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Clothing as communication? Vestments and views of the papacy c.1300

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ABSTRACT

This essay argues that Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) used clothing in a highly intentional and performative manner to communicate his status and authority. His audience, however, was quite limited – essentially, the small community of those who aspired to hold or influence the power of the Holy See – and the messages conveyed were not particularly complex. Attempting a reception history of papal attire c.1300, the essay surveys remarks regarding clothing in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century chronicles and analyses in depth the evidence of two sources: ambassadorial reports to King James II of Aragon (1291–1327) and the *De electione et coronatione sanctissimi patris domini Bonifatii pape octavi* of Cardinal Jacopo Caetani Stefaneschi (c.1270–1343). A suggestive finding is that performativity, or the highly theatrical use of garments, appears to have been used by Boniface VIII to foster dissemination of simple communications across great distances.

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From the early Middle Ages, the pre-eminence claimed by the successors of St Peter was associated with special clothing. The letters of Pope Gregory I (590–604), for example, and the earliest redaction of the *Liber pontificalis* mention the *pallium* as a symbol of papal office and favour. This white, woollen band was granted by popes to other bishops as a mark of special merit or status and it was stripped from pontiffs to visualise their deposition.¹ The *Constitutum Constantini*, or ‘Donation of Constantine’, generally regarded as a late eighth-century forgery, laid claim to much more exalted garb: it asserted that the Emperor Constantine had granted to Pope Sylvester I (314–35) and all his successors the right to wear imperial regalia. Only fragmentary evidence before the millennium reveals the actual use of imperial garments, but from the mid eleventh century surviving vestments, visual depictions and textual references document distinctive elements of papal attire that represented the pope’s authority – most notably the red mantle and the tiara.²

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¹ The following abbreviation is used in this paper: MGH: Monumenta Germaniae Historica; SS: Scriptores.

Maureen C. Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, c.800–1200* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 26–7. A more in-depth study of this garment is Steven A. Schoenig, *Bonds of Wool: the Pallium and Papal Power in the Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016).

² Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 191–4; in greater detail and with additional bibliography in Maureen C. Miller, *Vestire la chiesa: gli abiti del clero nella Roma medievale*, trans. Riccardo Cristiani (Rome: Viella, 2014), 49–50, 64–7.

To the frustration of textile specialists, however, the number of surviving garments known to have been worn by medieval popes, or donated either to them or by them to other individuals or institutions, is quite limited. The burial garments of Pope Clement II (1046–7) provide an early, quite spectacular, view of an entire matched set of pontifical vestments,³ but then one must wait until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries for further exemplars. These late medieval papal vestments differ stylistically from those of the mid eleventh century. Clement II's vestments were notable for their high-quality Byzantine silks, in several hues, with complex woven patterns of addorsed panthers and griffins. But they lacked additional embroidered ornament or gold thread. Papal garments at the turn of the fourteenth century, however, were hyper-ornamented. Boniface VIII (1294–1303) was buried in an alb decorated with more than two dozen scenes from the life of Christ embroidered in gold and silk thread, while the burial garments of his successor Benedict XI (1303–4) were made of 'Tartar cloth' suffused with gold threads and ornamented with Florentine-style embroideries.⁴

While it is clear that by the eleventh century papal clothing communicated the pontiff's status as the successor of Peter in the see of Rome and his claims to supreme temporal authority on the basis of the *Constitutum Constantini*, might the elaborately ornamented attire of later medieval popes communicate more nuanced messages? The survival of papal vestments, of inventories and documents describing them, and of more numerous chronicles in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries makes possible some assessment of papal clothing as a means of communication. After setting out particular patterns of description matching surviving papal vestments and their possible meanings, this paper surveys late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century chronicles and other sources recounting papal activities to discover whether observant contemporaries remarked upon papal garments and, if they did, what messages about the papacy they understood from them. The evidence indicates that Boniface VIII did use clothing in a highly intentional and performative manner to communicate his status and authority, but his audience was quite limited and the messages conveyed were not particularly complex.

Background and hypotheses

Language about clothing

Inventories of parish, cathedral and monastic treasuries from the late eighth century on reveal the distinguishing characteristics of ecclesiastical garments and other liturgical textiles.⁵ The earliest tended only to indicate the type of garment (cope, chasuble, etc.), the number owned and sometimes the material, but by the thirteenth and fourteenth

³ Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 179–81, 192–4.

⁴ Alfred A. Strnad, 'Giacomo Grimaldis Bericht über die Öffnung des Grabes Papst Bonifaz' VIII. (1605)', *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 61 (1966): 191–2; Julian Gardner, 'Opus anglicanum and Its Medieval Patrons', in *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus anglicanum*, eds. Clare Browne, Glyn Davies, and M.A. Michael (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 2016), 52–3. I am grateful to Professor Gardner for sharing the text of this catalogue contribution with me before its publication. For Benedict XI's burial garb, see Maria Luciana Buseghin, 'I parati di Benedetto XI conservati nella chiesa di San Domenico a Perugia: studi e ricerche', in *Benedetto XI papa domenicano (1240–1304)*, ed. Alberto Viganò (Florence: Edizioni Nerbini, 2006), 154–5; Anne E. Wardwell, 'Panni Tartarici: Eastern Islamic Silks Woven with Gold and Silver (13th and 14th Centuries)', *Islamic Art* 3 (1988–9): 98, 102, figures 21–2.

⁵ Bernhard Bischoff, ed., *Mittelalterliche Schatzverzeichnisse, I: Von der Zeit Karls des Großen bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1967), 42, 63–4, 73–4, 107.

centuries, the usual descriptive language of ecclesiastical inventories identified three things: the type of vestment; the material (wool, silk, etc.); and the colour. A mid thirteenth-century inventory from the cathedral of Hildesheim, for example, opened with ‘a chasuble of black samite-silk with gold embroidery’.⁶ Evidence directly related to the papacy indicates that the Roman see followed these conventions.⁷

A series of inventories of papal treasure at the very end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, however, reveals a more elaborate language of description emphasising the places or peoples that produced the materials of which sacred garments were made.⁸ A 1295 inventory of the treasury of the Holy See, for example, described copes as English (*pluviale anglicanum*), or having English embroidery (*cum frixio anglicano*); chasubles were decorated with English work (*de opere anglicano*).⁹ Other copes had ‘Cyprus work’ (*de opere ciprensi*), such as ‘a cope of red samite embroidered in gold in Cyprus work with roundels in which there are griffins and two-headed eagles and two birds facing a certain flower’.¹⁰ Still others were characterised as having been made of Tartar cloths, referring to a range of Asian silks produced in the Mongol empire,¹¹ and a cope made of Tartar cloth was also described as decorated with German embroidery.¹²

⁶ Bischoff, ed., *Mittelalterliche Schatzverzeichnisse*, 40: ‘Una casula de nigro examito cum aurifrigio’; also Riccardo Bar-sotti, *Gli antichi inventari della cattedrale di Pisa* (Pisa: Università di Pisa, 1959), 19.

