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Introduction

‘The water surged into the church with tremendous force, causing the main door to yield under its weight. Wooden furnishings, including chairs and the organ, floated on the surface. Even the sacristy was flooded. Drawers and cabinets filled with vestments and linens were also filled with mud and debris.’¹

- 1 This account of the flooding in the Saint-Lambert chapel in Verviers illustrates the impetus for the project aimed at assessing the value and significance of liturgical textiles. When a church faces a crisis such as flooding or fire, historic liturgical textiles are particularly vulnerable to destruction. Their vulnerability stems from their delicate material composition and often-overlooked heritage value, which heightens the risk of being easily discarded when damaged by disaster.
- 2 Swift action is required in such a crisis. In the case of the Saint-Lambert chapel, the church council of Saint-Remacle, along with the Cultural Committee of Saint-Remacle, acted quickly to evacuate and rinse the textiles. Afterwards, they laid the textiles out to dry on chairs in a nearby church that had been spared from the floodwaters.
- 3 Beyond the initial emergency response to rescue the affected heritage items from the water and mud, there is an immediate need to assess the heritage value of the damaged objects. When an entire collection is impacted, the extent of the damage can be so significant that saving all the items becomes challenging. Prioritising will be necessary. Which damaged objects are the most important to safeguard first, in terms of heritage value, and receive the necessary conservation treatment?
- 4 To address this need, the Textiles Studio of KIK-IRPA has launched a subproject within the CHrisis project that aims to evaluate the value and significance of liturgical textiles.

Problem Statement and Objectives

- 5 What is meant by assessing the value and significance of heritage? Evaluating heritage addresses the question: why is this heritage important, and for whom? A more comprehensive definition is as follows: assessing value and significance is the process of researching, understanding, and evaluating various heritage values in a rational and structured manner, in collaboration with different stakeholders and interested parties.² Heritage values encompass historical, social, and functional values, along with the specific characteristics of a heritage object or collection. Throughout this article, the term '(cultural) heritage values' is used for brevity. The combination of all these values constitutes the overall significance of an object or (sub)collection.³
- 6 Why is the process of significance assessment important? In the case of ecclesiastical heritage, an evaluation process is both useful and necessary when a Catholic church building requires repurposing. It is also essential for general heritage management, particularly when setting priorities in situations where choices must be made (such as in disaster scenarios) or when determining which heritage should receive legal protection or official designation. By making heritage values explicit through the involvement of various stakeholders, social support for the heritage is primarily created.⁴
- 7 It is also important to clearly define the purpose of the significance assessment beforehand. The project on assessing the value and significance of liturgical textiles is motivated by the need to evaluate value in crisis situations. Nevertheless, the project addresses this context more broadly than just acute disaster scenarios. Various factors threaten the category of heritage referred to as liturgical textiles.
- 8 In many sacristies, valuable liturgical textiles are preserved, including richly embroidered vestments, garments made from 18th century silk fabrics, and even older Italian silk velvets, linen damasks, and lacework. Often, this heritage is either unknown or undervalued. Furthermore, the preservation conditions for this unique legacy are frequently less than ideal. Many of these textile objects have fallen into disuse and have been relegated to drawers, boxes, storage spaces, or attics. The loss of function and social or spiritual significance of these objects, along with the gradual disappearance of knowledge about them, poses a significant threat to this precious heritage. This threat is becoming increasingly urgent due to profound changes in the church landscape. The reality of declining religious practice, which results in the restructuring of many parishes and church closures, has accelerated discussions about repurposing churches. Consequently, care for ecclesiastical heritage is increasingly under pressure and rests on the shoulders of a small group of dedicated volunteers.⁵ The project assessing the value and significance of liturgical textiles advocates for conducting thorough evaluations before a crisis occurs, ensuring that heritage managers understand which objects hold the greatest significance and should be prioritised for evacuation and conservation in the event of a disaster. This process should ideally be carried out systematically across all churches and entire heritage collections to enhance disaster preparedness.
- 9 Section 'Methodology' broaches assessment methodologies for religious heritage collections and examines how this approach can be implemented in emergencies that

require an accelerated evaluation process when no prior significance assessment has been conducted.

- 10 The project aims to assist heritage managers and professionals in evaluating the cultural heritage value and significance of liturgical textiles primarily preserved in Walloon churches. To achieve this goal, the Textiles Studio of KIK-IRPA has focused on expanding and deepening its (art) historical knowledge in this specific area of heritage, with the intention of further enhancing its expert role in future assessment processes.

Methodology

- 11 The assessment project for liturgical textiles primarily focused on the Walloon region. It arose from the needs identified during and shortly after the floods in southern Belgium in 2021.

Orientation in the Walloon Cultural Heritage Field

- 12 The initial phase of the project involved an orientation within the cultural heritage sector in Wallonia. The cultural policy domain, which includes movable religious heritage, is organised and funded differently in Flanders and Wallonia. To assist heritage managers and professionals in evaluating the significance of liturgical textiles preserved in Walloon churches, it was essential to gain a clear understanding of the relevant institutions, available tools, and the current status of value assessment for religious heritage in Wallonia.
- 13 In Wallonia, the Centre Interdiocésain du Patrimoine et des Arts Religieux (CIPAR) functions as the expertise centre for the preservation, protection, and promotion of religious heritage. It serves as the Walloon counterpart to PARCUM, the expertise centre for religious art and culture in Flanders.⁶ Moreover, each of the four French-speaking dioceses (Namur, Liège, Tournai, and the Vicariate of Walloon Brabant) has a heritage service or department, with one or more staff members acting as points of contact for church councils regarding the management of their religious heritage. CIPAR supports both these diocesan heritage services and directly assists church authorities and local governments in managing the heritage preserved in churches. As outlined in the article *Management and Coordination of Damaged Parish Churches in Wallonia During the Crisis Phase* in this issue (Maura Moriaux), CIPAR played a crucial role during the floods by providing support to affected parish churches, alongside colleagues from KIK-IRPA and Blue Shield Belgium.
- 14 The value assessment project was clearly conducted in collaboration with CIPAR and the diocesan heritage services.
- 15 To start, crucial knowledge was shared regarding the regional context of managing religious heritage, especially in relation to evaluating liturgical textiles.

