



**3rd HERA Workshop:
Early Modern Textile Production**

**PhD presentations on the topic Early Modern Textile Production
Conference room at the Helsingør Theatre, Old Town Museum**

**Friday 7 October
15:00 – 17:00**

Abstracts

Probate records from Danish and Norwegian towns c. 1536-1700

Camilla Luise Dahl, Centre for Textile Research

Probates are some of the most informative sources for dress in 16th and 17th century Denmark-Norway. A large number of probates for townspeople have survived and are stored in Danish, Norwegian and Scanian public archives. So far only a little of this large material has been transcribed and made accessible to a broader audience, leaving the majority of the material difficult to read, hard to access and undigested in terms of further investigation.

In this talk a presentation of the project “Probate records from Early Modern Denmark-Norway” will be given. So far the first part of the project “Probate records from Danish towns 1536-1660” is almost done. A large portion of the transcribed probates has now been made available online on the CTR website.

The aim of the current project, is to transcribe and publish a larger selection of dress inventories in probates from a number of towns; first Danish, and eventually Norwegian. The ongoing transcriptions will be published online and made accessible to students, scholars and researchers (at all levels) of early modern dress and textiles. Probates can be used to study dress and textiles in areas such as early modern textile trade, the use or trade of second-hand dress, production of dress and textiles, studies of specific garment types, the spread of fashions throughout Europe and within Denmark-Norway, names and typologies of garments, local versus international dress, and much, much more. Probates can also be a useful source material to researchers in various fields such as economic history, linguistics (terminology), and cultural history. Presentation of the material and suggestions to further research will be given.

Technical comparison between Swedish peasant bobbin made borders and bobbin made borders of gold and silver

Lena Dahrén, University of Uppsala

In 1986 I visited the Victoria & Albert Museum for the very first time and enjoyed the enormous lace exhibition which in those days covered at least two big halls.

Even more impressive was the exhibition of clothing on the first floor – quite new in those days I understand – showing bobbin and needle lace in the context of clothing from early 17th century until present days, where the change and adjustment of the lace to the contemporary fashion could be studied.

One of the oldest pieces in the exhibition was Mrs. Margaret Layton's jacket, from the 1620s, all over embroidered with silk and gold, and a bobbin made border of gold and silver¹ along all edges. Beside there was a portrait of Mrs. Layton wearing the very same jacket. - What caught my attention was that the bobbin made edging on the jacket was remarkable alike the bobbin made free-hand laces that can be seen among the Swedish peasant bobbin laces - conserved in regions like Dalarna and Hälsingland.

There has been a growing interest for free-hand lace among lace makers in Europe during the last 10-15 years. As the free hand technique has been "alive" in Sweden and transferred through generations until today it has been of great interest to support this kind of craft in the regions where it has belonged. ² There has also been an interest of revival and teaching the old bobbin lace technique in regions where it has been of use earlier, but where it has disappeared due to change in fashion and architecture. This means that I have been analyzing patterns and technique of free-hand lace for teaching - and among the laces in my series of exercise there was an edging with a tendency of a likeness with the Layton border.

About the same time friends of mine, working at the Swedish National Heritage board's textile section, made me aware of preserved bobbin made borders and edgings of gold and silver to be found in Swedish parish churches. Among those my eye caught a chalice-veil with a golden edging of the same kind as the peasant bobbin made borders in Hälsingland.

Now, this was the start for my thesis – to study the silver and golden bobbin made borders and edgings preserved in Swedish parish churches - and compare them with the Swedish peasant bobbin made lace. It very soon turned out that there were no sources concerning the context of the peasant laces, which meant that I had to drop them for the thesis. The likeness in technique and pattern, however, is there, and I am happy to have received a grant for further studying of the technical similarities.

I will present the laces to you. Their technique and as much as I today know of their presumed context. Afterwards I would love to hear your thoughts about what questions you think would be of interest – to give this study a deeper value even though the sources are limited.

Dressing up the Phantom of the Italian Wars *Cristiano Zanetti, European University Institute*

The monumental cycle of frescos executed at Cremona Cathedral (ca. 1512-1521), representing the lives of Virgin Mary and Jesus, has often concerned art historians for stylistic reasons, being a complex document of reception of different regional schools. However, I would like to look at it through the lenses of cultural and social history: these holy scenes are indeed populated with an array of contemporary characters. The most evident to detect are the *fabricieri*, elected lay representatives of the City Council in charge of the administration of the Cathedral. Among them, one can also notice important figures, clothed in rich robes, whose identity is not clear at all. My question is about the identity of these people and the message that, together with the *fabricieri*, they were supposed to communicate. I think that the reading of cloths, jewels and colours may help in this interpretative task. Furthermore, one of these unknown characters is curiously standing in lavish black damask, but –him alone- with unfinished physiognomic features...

Presentation of PhD proposal: significance of Indian textiles for trade, fashion, consumption, demand and material culture in Denmark and the Danish tropical colonies between 1660 and 1800

¹ In my text I have chosen to write gold and silver – even though it very seldom (or never) is pure gold or pure silver.

² My former profession, for 20 years, has been as handicraft consultant with concentration on bobbin lace.

Vibe Martens, Centre for Textile Research

I will present the topic of my current PhD proposal. The proposal is a cross-disciplinary investigation of the significance of Indian textiles, particularly cotton, for trade, fashion, consumption, demand and material culture in Denmark and the Danish tropical colonies between 1660 and 1800. The project brings together colonial history and textile research in India, Denmark and Europe.

The working hypothesis is that Indian textiles as a profitable commodity played an important role in the decision of the Danish state to establish colonies in India. However, in the long run this economic strategy failed because of the rapid decline of the Indian textile trade once production was superseded by the European manufacturers who could produce textiles of a similar quality. Despite this the trade in Indian textiles has significant ramifications for Danish cultural history and the role of the Danish tropical colonies in the slave trade (Guinea and the West Indies). In the past interest in Danish colonial trade has concentrated on the role of guns as a vital exchange commodity in the slave trade, here I will argue that textiles played an equally important role. Equally significant is that the rise in the consumption of Indian textiles in Denmark in the pre-modern era was central to the economic, social and cultural developments of modern society.

The core of the project is to examine the significance of the consumption of and trade in Indian textiles in for the economy and culture of Denmark and the Danish colonies in the pre-modern era. In order to examine this it is necessary to consider several perspectives (see fig. 1): The properties of the textile (i.e. the visual impact, novelty, pattern, colour fastness, softness, price etc.) are central to its popularity and increased usability. "The visual craze" made the Indian textiles different and exotic fashion items. Furthermore it had a social impact in terms of consumption. The "calico craze" meant that more people of different social statuses gained access to a large and expanding market for Indian textiles, or the European version, which became the basis of a consumer revolution.