⁷ See Maureen C. Miller, ‘A Descriptive Language of Dominion? Curial Inventories, Clothing, and Papal Monarchy c.1300’, *Textile History* 48, no. 2 (2017): 176–91.

⁸ Émile Molinier, ‘Inventaire du trésor du Saint-Siège sous Boniface VIII (1295)’, *Bibliothèque de l’École des Chartes* 43 (1882): 277–310, 626–46; 45 (1884): 31–57; 46 (1885): 16–44. Molinier distinguishes several types of inventories recording papal treasure: those of the personal treasury of the reigning pontiff; those of the treasury of the Holy See; and those of the treasury of the basilica of St Peter. The items inventoried are numbered in the 1295 inventory and to facilitate reference further citations will be Molinier, ‘Inventaire’, and then the item number. Lucas Burkart, ‘Das Verzeichnis als Schatz: Überlegungen zu einem *Inuentarium Thesauri Romane Ecclesie* der Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Cod. Ottob. lat. 2516, fol. 126r–132r)’, *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 86 (2006): 144–207. *Regesti Clementis papae V ex Vaticanis archetypis sanctissimi domini nostri Leonis XIII pontificis maximi ivssu et mvnificencia nunc primvm editi cvra et stvdio monachorum ordinis S. Benedicti appendices*, vol. 1 (Rome: Typographia Vaticana, 1892), 357–513. I thank the Inter-Library Loan librarians of the Yale University Library for making this volume available to me. On this extraordinary document, see Julian Gardner, ‘The Treasure of Pope Boniface VIII: the Perugian Inventory of 1311’, *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 34 (2004): 69–86. On the need for new editions, see Pierre-Yves Le Pogam, ‘Les inventaires du trésor pontifical entre la fin du XIIIe siècle et le début du XIVe siècle (1295, 1304, 1311): pour une réédition et une confrontation’, *Thesis Cahier d’Histoire des Collections et de Muséologie* 7 (2005): 7–39. Hermann Hoberg, *Die Inventare des päpstlichen Schatzes in Avignon 1314–1376* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944).

⁹ Molinier, ‘Inventaire’, nos. 881, 891, 902, 904, 916, 952, 967; other garments with English embroidery: nos. 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 936, 949, 951, 952, 953, 954, 958, 961, 962, 964, 967, 971, 972, 973, 974, 976, 982, 984, 986, 988, 989, 991, 998, 1001, 1005, 1008, 1010, 1018, 1034, 1036. Fine embroidery work from England is known as early as the late eighth- or early ninth-century *casula* of Sts Harlindis and Relindis: Mildred Budney and Dominic Tweddle, ‘The Early Medieval Textiles at Maaseik, Belgium’, *Antiquaries Journal* 65 (1985): 353–89. The term *opus anglicanum*, however, has tended since the late nineteenth century to be used more specifically to denote embroideries produced in England, chiefly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, distinguished by the technique of ‘underside couching’: Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, *Textile Conservation and Research: a Documentation of the Textile Department on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Abegg Foundation* (Bern: Schriften der Abegg-Stiftung, 1988), 118; Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth, and Maria Hayward, eds., *Encyclopedia of Dress and Textiles in the British Isles c.450–1450* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), s.v. *Opus anglicanum*, 392–7; Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 131, 250.

¹⁰ Molinier, ‘Inventaire’, no. 890: ‘unum pluviale de examito rubeo brodatum ad aurum de opere ciprensi cum rotis in quibus sunt grifones et aquile cum duobus capitibus, et due aves respicientes quemdam florem’; other vestments with ‘Cyprus work’, nos. 882, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 906, 908, 910, 915, 919, 923, 943, 980, 987.

¹¹ Molinier, ‘Inventaire’, nos. 897, 898, 907, 920, 932, 933, 941, 946, 947, 949, 963, 978, 987, 994, 1000, 1001, 1014, 1019, 1098. On Tartar cloths: ‘a generic name applied to a large and varied group of silks woven in Mongol-ruled territories of Central Asia and the Middle East’, see David Jacoby, ‘Oriental Silks Go West: a Declining Trade in the Later Middle Ages’, in *Islamic Artefacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, eds. Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 71–8.

¹² Molinier, ‘Inventaire’, no. 897: ‘unum pluviale de panno tartarico rubeo ad aurum cum frixio de Almania’; other examples of German embroidery: Molinier, ‘Inventaire’, nos. 886, 983, 1039.

Many vestments were depicted as composite creations, bringing together cloth from one place and ornamentation from another – all carefully distinguished by notaries. In addition to *opere alamanici* or *theotonico*, the 1295 inventory referenced cloth of Salerno, Lucca and Reims;¹³ cloth or gold embroidery work of the Veneto (*panno de Venetiis, frixio venetico*);¹⁴ and Spanish cloth (*panno hispanico*).¹⁵ Vestments *de diaspro de Antiochia* ('diaper from Antioch') and decorated in golden embroidered *opere Romanie* ('Roman [Byzantine] work') were also described.¹⁶

As has been argued in detail elsewhere,¹⁷ this emphasis on the places and peoples creating the fine fabrics and embroideries used in liturgical vestments was peculiar to the papal court: it is found not only in inventories of the treasury of the Holy See, but also in an inventory drawn up at Pope Boniface VIII's death in 1303 at the Vatican basilica of St Peter,¹⁸ inventories pertaining to cardinals' movable goods,¹⁹ and in cardinals' wills.²⁰ For this reason, it is referred to in this paper as 'curial', although not every cardinal adopted it. It is strikingly minimal or absent altogether, however, in the inventories drawn up in local dioceses and other royal courts. This distinctively curial language of description, moreover, had a limited lifespan. It becomes prominent in the late 1280s and declines after 1314.²¹

The relationship of this particularly detailed and precise descriptive language to actual textiles and garments is complex. First, an assertion in an inventory that a fabric was from (*de*) a certain place (e.g. *de Venetiis*) does not necessarily mean the garment or fabric in question was made in the locale mentioned. The notary may merely have been recording the assertion of the textile's owner or custodian, who may or may not have known or faithfully reported its provenance. Additionally, imitations of prestige fabrics are amply attested in late medieval Europe. So a fabric faithfully reported as 'Tartar cloth' could actually be from Central Asia or could be from a European workshop imitating Tartar designs.²² Finally, indications of provenance for coveted embroideries, such as *opus anglicanum*, over time became technical terms indicating certain manufacturing techniques typical for these *opera*: something described as *cum frixio anglicano* may indicate a garment with embroidered ornament in the style of 'English work', rather than one

¹³ Molinier, 'Inventaire', nos. 958 ('de panno salernitano'), 1016 ('de panno lucano'), 1022 ('de tela Remensi').