Collection Registration

- 16 Religious heritage preserved in parish churches in Wallonia is catalogued in a secure database managed by CIPAR. Church councils can access this database to input the

inventory of heritage preserved in their churches.⁷ This database is linked to the KIK-IRPA database, BALaT, for catalogued objects.

Status of Registration Degree

- 17 CIPAR systematically tracks, by diocese, which parish churches have fully catalogued their movable heritage in a digital format. In times of crisis, it is possible to quickly ascertain the availability of an inventory for the affected church. Significant progress has been made in inventorying over recent decades; however, many inventories continue to be added each year. To provide optimal support to church councils, CIPAR offers training, publications, and a validation procedure for these inventories.

Practice in Value Assessment

- 18 CIPAR has created a concise plan for assessing, selecting, and repurposing movable religious heritage in the event of complete or partial repurposing of church buildings.⁸ This plan is entirely based on the *Stappenplan Religieus Erfgoed* established in Flanders,⁹ yet it is presented in a more synthesised format. The following paragraph outlines the key steps of this evaluation methodology. However, practical experience with the significance assessment of religious heritage remains limited.

Orientation in Methodologies for Value and Significance Assessment

- 19 The first phase of the project also involved becoming more familiar with evaluation methodologies for heritage collections. Several well-established methods exist for assessing value and significance. Most of these methodologies draw inspiration from the Australian assessment methodology, *Significance 2.0*.¹⁰ A key reference work in the Dutch-speaking world is *Op de museale weegschaal – collectiewaardering in zes stappen*.¹¹ FARO, the Flemish Institution for Cultural Heritage, compiles various evaluation manuals on its website, highlighting the differences among them.¹² On one hand, there are general guidelines applicable to heritage collections of various types; on the other hand, there are manuals for specific collections. For example, the Flemish *Stappenplan Religieus Erfgoed* and the similar step-by-step plan developed by CIPAR represent a translation of the general evaluation methodology tailored to the assessment, selection, and repurposing of religious heritage collections, specifically designed for the Flemish and Walloon contexts, respectively. As the Flemish step-by-step plan is available online, this article refers to this Dutch-language tool several times.
- 20 What makes both step-by-step plans for evaluating religious heritage particularly unique is that they are specifically directed at church boards. This target group differs from collection managers in museums and other professional contexts, which are the focus of most evaluation methodologies. The management of religious heritage in parish churches is typically entrusted to volunteers, who are non-professional heritage managers. They play a crucial role in preserving and managing religious heritage, an important factor that should not be underestimated. Supporting this large group of volunteer heritage managers in their demanding responsibilities presents a significant challenge.

- 21 A brief overview of the main elements or steps involved in the assessment process follows, based on the manual *Stappenplan Religieus Erfgoed*. A more comprehensive theoretical rationale for the various steps in a thorough evaluation process can be found in the sources cited above.
- 22 The ideal scenario is that a value assessment can be conducted within a self-planned timeframe rather than being compelled by an emergency situation. In the context of an urgent crisis, it may not be feasible to undertake a comprehensive participatory evaluation process. How value and significance assessment can be practically implemented in crisis situations is briefly outlined below for each step, framed within a box. This is further illustrated in the case study of the affected textile collection from the Saint-Lambert chapel in Verviers, as detailed in the 'Results' section.

Project Team

- 23 A value and significance assessment ideally involves a participatory process conducted by a small team of diverse stakeholders, guided by an evaluation team with specific expertise. On one hand, assessing heritage is the work of experts; in the case of liturgical textiles, art-historical and material-technical research conducted by a heritage specialist is essential for a meaningful evaluation. On the other hand, it is equally important to involve various stakeholders in the assessment process: a representative from the church council, the parish, the diocesan heritage service, and possibly a municipal official, along with other local stakeholders or interested parties. In evaluating religious heritage, it is crucial to consider the values that the objects hold for the local community, such as their social and religious significance. This can foster public support and social engagement regarding the importance of certain heritage objects.

In an emergency, a small but efficient assessment team should be swiftly put together, led by a professional heritage expert who possesses a solid understanding of religious heritage and its legal framework. When evaluating the heritage value of specialised objects like liturgical textiles, the team should consult with a dedicated expert in the field.

Inventory

- 24 Before evaluating heritage, a comprehensive and current inventory is the essential first step. The inventory of movable heritage is not only a legal requirement but also functions as a management tool.

In the event of a disaster, if a complete inventory has not yet been made, an emergency inventory should be created. When circumstances allow, the items should be arranged for documentation. An emergency inventory should include at least one clear photo of each item, ensuring that every object is recorded in its current state. This visual record is essential for conducting a value assessment of the collection as a whole and, if possible, of individual items. An emergency inventory should assign a unique number to each item, with a corresponding label attached to ensure it remains identifiable at all times (fig. 1).

[fig. 1]



Chasuble and stole rescued from the affected Saint Lambert chapel in Verviers, labelled with an emergency inventory number.

© Brussels, KIK-IRPA, working photo (textiles workshop).

