

## **Layer upon Layer: The Evolution of Cassock, Gown, Habit and Hood as Academic Dress**

*by Alex Kerr*

Writers on the history of academic dress sometimes mistake which medieval garments were the antecedents of those worn in modern times. This happens especially when they misinterpret the evidence from memorial brasses and other pictorial sources. The situation is complicated by the fact that several Latin terms are used for a single article of dress in early university and college regulations and one term may refer to quite different articles at different periods. Now, as then, it is common to use words for clothing in both a narrow and a broad sense: for example, in modern English we use ‘jacket’ and ‘coat’ with various meanings, some of them overlapping or interchangeable. Similarly, in writing about medieval dress ‘gown’ or ‘robe’ may be a very specific item distinct from ‘cassock’ or ‘habit’ at one point, but any long, loose garment at another.

However, if we can identify the various articles of academic dress in the late Middle Ages and how they were worn together in layers, I believe it will be easier to understand how they evolved into the garments in use today. We shall see that each of these articles remains within the particular category of garments to which it belongs (cassock, gown, habit or hood), although it may alter significantly in appearance over the centuries. Each category of garments forms a distinct layer in the medieval and early modern periods: articles do not migrate from one layer to another, and the order in which the layers are worn does not change.

Academic dress exhibited the same general pattern (but by no means uniformity) all over western Europe in the Middle Ages, but it diversified along national lines from the sixteenth century onwards.<sup>1</sup> This paper is concerned with developments in England.

Important pioneering studies, like E. C. Clark’s ‘English Academical Costume (Mediaeval)’,<sup>2</sup> provide a mass of detailed evidence, some of it difficult to interpret

---

I am very grateful to Professor Bruce Christianson for reading earlier drafts of this article and making many valuable comments.

<sup>1</sup> See W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A History of Academical Dress in Europe until the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963; repr. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), pp. 4–6.

<sup>2</sup> *Archaeological Journal*, 50 (1893), pp. 73–104, 137–49, 183–209.

and evaluate, so that the reader sometimes cannot see the wood for the trees. On the other hand, the note on medieval academic dress by F. E. Brightman printed in R. T. Günther's book on the monuments in Magdalen College chapel in Oxford provides a useful summary from which to begin.<sup>3</sup> W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, whose book on the subject is the standard work, acknowledges the significance of this brief outline in his Glossary (pp. 190, 195), although he does not adopt all Brightman's terms. Here is Brightman's text, to which I have added illustrations from medieval brasses. Hargreaves-Mawdsley's terms for certain items are given in the footnotes.

The clerical, and therefore the academical, dress of the middle ages consisted of

i. an **undertunic** (*subtunica*, *tunica*),<sup>4</sup> the modern 'cassock'

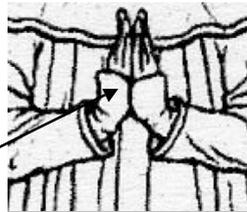


Fig. 1

ii. an **overtunic** (*tunica*, *supertunica*, *toga*, *gona*),<sup>5</sup> the modern 'gown'

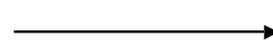


Fig. 2

iii. a **hood** (*caputium*), consisting of a cape enveloping the shoulders nearly down to the elbows,<sup>6</sup> and a head-piece,<sup>7</sup> with a 'poke' (*liripipium*, *tippetum*),<sup>8</sup> falling down behind.



Fig. 3

<sup>3</sup> *A Description of Brasses and Other Funeral Monuments in the Chapel of Magdalen College* (Oxford: Horace Hart, 1914), pp. v–vii; repr. in *The Magdalen College Register*, n.s. 8 (1915).

<sup>4</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley uses the term *subtunica* for this.

<sup>5</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley: *supertunica*.

<sup>6</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley: 'shoulder-piece'.

<sup>7</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley: hood.

<sup>8</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley: liripipe.