¹⁴ Molinier, 'Inventaire', nos. 901, 921, 930, 934, 937, 959, 961, 973, 990, 992, 999, 1016, 1047, 1066, 1072.

¹⁵ Molinier, 'Inventaire', nos. 929, 930, 931, 938, 939, 942, 960, 962.

¹⁶ Molinier, 'Inventaire', nos. 887, 937, 944, 957, 959, 976, 996, 1031, 1035.

¹⁷ See n. 3.

¹⁸ Eugene Müntz and Arthur Lincoln Frothingham, 'Il tesoro della basilica di S. Pietro in Vaticano dal XIII al XV secolo con una scelta d'inventari inediti', *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 6 (1883): 1–137.

¹⁹ Valentina Brancone, *Il tesoro dei cardinali del duecento: inventari di libri e di beni mobili* (Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2009) publishes new editions of the inventories printed in the nineteenth century cited below and adds newly discovered material. I will cite her edition, but readers may also consult Maurice Prou, 'Inventaire des meubles du cardinal Geoffroi d'Alatri (1287)', *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 5 (1885): 382–411; Annibale Teneroni, 'Inventario di sacri arredi appartenuti ai cardinali Bentivenga e Matteo Bentivegna d'Acquasparta', *Archivio Storico Italiano* 5, no. 2 (1888): 260–6; Guido Levi, 'Il cardinale Ottaviano degli Ubaldini secondo il suo carteggio ed altri documenti', *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 14 (1891): 231–303.

²⁰ Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *I testamenti dei cardinali del duecento* (Rome: Società romana di storia patria alla Biblioteca Vallicelliana, 1980).

²¹ Miller, 'Descriptive Language', 180–1.

²² Miller, 'Descriptive Language', 178–9; on European imitations of Eastern prestige fabrics, see David Jacoby, 'Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 217–18; idem, 'Oriental Silks Go West', 71, 77–9; Sharon Farmer, 'Medieval Paris and the Mediterranean: the Evidence from the Silk Industry', *French Historical Studies* 37, no. 3 (2014): 402.

with embroidery made in England.²³ The careful research of textile specialist Christiane Elster, however, has linked several surviving textiles to items described in the 1295 and 1311 papal inventories: a silk fragment, now in the Museo Diocesano of Osimo, decorated with the Caetani coat of arms and the papal tiara; and four vestments (a cope, a chasuble, two dalmatics), donated by Boniface VIII to the Anagni cathedral, ornamented in *opus cyprense* and still preserved there today.²⁴

This is some evidence that the descriptive language of these inventories did correspond with features found in surviving garments even if the actual provenance of the elements cannot be known with certainty. Several well-documented papal copes in *opus anglicanum* – such as one donated by Pope Benedict XI to S. Domenico in Bologna or the cope ‘of St Silvester’, believed to have been worn by Boniface VIII at the jubilee of 1300 and still preserved in the Lateran treasury – as well as embroidery fragments recovered from papal tombs, also indicate that popes wore liturgical garments featuring ‘foreign’ styles of textile ornamentation.²⁵

Possible messages communicated?

The curia’s elaborate descriptive language about its clothing is some index of the visual image that the papal court wished to project in the elaborate processions and liturgies that punctuated its day-to-day life. What messages might the curia have been communicating through these highly ornamented vestments combining fabrics and embroideries made by different peoples in varied places? A number of hypotheses merit exploration.

Might vestments made from materials from all over Europe and even beyond communicate the universality of the Church? After all, Christians from Scandinavia to Sicily recognised the pope as Christ’s vicar, and missionaries offered the grace of the saviour’s redemption to all peoples, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries especially to Tartars and Muslims. So if the pope wore ‘a beautiful chasuble of red Tartar cloth, ornamented with circles of gold ... and with orphreys of English work in front and in back

²³ Christiane Elster, ‘Liturgical Textiles as Papal Donations in Late Medieval Italy’, in *Dressing the Part: Textiles as Propaganda in the Middle Ages*, eds. Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 65–79, 177–85 (179, n. 15).

²⁴ I thank the author for sharing this study with me before its publication: Christiane Elster, ‘Inventories and Textiles of the Papal Treasury around the Year 1300: Concepts of Papal Representation in Written and Material Media’, in *Inventories of Textiles – Textiles in Inventories: Studies on Late Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, eds. Thomas Ertl and Barbara Karl (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 34–41. Julian Gardner has also linked several other surviving garments to those described in papal inventories: Gardner, ‘*Opus anglicanum* and Its Medieval Patrons’, 54–5.

²⁵ Miller, *Vestire la chiesa*, 9–10, 104–5. The Bologna cope, datable to the very end of the thirteenth century, is mentioned in a 1390 inventory from the convent of S. Domenico as ‘unum pluviale magnum cum figuris contextum de auro et fuit domini Benedicti pape’. Almost certainly this was Pope Benedict XI, a Dominican, and provincial of Lombardy for the order in 1286 and 1293: Francesca Bignozzi Montefusto, *Il piviale di San Domenico* (Bologna: Casa Editrice Prof. Riccardo Patron, 1970), 35–6; on its iconography, see Cristina Bussolati, ‘Il piviale di San Domenico: una proposta di lettura’, *Arte e Bologna: Bollettino dei Musei Civici d’Arte Antica* 3 (1993): 93–104. On the Lateran cope, A.G.I. Christie, *English Medieval Embroidery, a Brief Survey of English Embroidery Dating from the Beginning of the Tenth Century until the End of the Fourteenth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), 149–52, plates CII–CV; Rossana Buono, *Il museo di S. Giovanni in Laterano* (Rome: Fratelli Palombi Editori, 1986), 38–9, 41; Maria Andaloro, ‘Il tesoro della basilica di S. Giovanni in Laterano’, in *San Giovanni in Laterano*, ed. Carlo Pietrangeli (Florence: Nardini, 1990), 271–97, especially 275, where she affirms a dating to the late thirteenth century. Julian Gardner, ‘*Opus anglicanum*, Goldsmithwork, Manuscript Illumination and Ivories in the Rome of Boniface VIII’, in *Le culture di Bonifacio VIII: atti del convegno organizzato nell’ambito delle celebrazioni per il VII centenario della morte, Bologna, 13–15 dicembre 2004* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 2006), 163–79; idem, *The Roman Crucible: the Artistic Patronage of the Papacy 1198–1304* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2013), 209–12.

embroidered with white crosses and red roses of silk',²⁶ might he be communicating that his blessing, and invitation to share in Christ's mercy, was available to all peoples?