Assessment

- 25 This is the process of researching, understanding, and evaluating the heritage values of the collection. The criteria typically applied are categorised into four clusters:
 - Formal heritage characteristics include condition, ensemble value, provenance, rarity, and representativity.
 - Historical values include church historical value, historical-artistic value, industrial-historical value, and research value.
 - Social values include identity, religious and spiritual aspects, educational benefits, and experiential significance.
 - Use values, including ecclesiastical use value and economic use value.¹³
- 26 A clear description of each of these values can be found in the downloadable document *Stap 3 – Bijlage Waarderingscriteria 2018* from the *Stappenplan Religieus Erfgoed*. In the context of the CHrisis project, a framework for value and significance assessment has been outlined, consisting of the value clusters listed above, along with guiding questions. This framework serves as a useful tool for evaluating a (sub)collection. The assessment framework is available in section *Framework and Workflow for Assessing a Collection Element by Element*.

In crisis situations, there is no time for a thorough and participatory evaluation process. Instead, the assessment of value and significance will involve an expedited categorisation of part of the collection by a heritage professional, with input from an expert for specialised objects, such as liturgical textiles.

The condition of the affected items will inevitably impact their valuation. An expert can help determine whether a collection or object has suffered a total loss due to the disaster or if conservation treatment is feasible and worthwhile.

Using an emergency inventory, objects can be systematically reviewed and categorised based on their heritage value as high, medium, or low.

Decision or Action

- 27 Depending on the purpose of the evaluation process, the phases of decision-making, planning, and executing actions follow the assessment.

In the context of evaluating heritage during a crisis, this evaluation results in a selection and a repurposing plan. In the case of Verviers, for example, the assessment led to a categorisation into three groups: (1) to be preserved and conserved, (2) to be retained, and (3) to be deaccessioned.

Building Knowledge and Experience in Liturgical Textiles Assessment

- 28 Although the theory surrounding evaluation methodologies is widely available, as demonstrated in the previous paragraph, there remains limited practical experience with valuation processes for religious heritage, particularly regarding the specific category of liturgical textiles. The *Stappenplan Religieus Erfgoed* website outlines several successful assessment processes in Flanders, including an example of emergency categorisation.
- 29 With the CHrisis project focusing on the value assessment of liturgical textiles, the aim was to build and share additional knowledge and practical experience in this area. Specifically, the goal was to gain expertise in assessing the historical values related to this field.
- 30 Specialised knowledge about the art-historical development of liturgical textiles was gathered through a literature review.¹⁴ As a result, information was distilled regarding the formal, material, and stylistic evolution of liturgical vestments. This served as the foundation for a working paper outlining key observation points when examining liturgical textile collections, many of which are discussed in the ‘Results’ section.
- 31 Additionally, a collection of visual materials was compiled, featuring paraments with established dates based on the online KIK-IRPA database and illustrations from specialised literature.
- 32 The symposium *Fashion for God – Reuse in Religious and Secular Dress*, organised by the Museum Catharijneconvent in Utrecht, further enriched art-historical knowledge regarding liturgical textiles. This event was held in conjunction with the exhibition *Fashion for God*, which showcased religious vestments from hidden Dutch churches between 1580 and 1800.¹⁵ This event also provided an excellent opportunity to expand the professional network with experts in the field.
- 33 The acquired knowledge was subsequently applied to gain hands-on experience in evaluating liturgical textiles. In collaboration with CIPAR and the diocesan heritage services, suitable case studies were identified. A list was compiled for each diocese of churches that preserve an extensive collection of liturgical textiles, featuring a broad range of object types and dates. From this list, at least one church or museum per diocese was selected to review the textile collection and establish the groundwork for

an assessment. The cases selected from the longlist were based on practical considerations, such as a church council currently working to improve the storage conditions of its liturgical textiles, or a textile collection with which the involved heritage professional from the diocesan heritage service was already well-acquainted.

- 34 Before each site visit, the relevant inventory, which included photos of all objects, was thoroughly examined. The closed database managed by CIPAR proved to be a valuable resource, enabling an export to Excel, where additional information could be recorded about materials, techniques, and dating during the site visits.
- 35 To further enhance knowledge and experience, peer textile specialists were invited to collaborate on several case studies. These experts included Dr. Mireille Gilbert (UCLouvain), Dr. Hélène Malice (UCLouvain), and art historian Frieda Sorber (former curator at the Fashion Museum in Antwerp). Each collaboration fostered a rich exchange of knowledge and expertise.

Results

- 36 The *Value and Significance Assessment* project for liturgical textiles resulted in a diverse array of outcomes, which are detailed below.

Observation Points for Researching and Evaluating Liturgical Textiles

- 37 Based on specialised literature, a list of observation points was compiled to examine and assess a collection of liturgical textiles. Various characteristics aid in dating and evaluating the heritage values of these textiles.
- 38 One important note is that attention should not only be given to the oldest vestments in a collection. It is a reality that a significant amount of liturgical textiles from the 19th and 20th centuries have been preserved; however, this does not diminish their value. This is demonstrated by the publication *Kerkelijk textiel in Vlaanderen en Brussel in de 19de en 20ste eeuw*.¹⁶ A similar study of liturgical textiles preserved in Walloon churches would be worthwhile to be able to ascertain where, by whom, and what textiles were produced in this region. Given the significant preservation of liturgical textiles from this period, there is a risk that these objects may be among the first to be rejected during repurposing efforts, which could result in the loss of valuable information in a relatively short time.
- 39 The following list of observation points is not exhaustive but serves as a guideline. This list was discussed in a consultation meeting with CIPAR and the diocesan heritage services. During site visits, it provided a framework for gaining relevant experience.

Assembling Related Items into a Liturgical Vestment

- 40 During the inventory process, it is essential to assemble the vestments as completely as possible. This involves gathering the entire set of related garments and accessories that comprise a liturgical vestment, typically made from the same fabric and in the same liturgical colour (fig. 2). A complete vestment usually includes a chasuble, a cope, two dalmatics, stoles, and possibly maniples, a chalice veil, a burse, and sometimes a

shoulder veil.¹⁷ Sometimes, a vestment is complemented with an altar antependium made of the same fabric.

