey and once each; *marbri* (a weave that incorporates more than one colour) [Newton 1980: 58, 60, 65] and murrey. Twice *mixti coloris* is mentioned. One woman's tunic is said to be *halwskipftan*, that is mi-parti. One can also discern a development over time. White is totally absent in Norwegian wills after 1320, while black, which is unusual (mentioned twice) up to 1430 is mentioned six times during the following 20 years. For the other colours there is no similar obvious development, but it seems likely that red looses popularity after 1360, while green becomes more common. Blue enjoys a steady popularity during the whole period. Even though the data is based only on the colours of tunics, and the evidence is too small to permit a definitive statement as to which colours were the most popular during certain periods, it is possible to see changes in the popularity of different colours over time when one takes into account the colours of the garments as a whole.

Linings: Tunics, like many other garments, were often lined, in most cases with fur. In the documents tunics are lined with vair, *bissis* (probably = bishe, the grey squirrel's autumn fur), white fur (ermine), rabbit fur, marten, lambskin, *strengthened sindon*, which was a fabric made of cotton or hemp, manufactured in Cologne and Lombardy [Newton 1980: 135]. A not further specified green fabric for linings in sleeves also occurs.

Conclusion and some further thoughts

As shown above a quantitative survey of mediaeval documents provides data that can not be found anywhere else and that compliments the information gathered from the study of archaeological textiles and period art. Written sources have only been used sporadically to reinforce conclusions drawn from other sources and have not been the subject of systematic analysis in the study of dress in the Nordic countries during the Middle Ages. Such a survey would generate new knowledge, especially in collaboration with other available sources, and therefore it would be desirable to see an increased cooperation between scholars from the disciplines concerned.

SOURCES

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Eva I. Andersson
Historiska Institutionen Goeteborgs Universitet
Box 200
SE-405 Götebeorg
Sweden