Or, might the cultivation of an 'international' or 'universal' style instead be defensive rather than inviting? Might it respond to an escalating critique that the bodies governing the Church in concert with the popes – councils, but particularly the College of Cardinals and curia – were not representative? In the period when this curial language emphasising materials from many places is most in evidence, Italian dominance of the papacy was broken: whereas the overwhelming majority of the thirteenth-century popes were Italians, from the election of Bertrand de Got (reigned as Pope Clement V, 1305–14) in 1305 they were French until the Great Schism began in 1378.²⁷ In this context of the increasingly politicised perception of the curia, the cultivation of a liturgical look that blended materials from many places may have constituted a visual as well as descriptive rhetoric of greater universality.

Alternatively, might the wearing of garments featuring the handiwork of many peoples and places be the ideological assertion of a dominion that was spiritual but also temporal? Both Christiane Elster and I were arriving independently at this same interpretation of the language of curial inventories in 2014–15. Could, Elster perceptively asked, the repeated notice of provenances, the 'heterogeneity of certain "composite objects" and of the papal textile ensemble as a whole', serve as 'a symbolic visualisation of the papacy's political relationships and a claim for universal rule at the end of the thirteenth century?' Even as papal claims to authority were being more vigorously and effectively challenged across the thirteenth century, the expansiveness of those claims reached a crescendo during the pontificate of Boniface VIII. To wit, his bull *Unam sanctam* of 1302 decreed that 'it is necessary for the salvation of every human creature to be subject to the pope.'²⁸ Might, then, the wearing of vestments made of precious materials made by myriad peoples articulate expansive claims to authority?

Papal clothing as communication

Mass communication?

If Boniface VIII conceived of his highly ornamented and ornate vestments as the means to make visible to all the authoritative claims he would articulate textually in *Unam sanctam*, they were a massive communications failure. The broad viewing public appears to have taken little note of his attire.

The Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani (d. 1348), who was in Rome for Boniface's jubilee in 1300, made no remarks on clothing either ecclesiastical or secular. It was,

²⁶ *Regesti Clementis papae V*, 417: 'planetam pulcrum de panno tartarico rubeo, laborato ad compassus de auro ... Et habet aurifrigia de opere anglicano ante et retro, laborata ad cruces albas et rosas rubeas de serico.'

²⁷ The Italian-French division had been present in the college from the late twelfth century with roughly 80% of the cardinals from Italy, 18% from France and the rest of Christendom accounting for the remaining 2%: J.F. Broderick, 'The Sacred College of Cardinals: Size and Geographical Composition (1099–1986)', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 25 (1987): 16–21; on the ecclesiastical politics of the era see Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, *The Papacy*, trans. James Sievert (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 193–200; specifically on Boniface VIII: Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2003), especially 282–366.

²⁸ Elster, 'Inventories and Textiles', 49–50; Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: a Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1965), 413–14, 447–8; Schimmelpfennig, *Papacy*, 181–3, 196; Emanuele Conte, 'La bolla *Unam sanctam* e i fondamenti del potere papale fra diritto e teologia', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome Moyen Âge* 113, no. 1 (2001): 663–84.

instead, the remains of antiquity that made a deep impression upon him. Villani did relate that Boniface donned the garments symbolising his office during the attack at Anagni on 7 September 1303. In his heroic depiction, when the embattled pontiff realised that his enemies were upon him,

like the high-spirited and valorous man he was, he said: ‘Since, like Jesus Christ, I am willing to be taken and must die in treachery, at the least I desire to die as pope’; and straightaway he had himself robed in the mantle of St Peter, and with the crown of Constantine on his head, and with the keys and the cross in his hand, he seated himself upon the papal throne.²⁹

These details, however, were not recorded in the one eyewitness account of the attack that survives, the letter of William Hundleby, proctor at the curia, to his master John Dalderby, bishop of Lincoln (1300–20), dated 27 September 1303. Hundleby relates other snappy ripostes by Boniface, but his only reference to clothing is in generic statements about *vestimenta*, along with other valuables, being stolen from the papal treasure.³⁰ Villani presents Boniface’s attire as part of an assemblage that communicated only his identity as pope, his possession of the papal office.

Even Tolomeo da Lucca (1236–1326/7), who was quite interested in papal magnificence, does not single out clothing as a significant indicator. A Dominican friar, Tolomeo was a disciple and confessor of Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) in Naples before going on to be prior of S. Maria Novella in Florence and, finally, bishop of Torcello.³¹ His *Historia ecclesiastica nova* contains numerous observations on the character and accomplishments of individual pontiffs. Tolomeo, for example, remarks on the many innovations of Pope Nicholas III (1277–80) – the palace and gardens he built at St Peter’s; the series of pontifical portraits he had painted in St Peter’s, S. Paolo fuori le mura and the Lateran basilica; the decretals and constitutions he authored; and his renovation of the Sancta Sanctorum.³² He observed that Boniface VIII ‘began to extend his power in many ways not customary among his predecessors and to increase papal magnificence’.³³ What follows this assertion, however, illustrates the extension of papal power more than magnificence, and clothing figures in it not at all.

²⁹ Giovanni Villani, *Nuova cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Porta. 3 vols. (Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo/Ugo Guanda Editore, 2007), 2: 58, 117 (b.9, c.63): ‘ma come magnanimo e valente, disse: “Da che per tradimento, come Gesù Cristo, voglio esser preso e mi conviene morire, almeno voglio morire come papa”; e di presente si fece parare dell’amanto di san Piero, e colla corona di Gostantino in capo, e colle chiavi e croce in mano, in su la sedia papale si puose a sedere.’ As noted by Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, the detail of Boniface putting on ‘the mantle of St Peter’ also appears in the *Storie pistoresi*: Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, 354 n. 35; Silvio Adrasto Barbi, ed., *Storie pistoresi [MCCC–MCCCXLVIII]*. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptorum* (new edn.) 11, part 5 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1907), 239 (rubr. 150). Guglielmo Ventura, a pepper merchant from Asti, also witnessed the jubilee of 1300 but recorded in his chronicle only a report on prices, comments on the great crowds in attendance and the observation that the pope made a lot of money, appending a transcription of the indulgence: Elio Arleri, Osvaldo Campassi, and Giuseppe Tartaglino, eds., and Natale Ferro, trans., *Gli antichi cronisti astesi Ogerio Alfieri, Guglielmo Ventura e Secondino Ventura secondo il testo dei Monumenta Historiae Patriae volume V, Scriptorum tomo III, Torino 1848* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1990), 64–5.