- 41 Often, smaller liturgical items such as stoles, maniples, chalice veils, and bursae are stored in different cabinets or drawers and are not always inventoried alongside their respective vestments. It is important to examine the fabrics, trimmings, and decorations in detail when assembling these sets. For value assessment and potential repurposing, it is crucial to consider the vestments as a whole. The heritage value of objects significantly increases when they are part of an ensemble, ideally one that is complete. This concept is known as *ensemble value*. Ensemble value can refer, on one hand, to the coherence of elements with the building (for example, based on style) and, on the other hand, to the coherence between heritage objects themselves.
- 42 When reviewing and supplementing an inventory, it is important to make cross-references among the objects that are part of a vestment set.

[fig. 2]



Liturgical vestment (pink), ca. 1701–1800 (Vellereille–les–Brayeux, abbey of Bonne–Espérance, Centre d'Histoire et d'Art Sacré en Hainaut (CHASHa)).

(a) Cope. KIK object 10155706.

(b) Chasuble. KIK object 10155705.

(c) Dalmatic. KIK object 10155707.

(d) Stole, burse, maniple. KIK objects 10155709, 10155710, 10155711.

(e) Chalice veil. KIK object 10155708.

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Typology of Liturgical Vestments

- 43 Each component of liturgical garments has evolved in shape, typically guided by ecclesiastical regulations. For instance, the chasuble has shifted from a wide, circular or semicircular model to the Baroque Roman design, known as the *violin case* model, and then back to a wide, bell-shaped form. The most common model of old chasubles still found in parish churches is the violin case model. Very rarely is an older circular chasuble preserved.¹⁸ Exceptionally, based on the nature of repairs, one can infer that

the shape of the original wide chasuble was adapted to the violin case model in response to new liturgical regulations.¹⁹

- 44 Likewise, specific stylistic features of a cope offer insights into its dating, including the shape and size of the cope's shield.²⁰

Type of Fabric and Traces of Reuse

- 45 Many fabrics are characteristic of specific periods, making it essential to examine both their stylistic features and technical characteristics. Although this is the work of specialists, several identifiers are worth noting.
- 46 For instance, the so-called Renaissance silk velvets are recognisable by their large pomegranate motifs and pointed ovals.²¹
- 47 The fabrics that impart a distinctive appearance to many 18th century garments are silk figured textiles, typically showcasing woven floral patterns often embellished with gold or silver threads (fig. 2).²² These luxurious silk fabrics were also used for upholstery and served as exquisite attire for the upper bourgeoisie.
- 48 It is not uncommon for liturgical garments and altar frontals to be made from worn clothing that has been donated to the church.²³ With careful observation of the liturgical attire, signs of usage can be recognised, such as needle holes, fabric creases, specific wear and tear, soiling, and discolouration (fig. 3). These traces not only help to date the garments but also provide insight into their history and previous use, underscoring their cultural significance.

[fig. 3]



Liturgical vestment, 1777 (Vellereille–les–Brayex, abbey of Bonne–Espérance, Centre d'Histoire et d'Art Sacré en Hainaut (CHASHa)).

a. Dalmatic. KIK object 10039831.

b. Detail of the dalmatic, traces of reuse.

© Brussels, KIK–IRPA, working photos (Judith Goris).

Woven Patterns in Fabrics: Ecclesiastical Patterns or Not?

- 49 In the early decades of the 19th century, the same fabrics were used for liturgical garments as for civilian clothing and interiors. Neither the fabric pattern nor the

colour scheme was specifically ecclesiastical. It was only during the significant expansion of the French silk industry after 1820 that specialised companies emerged, focusing primarily on fabrics for ecclesiastical use.²⁴

- 50 When closely examining monochromatic damask silk weavings, it is essential to consider the presence or absence of typical ecclesiastical motifs (fig. 4). These may include eucharistic symbols such as ears of grain, grapes, or grape leaves, as well as symbols of the Passion, like a crown of thorns, or distinct neo-Gothic motifs, including quatrefoils, pointed arches, and Gothic letters.²⁵

[Fig. 4]



Woven patterns in fabrics from liturgical vestments include: (a) floral motif; (b) floral motif featuring ears of grain as an eucharistic symbol; (c) neo-Gothic motif; (d) Christogram motif IC alongside the evangelical motif.

© Brussels, KIK-IRPA, working photos (Judith Goris).

Shaped Woven Crosses and Ornamental Borders

- 51 Typical of the 19th century are the woven crosses and bands for chasubles, as well as the woven shields for copes. If these elements are crafted from a different fabric or merely decorated with trimmings, it indicates that the vestments are older, often from the 18th century (fig. 5).

The method of weaving decorative elements specifically for liturgical vestments became possible due to advancements in looms and the industrialisation of silk weaving. This innovation replaced the labour-intensive process of embroidery.²⁶

[fig. 5]



Chasubles rescued from the affected Saint Lambert chapel, Verviers.

(a) Cross is only marked by trimmings.

(b) Cross cut from fabric other than the base fabric, appliquéd.

(c) Woven-into-shape cross.

(d) Woven-into-shape cross.

© Brussels, KIK-IRPA, working photos (textiles workshop).

Embroidery Techniques

- 52 Like many fabrics, certain types of embroidery found on aurifrices, chasubles, crosses, and the decorative borders of vestments are characteristic of specific periods. Notable examples include the beautiful medieval embroideries created with gold thread and multi-coloured silk, often referred to as *painting with the needle*²⁷ and *Opus Anglicanum*²⁸. With the rise of the Neo-Gothic style, this type of embroidery was once again appreciated and applied with varying degrees of complexity, often resulting in beautifully historicised vestments.²⁹

Gold and relief embroidery from the 16th and 17th centuries can also be relatively easily identified.³⁰ In the 17th century, relief embroidery could become so heavy and thick that it appeared sculptural. This type of embroidery, made with gold or silver thread, remained popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, although its technical characteristics did change.