To these, beneficiaries, dignitaries, and graduates added

iv. a **habit** (*habitus*),<sup>9</sup> which was of several forms:

1. the **cappa**, which took four shapes:

a. the **cappa clausa**, the modern *cappa magna* and 'parliament robe' of prelates, used academically by Doctors of Divinity and of the Canon Law, which had a hood attached to it, or rather was itself a huge hood, the cape of which reached to the feet, with a slit in front through which the arms were passed<sup>10</sup>

b. the **chimere** (*chimaera*, *pallium*),<sup>11</sup> a *cappa* with two side-slits for the arms, used by Bachelors of Divinity and Canon Law and Doctors of Medicine and the Civil Law; the present 'Convocation habit' of Doctors in Oxford and the chimere of Bishops, prescribed in the *Decretals of Gregory IX* and still used by English Bishops

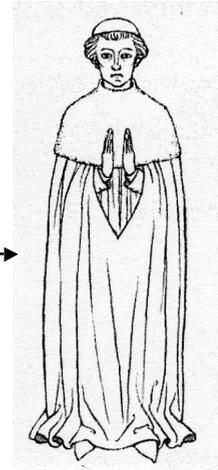


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

<sup>9</sup> Of course, the habit was worn over the gown (*overtunic*, *supertunica*) and under the hood, as Figs 2, 3 and 5–8 show.

<sup>10</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley: *cappa clausa* with one slit. In his view (p. 5), this *cappa* was simply a development of the priest's pluvial, 'a loose cape with a hood', and Clark (p. 99) rejects the suggestion that the *cappa clausa* was an enlarged and lengthened hood. However, if Brightman is right, the body of the *cappa* was the outsize cape of a hood and the upper part (which looks like a cape) must in fact have been the cowl flattened and turned out, sewn up at the front and draped over the shoulders. This startling hypothesis is supported by two features peculiar to this *cappa* with one slit: no 'roller' hood appeared at the neck and the fur lining of the 'shoulder-piece' faced outwards rather than lying against the wearer's back as was the case with the hood worn over other types of habit.

<sup>11</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley: *cappa clausa* with two slits. Some believe that the episcopal chimere had a different origin and only later came to resemble this academic habit.

c. the *cappa manicata*, a chimere with long sleeves which were already unused in the fifteenth century and left to hang loose from the shoulders, while the arms were passed through the side-slits;<sup>12</sup> used by Doctors of Civil Law, and surviving in Cambridge till the end of the seventeenth century (see Loggan's plate in *Cantabrigia illustrata*)<sup>13</sup>

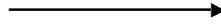


Fig. 6

d. the *cappa nigra*, a short chimere used by Masters of Arts →

2. the *tabard* (*tabardum*), a tunic with short pointed sleeves, distinctive of Bachelors, but used by higher degrees, as a matter of convenience, of course in the colour of the faculty.<sup>14</sup>



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

The Hood of the ordinary form was used over all these habits except the first. The Hood for graduates was lined and edged with fur, or, from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, in summer (i.e. from

<sup>12</sup> Pictorial evidence for the medieval *cappa manicata* is elusive. The strange pendants in our illustration in Fig. 6, showing John Lowthe (d. 1427), *Juris Civilis Professor* of Oxford, may represent the 'long sleeves which were already unused' to which Brightman refers. Clark (p. 188) thinks this is possible. Hargreaves-Mawdsley believes they are liripipes attached to the back of the habit, an extravagant passing fashion (p. 72), although he recognizes a hanging sleeve with a similar opening at the foot in a late-thirteenth-century Cambridge manuscript miniature as that of a *cappa manicata* (p. 116, n. 4). Elsewhere he confuses the *cappa manicata* with the tabard (p. 75 and Plate 9, p. 193).

<sup>13</sup> (Cambridge: the engraver, 1688 or 1690), Plate VII, No. 19, but see p. 53, below.

<sup>14</sup> It is not clear on what evidence Brightman bases his statement that tabards were made in the faculty colour for higher degrees.

Easter to All Saints) with silk, if desired;<sup>15</sup> and gown and habit might be, and commonly were, similarly lined and edged.

Authors of books on monumental brasses have adopted a terminology of their own, based on a certain misunderstanding of the facts.<sup>16</sup> They have called the overtunic a 'cassock', which is a mistake; they have separated the hood from its cape and called it a 'tippet', whereas a 'tippet' is quite a different thing, being the modern 'scarf', derived from the liripipe, not from the cape, of the hood;<sup>17</sup> while the chimere has been called a 'rochet', which is absurd, and the *cappa nigra* a 'sleeveless tabard', which, while no doubt it describes the superficial appearance of the *cappa nigra* after the middle of the fifteenth century, ignores its name and, therefore, probably also its origin.<sup>18</sup>

Brightman's comments in the closing paragraph of his note, published nearly a century ago, apply equally to some more recent writers on academic dress. Even those who begin by distinguishing carefully between the inner garment (the undertunic or *subtunica*), the middle garment (the overtunic or *supertunica*) and the outer garment (the habit) sometimes use terms imprecisely later in their work.