³⁰ Henry G.T. Beck, ‘William Hundleby’s Account of the Anagni Outrage’, *Catholic Historical Review* 32 (1946): 195–6.

³¹ Ludwig Schmutge, ‘Fiadoni, Bartolomeo (Tolomeo, Ptolomeo da Lucca)’, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, ed. Alberto M. Ghisalberti (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–, in progress), 47: 317–20.

³² Tolomeo da Lucca, *Historia ecclesiastica nova*, eds. Ottavio Clavuot and Ludwig Schmutge. MGH SS 39 (Hanover: Hahn, 2009), 607–13 (b.23, c.28–36).

³³ Tolomeo da Lucca, *Historia ecclesiastica nova*, 641 et seq.; this is the manuscript C continuation that the editors believe highly likely to be the work of Tolomeo (‘Einleitung’, xxii–xxviii).

Even in a town like Orvieto that enjoyed frequent papal visits, pontifical attire elicited little comment. The *Cronica potestatum* recorded the placing of the first stone in 1290 for the city's new cathedral and commented that Pope Nicholas IV (1288–92), his cardinals and other prelates were all 'solemnly attired' (*sollemniter parati*): their vestments communicated formality and dignity appropriate to the occasion. The same chronicler gave a bit more detail when noting that the commune gave fitting honour to Lord Goffredo, husband of the countess of Pitigliano, by providing him with an escort of 12 knights garbed in tunics and mantles lined with squirrel fur.³⁴ Similarly, the *Annales Parmenses maiores* reported that Azzo VIII d'Este (1293–1308) gave each of 52 new knights 'two vair garments, one of samite' (*duas vestes varas, unam de samite*) while mentioning nothing about papal attire in either the accounts of the jubilee or of the attack at Anagni.³⁵ And the Franciscan chronicler Salimbene de Adam (c.1221–90), usually not at a loss for words, made only passing references to papal vestments even though he related being in the presence of Pope Innocent IV (1243–54) several times, and in one instance standing so close to the pontiff that he could have touched him.³⁶ In describing the election of Pope Alexander IV (1254–61), Salimbene credited the Cardinal Deacon Ottaviano with placing 'the mantle on the best man in the curia' (*imposuit mantum meliori homini de curia*). And when the Perugians burned an effigy of Pope Martin IV (1281–5), they dressed the straw figure in red (*indutum de rubeo*).³⁷ Salimbene only included details about fabrics and ornaments when describing lay clothing – such as the funeral attire of Count Louis of the San Bonifacio of Verona, which was 'scarlet with a beautiful fur of vair ... a beautiful cap of vair on his head, and a splendid scarlet cloak trimmed with various kinds of fur' – or lay gifts to the Church.³⁸

Roman chroniclers are scarce for this period and taciturn. The *Cronaca romana* of Guidotto Spiapasto, covering 1288 to 1301, recorded papal movements, carefully noting when audiences for business were held and when not. Guidotto, who was proctor for the commune of Vicenza trying to move a case along at the curia, recorded nothing about papal attire.³⁹ Nor did Francesco d'Andrea, whose collection of notices about Viterbo and Rome is meagre from 1281 to 1367, or Riccobaldo of Ferrara (c.1246–1320) in his *Compendium Romanae historiae*.⁴⁰ Like Salimbene's *Cronica*, Saba Malaspina's

³⁴ L. Fumi, ed., *Ephemerides Urbevetana dal Cod. Vaticano Urbinate 1745*. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (new edn.) 15, part 5 (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1903), 162, 169. The account in this chronicle of the attack on Pope Boniface VIII at Anagni (174) reported only that 'papa paravit se pontificaliter, timens occidi'. The statues of himself Boniface VIII had erected at two city gates, 'ad magnificentiam dicti pape', elicited more notice (134, 170).

³⁵ G.H. Pertz, ed., *Annales et notae Parmenses et Ferrarienses: Annales Parmenses maiores (a. 1165–1335)*, in *Annales aevi Suevici*, ed. G.H. Pertz. MGH SS in folio 18 (Hanover: Hahn, 1863), 714, 724, 729. Nor did the Siense chronicle of Andreas Dei or the *Annales Cavenses* remark on papal clothing: Andreas Dei, *Chronicon Senense (1186–1328)*. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* 15 (Milan: Ex Typographia Societatis Palatinae, 1729), 11–128; G.H. Pertz, ed., 'Annales Cavenses', in *Annales, chronica et historiae aevi Saxonici*, ed. G.H. Pertz. MGH SS in folio 3 (Hanover: Hahn, 1839), 185–97.

³⁶ Salimbene de Adam, *Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Scalia. 2 vols. (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1966), 1: 467, 476; 2: 646–8: 'Ego vero eram iuxta papam, ita ut possem eum tangere, quando vellem' (2: 648).

³⁷ Salimbene, *Cronica*, 2: 746–7.

³⁸ Salimbene, *Cronica*, 2: 752, '... de scarleto cum pulcra pelle varia ... in capite pulcherrimam capellinam de variis et clamidem de scarleto cum variis pellibus adornatam', 754.

³⁹ D.D. Bartolan, 'Cronaca romana dall'anno 1288 al 1301', *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* 33, no. 1 (1887): 425–33.

⁴⁰ Pietro Egidi, 'Le croniche di Viterbo scritte da frate Francesco d'Andrea', *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 24 (1901): 197–252, 299–371; Riccobaldus Ferrariensis, *Compendium Romanae historiae*, ed. A. Teresa Hankey (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 1984). O. Holder-Egger, ed., 'Chronicon breve summorum pontificum (1241–1316)', in *Ex rerum Francogallicarum scriptoribus. Ex historiis auctorum Flandrensium Francogallica lingua scriptis. Supplementum tomi XXIV*, ed. G. Waitz. MGH SS in folio 26 (Hanover: Hahn, 1882), 439–40, gives just

(d. 1298) chronicle covers an earlier period (1231–85) and has little to say about ecclesiastical or lay garb.⁴¹

The most likely reason pontifical clothing elicited little comment among these thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century chroniclers is that ornate liturgical garments, combining patterned silks and elaborate embroideries, had been standard clerical attire for more than two centuries. The style originated and was first broadly diffused in northern Europe over the ninth and tenth centuries. It came to Italy with the Ottonians, is evident in Rome by 1050, and by the twelfth century was normalised throughout Europe.⁴² A remark by Salimbene de Adam is telling in this regard. An outburst on ‘wicked priests’ reached a crescendo with the indictment that ‘they have indecent missals, vestments and altar linens that are crude, stained and filthy. ... Many women have finer strings for their shoes than the cincture, stole and maniple many priests possess, as I have seen with my own eyes.’⁴³ Ugly and soiled clothing merited mention as it represented the moral defects of ‘wicked clerics’. Decent clothing communicated propriety and goodness; it was unremarkable since these qualities were expected in the clergy. Although some viewing the beautiful vestments worn by popes like Boniface VIII may have doubted whether the man’s character matched his attire, observers whose accounts of the period have survived chose neither to share those doubts nor to describe the garments.