- 53 In the 19th and 20th centuries, many other, less labour-intensive embroidery techniques gained popularity, such as appliqué, cross-stitch, and (machine) chain stitch embroidery.³¹

Labels, Signatures, Inscriptions, and Dates

- 54 An important aspect to investigate is whether there are indications of the manufacturer, embroiderer, workshop, or tailor who created the vestment. Especially when dating 19th and 20th century vestments, a label bearing the company's name can be very useful for achieving more precise dating. The publication *Kerkelijk textiel in Vlaanderen en Brussel in de 19de en 20ste eeuw* includes lists of known workshops and manufacturers of liturgical vestments organised by region, compiled through archival research using address books, advertising sources, and catalogues. Where possible, a timeframe has been provided for the periods during which these producers were active in making vestments.³²

- 55 Other clues to the piece's historical context may sometimes be well hidden, such as a date, the name or initials of the maker or donor, a coat of arms, etc.

Church Accounts, Exhibition Catalogues, and Archival Documents

- 56 If possible, archival research can offer additional information. An inventory campaign or evaluation process provides a valuable opportunity to proceed in this regard. It is beneficial to ask the local historical society or archivist to perform archival work to seek further information.
- 57 Although church accounts often include general descriptions, such as 'red vestment,' it is sometimes possible to link a dated record to the corresponding vestment in the collection. When such information is found regarding an object or a set of vestments, it is crucial to include this data in the digital inventory.

Iconography

- 58 It is essential to examine whether the vestment features images that reference the church for which it was created, such as the patron saint or the parish coat of arms (fig. 6).

[Fig. 6]



Liturgical vestment, 1642 (Enghien, Church of Saint-Nicolas)

(a) Dalmatic, Bordeaux velvet with gold and silk thread embroidery, KIK object 10020238.

(b) Detail of the embroidered coat of arms of Enghien, KIK object 10020238.

© Brussels, KIK-IRPA, x170154 and x170156.

Less Common Object Categories

- 59 In addition to more common textile items, such as liturgical vestments, antependia, banners, and clothing for statues, there are also less frequently encountered textile objects, including a pall box, a reliquary cover, special upholstery in a tabernacle, floor carpets, cushions, and more. When compiling the textile inventory and assessing the objects, it is important to examine all textiles to allow for the possibility of exceptional discoveries.

Linens

- 60 A challenging category to assess is linens, which are often found in significant quantities within a church, including albs, surplices, and various liturgical linens such as altar cloths, corporals, chalice veils, and more. However, this group of objects should not be overlooked. Often, these linens feature decorative borders made with various textile techniques, such as lace, fine crochet, and embroidered netting. These should be evaluated by a textile specialist.
- 61 Linen undergarments, such as albs and surplices, are often still pleated and tied as they were originally stored (fig. 7). It is crucial to maintain this preservation technique, as it holds historical value; this practice represents a skill that has nearly been lost.

[fig. 7]



Liturgical linen under vestments

(a) Albs pleated and tied as they were originally stored.

(b) Alb finished with decorative crochet trim, pleated and tied.

© Brussels, KIK-IRPA, working photos (Judith Goris).

Case Studies

- 62 As outlined in the Methodology section, the primary goal of this project was to gain experience in assessing liturgical textiles through case studies, in collaboration with

heritage service staff and church council members. Although methodologies for evaluating the value and significance of heritage collections emphasise the importance of a participatory approach (see section *Orientation in Methodologies for Value and Significance Assessment*), this project did not aim to establish comprehensive participatory assessment processes. Nevertheless, each case study serves as a foundation for potential future evaluations of these collections. For each case, we proceeded as follows: prior to the site visit, the relevant inventory, including photos of all objects, was carefully examined. A printout of the inventory in spreadsheet format acted as a working tool during the site visit, facilitating the recording of additional notes on materials and techniques. Further research was conducted afterwards to assess the object from an (art) historical perspective. The updated inventory, along with feedback on the collection's qualities and historical significance, was then shared with the involved stakeholders.

- 63 The collections of liturgical textiles from the following parish churches and museums were investigated either in whole or in part, depending on the time available and the size of the entire textile collection.

Verviers, Saint-Lambert Chapel

- 64 This case involves the liturgical textile collection of the Saint-Lambert Chapel in Verviers, which was severely impacted by floods. The article *From Flood to Recovery: Coordinating Crisis Support for Churches in Need in Wallonia* broaches the emergency response to the situation (Maura Moriaux). From the perspective of value and significance assessment, this case exemplifies how such evaluations can be conducted during a crisis. Under the coordination of CIPAR, several independent restorers and textile experts volunteered to assist in the aftermath of the floods. Their tasks included assessing the damage, compiling an emergency inventory of the textiles, and evaluating which garments held the most heritage value. In the subsequent phase, the heritage service of the Diocese of Liège thoroughly prepared the value assessment of the affected textile collection, drawing on the emergency inventory created during the initial phase. The evaluation process involved classifying the objects into three categories: (1) to be preserved and conserved, (2) to be retained, and (3) to be deaccessioned. This emergency categorisation was reviewed with the textile workshop of KIK-IRPA, after which the objects were physically labelled with colour-coded tags corresponding to their assigned category. The categorisation was reviewed again on the day the items were packed, with only minor adjustments made. Through close observation of smaller items, several accessories— such as stoles, chalice veils, and burses— were successfully reunited with their corresponding vestments.