---

<sup>15</sup> The summer lining of silk was permitted from this relatively early date only by Oxford, and only to those of the rank of MA and above (including BD). See B. Christianson, 'Oxford Blues: The Search for the Origins of the Lay Bachelors' Hood', *Burton Society Annual*, 2003, pp. 24–28 (pp. 24–25).

<sup>16</sup> Brightman is no doubt alluding to works such as the following: H. Haines, *A Manual of Monumental Brasses*, 2 vols (Oxford: Parker, 1861); H. W. Macklin, *Monumental Brasses* (London: Swann Sonnenschein, 1890) and *The Brasses of England* (London: Methuen, 1907); H. Druitt, *A Manual of Costume as Illustrated by Monumental Brasses* (London: Moring, 1906).

<sup>17</sup> Brightman must mean that they call the cape a 'tippet'. Hargreaves-Mawdsley refers to the 'shoulder-piece' and the hood as if they were separate articles—and sometimes they were, up to the mid-seventeenth century—although he is as emphatic as Brightman in rejecting the word 'tippet' for the 'shoulder-piece' or cape. I return to the vexed question of the tippet below.

<sup>18</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley says the *cappa nigra* was the same as the *cappa clausa* with two slits (p. 193), but at several points he uses the term 'sleeveless tabard' for this garment.

### ***The cassock and the suit***

On medieval memorial brasses a tight sleeve end, with the appearance of a shirt cuff, is all that betrays the presence of the undertunic or *subtunica*. This is most obvious where early-fifteenth-century ‘mitten’ sleeves reach down to the knuckles (Fig. 1). It was not the overtunic or *supertunica*, as some writers suggest, but this undertunic, a fairly close-fitting garment worn with a belt, that became the cassock and was replaced in due course, for laymen, by doublet and hose, coat and knee-breeches, and lastly the suit. Academics, like most other people, doubtless wore drawers and a collarless shirt below their undertunic, but of course these were not seen.<sup>19</sup>

As the outer layers of academic dress opened up in the sixteenth century, inner layers became visible. By the middle of the century, more of the cassock or coat was revealed, and it was only from this period onwards that anything of the shirt came into view, now with a collar and accessories such as the Tudor ruff or bands. Modern wearers of academic dress will have a stock, shirt or blouse, and underclothes below that. Some institutions prescribe styles and colours for the suit, skirt or dress, the shirt or blouse and the accessories to accompany them on formal occasions (e.g. *subfusc* at Oxford).

### ***The gown and the robe***

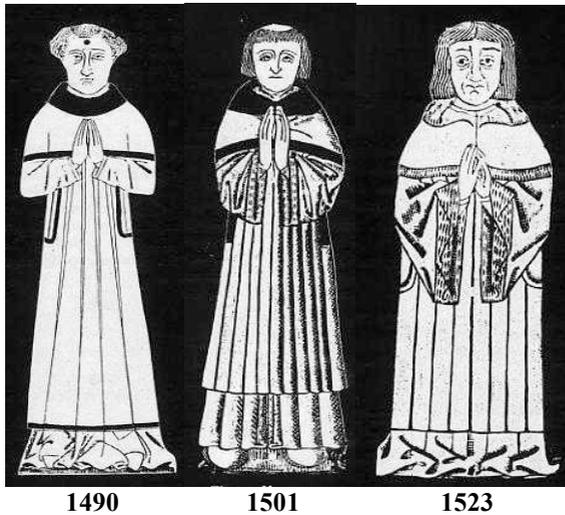
Admittedly, visual similarities between articles of dress in the fifteenth century and those with a different function in the seventeenth can be misleading. The sleeves of the tabard, worn as a habit (the outer layer) by bachelors in the medieval period (Fig. 8), resemble the sleeves of a seventeenth-century BA gown. However, graduates gave up the tabard well before the gown with long, pointed open sleeves developed. It is unlikely that the gown and tabard coalesced to become the modern open-sleeved gown, as George Clinch believes,<sup>20</sup> or that the tabard took the place of the gown, as Charles A. H. Franklyn suggests.<sup>21</sup> Rather, the medieval overtunic or *supertunica* (Fig. 2), a loose-fitting, sometimes pleated gown with fairly narrow sleeves like those of a modern jacket or coat, simply turned little by little into the bachelor’s gown we know today—and also the doctoral full-dress robe—as the sleeves widened and the front opened up (see Fig. 9).

---

<sup>19</sup> See C. W. and P. Cunnington, *The History of Underclothes*, rev. edn by A. D. Mansfield and V. Mansfield (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), pp. 21–22.

<sup>20</sup> *English Costume from Prehistoric Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1909), pp. 250–51, 253. Hargreaves-Mawdsley rejects this view (pp. 88–89).