The audience that mattered

While some of the observers surveyed above – such as Giovanni Villani, Riccobaldo of Ferrara or the Orvietan author of the *Cronica potestatum* – may simply have been watching from too great a distance to be able to see details of papal finery, others were near enough to have a good view. Salimbene, remember, recalled being so close to Pope Innocent IV that he could have touched him, and Saba Malaspina was a *scriptor* at the papal curia from 1283 until his appointment as bishop in 1286 to the see of Mileto.⁴⁴ Both these authors were writing before the most intense use of descriptive language emphasising the peoples and places creating the fabrics and embroideries used in papal vestments. But Guidotto Spiapasto, whose *Cronaca romana* covers 1288 to 1301, was a proctor at the papal curia, and Tolomeo da Lucca was present at the election of Pope Celestine V in 1294, assisted at his consecration in Aquila and was definitely in Naples for his renunciation – and yet neither of these authors remarked upon papal clothing. More than proximity and good visual access to the papal court seem to have been necessary to take an interest in communicative uses of pontifical attire.

brief notices; and O. Holder-Egger, ed., ‘*Continuatio chronici pontificum ex Gilberto (1187–1243)*’, in *Annales aevi Suevici (Supplementa tomorum XVI et XVII). Gesta saec. XII. XIII. (Supplementa tomorum XX–XXIII)*, ed. G. Waitz. MGH SS 24 (Hanover: Hahn, 1879), 140–1, lists only election and death dates with the length of pontificate. The *Cronichetta inedita del monastero di S. Andrea ‘ad clivum Scauri*’, in *Il Muratori: Raccolta di documenti storici inediti o rari tratti dagli archivi italiani pubblici e private*, ed. Isidoro Carini. 3 vols. (Rome: Tipografia Vaticana, 1892–4), fasc. 7–8, 2: 5–58, contains three entries (VII–IX, on 29–31) on the pontificate of Boniface VIII, but none mentions clothing.

⁴¹ Saba Malaspina, *Der Chronik des Saba Malaspina*, eds. Walter Koller and August Nitsche. MGH SS 35 (Hanover: Hahn, 1999), 188 (b.4, c.6), 198 (b.4, c.13).

⁴² Miller, *Clothing the Clergy*, 96–140, especially 133–7.

⁴³ Salimbene, *Cronica*, 1: 615: ‘Missalia, paramenta et corporalia habent indecentia, grossa, nigra et maculata ... Multa mulieres habent meliores ligaturas subtellarium, quam multi sacerdotes habeant cingulum, stolam et manipulum, ut vidi oculis meis.’

⁴⁴ Berardo Pio, ‘Malaspina, Saba’, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 67: 803–6.

An interrogation of witnesses in 1310, however, offers evidence that those in the presence of a prelate were expected to notice what he was wearing. The document is directly related to Boniface VIII, having been redacted by a commission of cardinals charged with investigating the French crown's allegations against the deceased pope, a post-mortem continuation of King Philip the Fair's feud with the Caetani pontiff. A series of questions were asked to probe the quality of witnesses' memories. Where were you? Was Benedict Caetani (Pope Boniface VIII) standing or sitting? What was he wearing?⁴⁵ The last query was asked of 12 of the 14 witnesses; all those asked remembered something. Nicola, abbot of the monastery of Santa Maria de Margaritis in Campania, testified that Benedict was wearing 'a Roman alb and a mantle over it, the colour of which he could not recall'.⁴⁶ But others remembered not only articles of clothing and their colour, but also the fabrics of which they were made. Both Nicola da Oppido and Ruggero di Simone de Gesualdo said that Benedict was wearing a *mantellum de blaveto forratum de vario* ('a cloak of blue fabric furred with vair', a detail that may indicate their testimony was rehearsed), but others recalled the cardinal Caetani wearing garments made *de scarleto* (a rich, full-woolen broadcloth) or *de blaveto* (a blue fabric).⁴⁷ These witnesses, individuals who had been in the same room with Boniface, however, gave no indication regarding the provenance or manufacture of these materials. Such details seem not to have made a memorable impression or communicated anything worth recording.

Indeed, in the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century writings of those who certainly or likely saw papal attire that I have been able to survey, there are only very few and fleeting references to the kind of detail that is so striking in the curial inventories of the period – that is, to peoples or places making the materials of which vestments were made. Only two sources – a record of diplomatic gifts to the pope and a celebratory account of a papal consecration – offer any evidence that such information was notable. But these two sources, set in the context of others that reveal a particular, if less detailed, interest in clothing at the papal court, do give us some clues as to ways in which papal attire was communicative.

Let us consider first the report of an ambassador, Vidal de Villanova (d. 1353), a trusted councillor of King James II of Aragon (1291–1327). Sent on numerous embassies on behalf of his sovereign, in 1303 Vidal was charged with buying and conveying to the Roman curia a considerable amount of cloth to be distributed as gifts. They included pieces of *escarlato* and red *presset* that cost 2237 *solidi* of Barcelona, and a piece of white *escarleto* from Brussels worth 39 gold florins, that were given to the pope, plus pieces of cloth for two cardinals. Cardinal Matteo Rossi received a *peciam panni morati de grana* (a piece of cloth [coloured] reddish-brown using 'scarlet grain', also known as kermes).⁴⁸ This source, of course, is akin to the curial inventories: the value of the fabric is recorded along with

⁴⁵ Jean Coste, ed., *Boniface VIII en procès: articles d'accusation et dépositions des témoins (1303–1311)* (Rome: Fondazione Camillo Caetani/L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1995), 621–733; for this series of interrogations conducted from 17 August to 9 September 1310 in Provence regarding a *disputatio* said to have occurred in Naples in 1294 when Benedict Caetani was still a cardinal, see Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, 52–4. Typical questions testing the witness's memory were: 'ubi audivit ... in quo loco', 'qui erant presentes' (652), 'quibus vestibus erat tunc dictus cardinalis indutus' (653).