Namur, Saint-Loup Church

- 65 The management of the religious heritage within this church is in capable hands. The non-profit association *Amis de Saint-Loup* consists of a dedicated group of volunteers committed to preserving this exceptional Baroque art heritage site. In recent years, they have made significant improvements to the storage conditions of the liturgical textiles, starting with a detailed inventory of the extensive collection. This inventory is meticulously prepared, featuring high-quality, systematically numbered photographs. Additionally, all objects have been labelled with their corresponding inventory

numbers, which is a crucial step in ensuring a clear link between the physical items and their descriptions in the inventory. However, complications arose in starting the assessment process because the inventory had not yet been fully digitised.

- 66 As part of the CHrisis project, two site visits were conducted with several textile specialists to thoroughly examine the liturgical textiles and exchange knowledge and experience. Notable discoveries included attributing a significant number of vestments to the 18th century Namur tailoring family, Lekeu. During that era, it was uncommon for creators to sign their work, making this identification particularly remarkable. The work of the Lekeu family is part of ongoing research by Dr. M. Gilbert at UCLouvain.
- 67 A tangible outcome of this case was the improvement of the inventory's entry into the digital database, which is crucial for conducting a systematic valuation process.

Enghien, Saint-Nicolas Church

- 68 The dedicated church council of Saint-Nicolas actively worked to improve the storage conditions of their extensive collection of liturgical textiles during the project period.³³ The inventory of their collection had been excellently digitised, allowing much of the evaluation to be conducted remotely using the photographic documentation and the Excel-based inventory.
- 69 During three site visits, along with textile experts and the heritage staff of the Diocese of Tournai, the vestments were visually examined, and most pieces were dated. Notably, a remarkable 17th century vestment, dated 1642, was thoroughly analysed and recognised as having significant historical value (fig. 6 and 8). The embroidered coat of arms on the garment clearly indicates that it was specially made for this church, which significantly enhances the overall value of this robe. The multi-coloured silk embroidery on the vestment showcases exceptional artistic craftsmanship in both design and execution, highlighting its high artistic value. The vestment will be further studied as part of ongoing research at UCLouvain.
- 70 This case resulted in a comprehensive evaluation report, which is intended to initiate a participatory value assessment process to appraise social and use values in addition to historical values.

[fig. 8]



Case study, liturgical vestment, 1642 (Enghien, Saint-Nicolas Church)

(a) Examining the embroidery.

(b) Assembling the complete liturgical vestment: chasuble KIK object 10020234, two dalmatics KIK object 10020238.

(c) Cope. KIK object 10020227.

(d) Detail of the embroidery in silk and gold thread on a dalmatic. KIK object 10020238.

(e) Detail of the embroidered date on the chasuble. KIK object 10020234.

Working photos (Maura Moriaux (a)).

© Brussels, KIK-IRPA, x170141 (c), x170167 (d), x170149 (e) and working photo (Judith Goris) (b).

Estinnes, Centre d'Histoire et d'Art Sacré en Hainaut (CHASHa)

Namur, Diocesan Museum of Namur

- 71 In both the CHASHa in Estinnes and the Diocesan Museum of Namur, we examined the liturgical textile collections alongside the responsible heritage staff from the diocesan heritage services. The aim and outcome of this work were to apply the acquired expertise through hands-on collaboration. This knowledge transfer to professional heritage staff indirectly supports non-professional heritage managers and helps build capacity in the broader heritage management community.

Liers, Saint-Rémy Church

- 72 This case was included in the project due to a specific concern raised by the church council about preserving and managing their liturgical textiles. They noticed mould on some older vestments, prompting questions about the value of the textiles and whether it was worth investing in improved climate control in the sacristy.
- 73 This collaboration to examine the collection of liturgical textiles raised awareness of the heritage value. It was confirmed that the collection indeed included significant pieces, such as medieval embroidery. This case highlights the importance of supporting the efforts and investments of an average parish church in preserving its heritage.

Framework and Workflow for Assessing a Collection Element by Element

- 74 Although this project did not aim to conduct comprehensive evaluations, several essential tools were developed for the process.
- 75 First and foremost, an assessment framework is essential. This reference framework offers guidance during the evaluation of value and significance, comprising a blend of established evaluation criteria and accompanying guiding questions. By systematically reviewing these, an assessment team can operate in a rational and structured manner. This framework can be applied to assess either the entire (sub)collection or individual elements. Evaluating each value involves assigning a qualitative rating (ranging from high to low). For each criterion, it is crucial to define what a specific object or (sub)collection must satisfy to achieve ratings of high, moderately high, moderately low, or low. The developed assessment framework provides numerous examples of such determinations.
- 76 It is also possible to indicate the potential for the future development of a value, as it may evolve over time. For example, an assigned value can increase through provenance research, improvement of the condition through restoration, or enhancement of the accessibility of the object or collection to the public.
- 77 The assessment framework was created using various existing documents, such as:
- The evaluation form from the publication *Op de museale weegschaal*³⁴
 - The *Stappenplan Religieus Erfgoed* at step 3³⁵
 - *formulier waardering geheel*
 - *bijlage waarderingscriteria*
 - The document *Évaluation du patrimoine mobilier : feuille de route* from CIPAR³⁶
- 78 Since this project was conducted for the Walloon region, the evaluation framework was created in French (in appendix), with a Dutch version also included in appendix, and is included in English below (fig. 9).