⁴⁶ Coste, ed., *Boniface VIII en procès*, 513, 665; others unable to recall details: 675, 706–7, 732.

⁴⁷ Coste, ed., *Boniface VIII en procès*: 'erat indutus de scarleto desuper' (671), 'supra camisiam mantellum de blaveto' (685), 'unum mantellum de scarleto' (717), 'habens mantellum rubeum de scarleto' (723).

⁴⁸ Heinrich Finke, ed., *Acta Aragonensia: Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen, zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II. (1291–1327)*. 3 vols. (Berlin: W. Rothschild,

details justifying the amounts expended. Indeed, it calls our attention to a significant source of the textiles that ended up in the papal treasuries. For diplomatic gifts such as these to be effective, ambassadors like Vidal had to acquaint themselves with the tastes of those wielding power at the curia. Diplomats may have made inquiries but they also certainly observed, and so the clothing the pope and his cardinals wore communicated, at a very basic level, what they liked. The attire the pope and his retinue favoured could be used to curry favour.

Another document in this same collection of diplomatic correspondence from the Crown of Aragon, moreover, not only confirms that emissaries at the papal court paid attention to papal clothing, but also reveals a broader context for their interest. In 1302, Arnau Sabastida, treasurer (*maestre racional*) to King James II, transmitted a report about events at the curia that came to him rather indirectly (via an informant of his nephew in Montpellier).⁴⁹ It related a strange and dramatic exchange between Boniface VIII and his cardinals in the public setting of St Peter's basilica. The pope asked, three times, 'who he was' (*el qui er[e]*), until finally one of the cardinals responded that the pontiff held the place of God on earth and that of St Peter, so that what he bound on earth would be bound in Heaven. After demanding the assent of all the cardinals to this 'truth', he then deposed all the prelates present, demanding their hats and rings, offering later to restore those who were obedient to their former dignities. Then, according to the report, the pope withdrew to a chamber and returned in different attire – 'pants of red *presset* and gold shoes with gilt spurs and garments entirely of red *presset*' – with a sword in hand.⁵⁰ In this outfit he asked if they believed he was the emperor and they responded affirmatively. The report continued, recounting that Boniface then said 'I am dressed like this because I am above all things in Christendom', explaining further that the cross on his back and the sword in his hand symbolised the spiritual and temporal power the Lord had bestowed upon him.⁵¹ Another costume change then followed, according to Arnau's letter: the pope withdrew again and returned dressed completely in black and continued his harangue, this time explaining that his attire related to his pain and distress at so much disobedience to the head of Holy Church.

This account seems far-fetched: perhaps it was meant ironically, as a sarcastic parody of Boniface and his curia? Other evidence, however, suggests kernels of truth in this tale, even if exaggerated. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani's careful contextualisation of this account's details in light of other reports about Boniface VIII's behaviour – notably, other instances in which he brandished swords and demanded recognition of his authority – makes a strong case for its consideration.⁵² Whether all of its details are trustworthy or not, the report asserts a significant and highly intentional use of clothing to communicate: two

1908–22), 1: 152–3. On diplomatic gifts in the papal court see Karsten Plöger, *England and the Avignon Popes: the Practice of Diplomacy in Late Medieval Europe* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2005), 209–18.

⁴⁹ Finke, ed., *Acta Aragonensia*, 1: 133–5, analysed in Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, 391–5.

⁵⁰ Finke, ed., *Acta Aragonensia*, 1: 134: 'el se calça calces de preset vermeyll e çabats daurades et esperons deaurats et vestes tot de preset vermeyll'.

⁵¹ Finke, ed., *Acta Aragonensia*, 1: 134: 'E puix pres una esp[aa] et hisque de fora et dix a tots, si creyen, que el fos enperadore et els dixeren, que hoc. Jo, dich el, me som axi vestit per ço, con yo som sobre totes coses de la chrestianat. La creu, que port detras, port per ço con son papa, lespaa, que tench ab m[es mans], os devets creure cascuns, que nostre senyor la dona a sent Pere en significança, qu dela .I. tayl deges tenir dretura per lo celestial e per laltre deges tenir dretura terrenal, e que per aquela raho avia presa aquela espaa.'

⁵² Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, 291–5.

costume changes are recorded along with two overt papal explanations of the meaning of his garments. Whether or not many contemporaries recorded observations about papal attire, those who made and repeated this report found it plausible that the pope saw communicative potential in clothing and staged performances using garments to make points, and to make them memorably. As we saw above in recorded witness testimony, individuals were expected to notice and remember clothing. Arnau's report suggests that this expectation could be actively manipulated to communicate.

Two other aspects of this report seem significant. The fact that a royal councillor conveyed it to his sovereign indicates that papal performances of authority, including those using clothing to convey messages, were politically important, even when not directly touching state matters before the curia. They provided information on the papal mood, the pontiff's preoccupations, and possible shifts in power among his closest councillors and within the College of Cardinals. It is also significant that even in this third- or fourth-hand report, fabric types ('red *presset*') are included. What kinds of textiles the pope associated with his authority were important to powerful observers. When, shortly thereafter, King James ordered his ambassador Vidal de Villanova to purchase and convey gifts to the pope, Vidal included expensive pieces of red *presset* in his textile offering, implicitly recognising the pope's expansive claims to authority, his position 'above all things in Christendom'.

The other source mentioning the place where fabrics worn by the pope were made is the *De electione et coronatione sanctissimi patris domini Bonifatii pape octavi* of Jacopo Caetani Stefaneschi (c.1270–1343). Stefaneschi had been made cardinal deacon of S. Giorgio al Velabro by Boniface VIII in 1295 and he wrote this account of the pope's consecration and coronation shortly after the events.⁵³ In Book 2, Chapter 9, describing the procession after the pope's coronation, he wrote of Boniface having arrived on horseback, 'his mantle, shining with a diadem and adorned with gold, glistens, for it is stitched with the tip of a Cyprian feather.'⁵⁴ Stefaneschi's allusion here to *opus cyprense* actually accords with what we know of Boniface VIII's tastes in precious textiles. The inventory of the treasury of the Holy See drawn up in 1295, a year after Boniface's elevation to the throne of St Peter, details 19 vestments made with 'Cyprus work'⁵⁵ and numerous textiles wholly or partially of *opus cyprense* are also minutely described in the 1311 inventory of the treasury. Indeed, four vestments donated by Boniface VIII to the cathedral of Anagni that still survive today can be securely identified as 'Cyprus work' because of these detailed inventory descriptions: a cope, chasuble and two dalmatics were made of a heavy red samite silk covered with gold embroidery in a pattern of large roundels with griffins, parrots, double-headed eagles and various floral motifs that mimicked the patterns woven into Byzantine silks.⁵⁶

⁵³ This work is part of the larger *Opus metricum* published in Franz Xaver Seppelt, ed., *Monumenta Coelestiniana: Quellen zur Geschichte des Papstes Coelestin V* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1921), 84–109; on Stefaneschi, see Paravicini Bagliani, *Bonifacio VIII*, xx–xxi; and on the cardinal's extraordinary artistic patronage, Gardner, 'Opus anglicanum and Its Medieval Patrons', 54; idem, *Roman Crucible*, 31–4.

⁵⁴ Seppelt, ed., *Monumenta Coelestiniana*, 101: 'Adventabat equo, candens diademate palla/Aurataque super palla, nam cuspidate plume/Cyprensis consuta nitet.' My thanks to Bruce Venarde for his suggestions on translating this.

⁵⁵ Molinier, 'Inventaire', nos. 882, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 906, 908, 910, 915, 919, 923, 945, 980, 987 (seven copes, 10 chasubles, one dalmatic, and one tunicle). On this type of embroidery, see Jannic Durand and Marielle Martiniani-Reber, 'Opus Cyprense – oiselets, or de Chypre et broderies', in *Chypre entre Byzance et l'Occident IVe–XVIIe siècle*, eds. Jannic Durand and Dorota Giovannoni (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2012), 266–72.

⁵⁶ Elster, 'Inventories and Textiles', 38–42.

This one, fleeting, poetic allusion to ‘Cyprus work’ can only be understood in context. Stefaneschi’s poetic description of Boniface VIII’s consecration and coronation is replete with references to clothing. He opens Book 2 with a 30-line depiction of the new pontiff’s vesting for consecration. Arriving at St Peter’s basilica, Boniface puts off his ‘glistening roseate mantle’ (*roseo velamine fulgens*), and having gird himself with the cincture he donned the snowy-white amice and the stole, then the satin-sleeved tunic and the Levite’s dalmatic, and over them the full chasuble. He doffs the mitre, its two ‘horns’ symbolising the old and the new law, then the gloves, the ring and the maniple. Even the *sandalia ornamenta* on the pope’s feet merit notice. The entire third chapter is devoted to the bestowal of the *pallium* – that white, woollen, liturgical scarf that symbolised the papal office – which, Stefaneschi relates, was affixed with gold pins topped by pure sapphires. The coronation on the front steps of the basilica opens with a costume change: the ‘great pious monarch’ (*magna pietatis monarcha*) is draped with a special chasuble, one of various hues, and then crowned with the ‘ancient mark of *imperium*’ (*vetustum imperii signum*), the tiara (elaborately described, mentioning the gems encrusting it three times). This imperial figure then begins his procession from St Peter’s to the Lateran, and as the various orders assemble, Boniface arrives on horseback: ‘his mantle, shining with a diadem and adorned with gold, glistens, for it is stitched with the tip of a Cyprian feather’. At exactly this point, two rulers step forth – Charles II, king of Sicily (d. 1309), and his son, Charles Martel,⁵⁷ whom Pope Nicholas IV recognised as king of Hungary (1290–5) – to act as the pontiff’s groomsmen. Boniface VIII’s Cyprus-work mantle, therefore, is quite directly related to this rite of imperial procession, the submission of his vassals, the mere temporal kings of Sicily and Hungary, and their acknowledgement of the pope’s superior authority.

Conclusions

Although our evidence is limited, these two sources including references to the places or peoples providing the materials for papal attire associate such textiles with power, and more particularly the pontiff’s supremacy. As Boniface reportedly put it, such garments represented his position ‘above all things in Christendom’. If observers interpreted them as representing the universality of the Church or as asserting it in the face of criticism, they seem not to have recorded their views. When papal clothing elicited comment, including reference to precious materials made by different peoples, it was understood to articulate expansive claims to authority.

The audience for papal communication through clothing, however, was extremely limited.⁵⁸ The limitation seems not primarily visual. There were observers, as noted above, physically close enough to the pope to see details of his attire who were not moved to remark upon them: if something was communicated, these observers did not deem the message worth conveying to posterity. Rather, the key limitations were cultural and political. The audience that mattered was the small community of those who aspired to hold or influence the power of the Holy See. Culturally, these individuals were

⁵⁷ Seppelt, ed., *Monumenta Coelestiniana*, 92–3, 95, 98–101. Charles Martel’s claim to the Hungarian throne came through his mother, Maria of Hungary, but the kingdom was in fact ruled by the Árpád Andrew III (r. 1290–1301).

⁵⁸ Here confirming Elster, ‘Inventories and Textiles’, 31; see also Gardner, ‘*Opus anglicanum* and Its Medieval Patrons’, 55.

connoisseurs of fine things, particularly the things that lubricated relations at the papal court. Politically, they were ‘players’: that is, they were individuals close to the greatest powers in Christendom and with power of their own. They were cardinals and ambassadors to the papal court.

Considered within the range of communicative tools at the disposal of the papacy, however, one must acknowledge that clothing was a weak medium for conveying ideas. Note that in Arnau Sabastida’s report, Boniface VIII seems to have felt the need to explain verbally what his outfits meant. Simply wearing them was not sufficient to be reliably understood, even in the presence of the audience most interested in papal affairs. Indeed, even these examples underscore that clothing primarily communicated wealth, status, rank, office, dignity and the power that accompanied them. While these things are and were important, they are not particularly complex, and the reception history of papal attire attempted here suggests that the actual complexity of textile artefacts – as composite objects combining multiple materials with ingenuity and skill – did not necessarily communicate intricate messages. For those studying textiles, then, the primary conclusion is one of interpretive caution and the necessity of considering reception. There are many meanings a garment might generate for us as modern intellectuals; whether any of those meanings was understood or valued by medieval viewers should be assayed and not assumed.

For the history of papal communication, Boniface VIII’s performative uses of clothing were significant not for the complexity of the messages they conveyed but for their strategic aim to make simple points *memorably* and to promote their diffusion. The highly intentional combination of theatricality with unexpected clothing choices – pants and spurs, unusual colours such as black – was devised to communicate forcefully in a way that witnesses would recall and repeat. Although the audience of eyewitnesses was limited to powerful curial insiders, the pope’s performativity – his creation of a spectacle using unusual clothing as well as strange behaviours – allowed simple messages to travel great distances: they were recounted, repeated and passed along until they reached, through Arnau Sabastida’s report, King James II of Aragon. Papal communication through clothing was not effective in reaching the masses, but by the late thirteenth century it was surmounting great distances through the strategic use of theatricality.

Note on contributor

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