Conclusion and Recommendations

- 81 The project to assess the value and significance of liturgical textiles was initiated in response to the 2021 floods, which severely impacted several churches in Wallonia and highlighted the vulnerability of this invaluable heritage. This vulnerability needs to be viewed more broadly than just during acute crisis situations. In light of the current changes in the Catholic Church landscape, the care of religious heritage is increasingly under strain. A diminishing group of dedicated volunteers shoulders the responsibility for preserving and managing this treasured heritage.
- 82 In Wallonia, church councils and local authorities receive support from both CIPAR and the diocesan heritage services for this task. These heritage professionals are prepared to assist the group of voluntary, non-professional heritage managers in assessing, selecting, and, if needed, repurposing movable religious heritage.
- 83 Existing evaluation methodologies exist to assess religious heritage. These methodologies emphasise the importance of engaging various stakeholders in mapping different types of heritage values to garner social support. While the theory surrounding assessment methodologies is widely accessible, practical experience with evaluation processes for religious heritage, especially regarding religious textiles, remains limited. Through literature reviews, case studies, and exchanges of experiences with other textile experts, this project has expanded knowledge and experience in evaluating expert-related (art) historical heritage values. A list of observation points has been developed (see 'Results' section) to guide the dating and (art) historical value of religious textiles, ensuring that 19th and 20th century vestments are not overlooked.
- 84 In collaboration with heritage professionals at CIPAR and diocesan heritage services, practical experience has been gained in the value and significance assessment of liturgical textiles. This project thus contributed to building a solid foundation for future assessment processes, which will ideally be conducted according to a proven step-by-step plan. Such an ideal trajectory involves a small team of stakeholders under the guidance of a heritage professional. For specialised textile historical advice, the evaluation team can rely on the textiles studio of KIK-IRPA.
- 85 The assessment project for liturgical textiles serves as a crucial impetus for implementing the roadmap for assessing the significance, selecting, and repurposing movable religious heritage in Walloon parish churches. Conducting a thorough value assessment before a disaster occurs is vital for enhancing risk preparedness.
- 86 Additionally, it is advisable to conduct systematic evaluation research on liturgical textiles preserved in churches and museums in Wallonia and Brussels. This would establish a strong foundation for cataloguing liturgical textiles of significant heritage value in these regions. Throughout the project, it became evident that textile cultural heritage is currently underrepresented among classified artworks and objects of importance in Brussels and Wallonia, including religious textile heritage. All stakeholders involved in this project agree on the necessity and urgency of this effort. Numerous liturgical textile objects possess considerable cultural-historical, socio-cultural, scientific, or artistic significance for the community and warrant protective

measures as well as visibility. Cataloguing and safeguarding these heritage objects acknowledges the centuries-long dedication and care devoted to their preservation.

We would like to express our gratitude to CIPAR, and especially to Maura Moriaux, for the enthusiastic and productive collaboration on this project. We would also like to thank all the staff of the diocesan heritage services for their valuable contributions. Many thanks as well to textile experts Dr. Hélène Malice, Dr. Mireille Gilbert, and Frieda Sorber for the enlightening exchanges. We are also grateful for the work of Kathleen Ribbens and Joke Vandermeersch during the period immediately following the floods for providing expert advice and conducting an initial assessment and emergency inventory of the most valuable objects. Finally, we would like to thank the working group of the Stappenplan Religieus Erfgoed for granting us permission to use, translate, and adapt the tools from the step-by-step plan to the context of our project.

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NOTES

1. From excerpts in the CIPAR newsletter of 21/09/2021, accessed on 06/09/2024.
2. Description based on the museum collections standard SPECTRUM 5.0, procedure for collections review (<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum/procedures/collections-review-spectrum-5-0/>, accessed on 30/05/2024).
3. Russell and Winkworth 2009, p. 63; Versloot 2013, p. 5.
4. <https://www.stappenplanreligieuserfgoed.be/over-het-stappenplan>, accessed on 13/09/2024.
5. *Ibidem*.
6. Formerly Centrum voor Religieuze Kunst en Cultuur (CRKC).
7. For comparison: in Flanders, the registration of religious heritage is gradually evolving towards the use of an integrated collection management system for all Flemish heritage organisations. (<https://meemoo.be/nl/projecten/vlaamse-erfgoeddatabanken>, accessed on 14/10/2024).
8. This step-by-step guide is not published, but has been made available as a procedure for the diocesan heritage services and the church councils. It has also been provided to the authors.
9. In Flanders, the *Stappenplan Religieus Erfgoed* (Religious Heritage Step-by-Step) was developed by the Working Group for Evaluating and Repurposing Movable Religious Heritage, a collaboration between PARCUM, the Province of Antwerp, and the Province of East Flanders. It is available online at www.stappenplanreligieuserfgoed.be.
10. Russell and Winkworth 2009.
11. Versloot 2013.
12. <https://faro.be/kennis/collectiemanagement/wat-is-waarderen/welke-waarderingsmethodes-zijn-er>, accessed on 14/10/2024.
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14. Relevant consulted research works include the following: Aribaud 1998; Aribaud 2006; Van Dyck 2009; van Roon 2010; Monnas 2012; Leeftang and van Schooten 2015; Brown, Davies and Michael 2016; Lugtigheid 2021; Heering 2021; Arts and de Beer 2023; de Beer 2023.
15. The symposium *Fashion for God – Reuse in Religious and Secular Dress* took place on 11 and 12 January 2024, at the Museum Catharijneconvent in Utrecht and coincided with the exhibition *Fashion for God*, which ran from 14 October 2023, to 21 January 2024.

16. Van Dyck 2009.
17. The French and Dutch terminology for liturgical textiles can be found in the publications CIPAR 2017 (available online) and PARCUM 2020, respectively.
18. For example, the so-called chasuble of Thomas Becket from the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Tournai (KIK object 10061595) and the so-called Saint Bernard chasuble from the former Abbey of Cambron (KIK object 10076606).
19. For example, the chasuble of Nicolas de Romont (KIK object 10037009), which was studied as part of the Ornamenta Sacra project (https://ornasacra.kikirpa.be/index.php/Chasuble_de_Jean_de_Romont, accessed on 14/10/2024).
20. Van Dyck 2009, p. 27; Van Roon 2010, p. 38-39.
21. Monnas 2012. For example, the garment from the church of Saint-Lambert in Dinant (KIK object 10090146).
22. Lugtigheid 2021, p. 106; Aribaud 1998.
23. An extensive study on this subject was conducted by René Lugtigheid. Lugtigheid 2021.
24. van Roon 2010.
25. Van Dyck 2009, p. 31-32.
26. Van Dyck 2009, p. 32.
27. Leeftang and van Schooten 2015.
28. Brown, Davies and Michael 2016.
29. Van Dyck 2009, p. 30 and 47.
30. van Roon in Arts and de Beer 2023, p. 41-43.
31. Van Dyck 2009, p. 47-48.
32. Van Dyck 2009.
33. Guidelines for the proper preservation and management of liturgical textiles include CIPAR 2018 and Monumentenwacht Vlaanderen vzw 2010.
34. Versloot 2013, p. 60-61.
35. <https://www.stappenplanreligieuserfgoed.be/alle-downloads>; accessed on 7 October 2024.
These documents have been translated and slightly adapted with the permission of the Flemish working group *Waarden en herbestemmen roerend religieus erfgoed*, which developed the *Stappenplan Relieus Erfgoed*.
36. Unpublished document, provided to the authors.

ABSTRACTS

The project to assess the value and significance of liturgical textiles was initiated after the 2021 floods in Wallonia, which highlighted the vulnerability of this religious heritage. Its goal is to support heritage managers and professionals in evaluating the cultural heritage value and significance of these textiles, which include richly embroidered garments made of luxurious silk fabrics. The project involves collaboration with CIPAR, diocesan heritage services, church councils, and textile experts to enhance knowledge and expertise in assessing liturgical textiles. It builds on existing methodologies for evaluating religious heritage, using a participatory approach.

A key outcome involved compiling and sharing observation points for evaluating religious textiles, ensuring that 19th and 20th century pieces are not overlooked. Paying attention to

vestment typology, fabric types, woven patterns, and embroidery techniques provides clues for dating and assessing their (art) historical value.

Case studies, such as the liturgical collection in Verviers post-flooding, helped gain relevant knowledge and practical experience. The project provided a framework for the systematic significance assessment of religious textiles and emphasises the need for continued research in Wallonia and Brussels to protect and raise awareness of these culturally significant artefacts.

Le projet d'évaluation de la valeur et de la signification des textiles liturgiques a été lancé à la suite des inondations de 2021 en Wallonie, qui ont mis en évidence la vulnérabilité de ce patrimoine religieux. Son objectif est d'aider les gestionnaires du patrimoine et les professionnels à évaluer la valeur patrimoniale et la signification culturelle de ces textiles, parmi lesquels figurent des vêtements richement brodés confectionnés dans des étoffes de soie luxueuses.

Le projet est mené en collaboration avec le CIPAR, les services diocésains du patrimoine, les fabriques d'église et des experts en textiles, afin de renforcer les connaissances et les compétences en matière d'évaluation des textiles liturgiques. Il s'appuie sur des méthodologies existantes d'évaluation du patrimoine religieux, en adoptant une approche participative.

L'un des principaux résultats du projet est la compilation et le partage de points d'observation utiles à l'évaluation des textiles religieux, veillant à ce que les pièces des ^{xix}e et ^{xx}e siècles ne soient pas négligées. L'attention portée à la typologie des ornements liturgiques, aux types de tissus, aux motifs tissés et aux techniques de broderie permet d'en affiner la datation et d'évaluer leur valeur historique ou artistique.

Des études de cas, comme celle de la collection liturgique de Verviers après les inondations, ont permis d'acquérir des connaissances pertinentes et une expérience concrète. Le projet a ainsi fourni un cadre pour une évaluation systématique de la signification des textiles religieux et souligne la nécessité de poursuivre les recherches en Wallonie et à Bruxelles afin de protéger et de valoriser ces objets culturellement significatifs.

Het project rond de waardering en betekenisbepaling van liturgisch textiel werd opgestart na de overstromingen in Wallonië in 2021. Deze ramp brengt de kwetsbaarheid van dit religieus erfgoed scherp aan het licht. Het project beoogt erfgoedbeheerders en -professionals te ondersteunen bij het evalueren van de erfgoedwaarde en de betekenis van kerkelijk textiel, zoals rijkelijk geborduurde gewaden van luxueuze zijdeweefsels. De samenwerking met CIPAR, de erfgoeddiensten van de Waalse bisdommen, kerkfabrieken en textielexperten, heeft als doel de kennis en expertise rond de waardering van liturgisch textiel te versterken. Het bouwt voort op bestaande methodieken voor de waardering van religieus erfgoed, die gebruik maken van een participatieve benadering.

Een belangrijk resultaat was het bundelen en delen van aandachtspunten voor de evaluatie van religieus textiel, met de benadrukking om stukken uit de 19e en 20e eeuw niet over het hoofd te zien. De studie van onder andere de typologie van gewaden, weefseltypes, ingeweven patronen en borduurtechnieken levert aanwijzingen voor datering en (kunst)historische waardering.

Via casestudies, zoals de liturgische collectie in Verviers na de overstroming, werd waardevolle kennis en praktijkervaring opgedaan. Het project biedt een kader voor de systematische waardebeoordeling van religieus textiel en benadrukt de nood aan verder onderzoek in Wallonië en Brussel om dit cultureel waardevolle erfgoed te beschermen en onder de aandacht te brengen.

INDEX

Mots-clés: évaluation de la valeur et de la signification, valeurs patrimoniales, patrimoine religieux, ornements liturgiques, critères d'évaluation

Trefwoorden waardering en betekenisbepaling, culturele erfgoedwaarden, religieus erfgoed, liturgische gewaden, beoordelingscriteria

Keywords: value and significance assessment, cultural heritage values, religious heritage, liturgical vestments, assessment criteria

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