<sup>21</sup> *Academical Dress from the Middle Ages to the Present Day, Including Lambeth Degrees* (Lewes: privately printed by W. E. Baxter, Ltd, 1970), pp. 110–11.



**Fig. 9. Wider still and wider: sleeves of gowns opening up at the end of the Middle Ages**

*Figures of MAs from Magdalen College, Oxford, wearing:*

- a cassock (undertunic or subtunica) with tight cuffs
- a full-length gown (overtunic or supertunica) with ever wider sleeves
- a calf-length habit (cappa nigra)—with the sleeves of the gown pulled through the edged side slits
- a hood

As early as the thirteenth century a slit was cut as an alternative opening in the upper arm or at elbow level in the loose sleeves gathered in at the wrist (so-called pudding or bagpipe sleeves) customary on some laymen's gowns. At first this was a practical measure taken by people like musicians and physicians to free their forearms when carrying out their professional work.<sup>22</sup> By 1500 the resulting closed sleeves, in glove, bag and false-panel varieties, were common for laymen's robes of dignity. In the mid-sixteenth century, MAs, BDs and members of lay faculties in universities abandoned open sleeves on their undress gowns and adopted this style, following contemporary non-academic fashion. Up to the mid-seventeenth century the part of the gown sleeve hanging below the elbow was short, sometimes resembling a tube open at the foot with a 'cuff' (see Fig. 10), but by the 1670s it had lengthened and the foot was always sewn shut.<sup>23</sup> DDs at Oxford also followed this fashion, while those at Cambridge kept their bell-sleeved or pudding-sleeved gowns—at least as an alternative to the MA style.

Franklyn (p. 111) thinks that when MAs gave up the gown with wide sleeves they may have worn a sort of *cappa manicata* instead. However, there is no reason to believe that this habit took the place of the gown—and in any case Franklyn is convinced that for a while MAs kept a separate habit in black to wear over their gowns just as doctors kept a scarlet one.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, H. Norris, *Costume and Fashion*, Vol. II, *From Senlac to Bosworth* (London: Dent, 1927; repr. as *Medieval Costume and Fashion*, Mineola, NY: Dover, 1999), Fig. 205, p. 155; D. Hartley, *Medieval Costume and Life*, intro. and notes by F. M. Kelly (London: Batsford, 1931), p. 31; J. Peacock, *Costume 1066–1990s*, rev. edn (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), pp. 15 ff.

<sup>23</sup> See Hargreaves-Mawdsley, pp. 66–67, 80, 85, 112, 116, 121.



**Fig. 10. Dean Henry Caesar  
(d. 1636), Ely Cathedral**  
*Photograph: Nicholas Groves*

Having suggested that some modern gowns evolved from medieval habits (the tabard and the *cappa manicata*), Franklyn (pp. 111–12) believes that he is left with what he calls ‘conundrums’ to clear up. He states that no hood should be worn over a habit, which is the outermost garment, and that if one were worn at all it would be under the tabard or *cappa*, not over it. This leads him to wonder how it came about that at Oxford bachelors, masters and the proctors in full dress wear a hood with their gowns, but doctors do not wear theirs when in full-dress robes. He comes round to the view that the black gowns of MAs and lay doctors must have developed from the medieval gown and not the *cappa manicata* after all. He could have saved his readers this unnecessary detour if he had recognized the simple fact that gowns invariably come from gowns and habits from habits.

Undaunted, Franklyn goes on to assert that the BA gown may derive from the sleeved tabard and that the full-dress robes of doctors are ‘most probably tabards’. Later (p. 153) he states as a fact that Cambridge doctors’ festal gowns are tabards and therefore no hoods should properly be worn with them.

I cannot see what evidence there is for any of this. The evolution from overtunic or *supertunica* (the medieval gown) to modern gown and robe can be traced with fewer missing links; and I believe that the full-dress robe is merely a festal version of the undress gown, and not a tabard. Furthermore, it is clear from the pictorial evidence that the medieval academic put his hood on over his tabard or *cappa* or, if he was not wearing a habit, over his gown. There are no grounds for the claim that it is wrong to wear a hood with a full-dress robe. It was worn in the sixteenth century at both Oxford and Cambridge, left off in the seventeenth and eighteenth (except by Doctors of Music) and put on again at Cambridge in the nineteenth; it was simply a matter of fashion or custom.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> J. H. Baker, “‘Doctors Wear Scarlet’: The Festal Gowns of the University of Cambridge”, *Costume*, 20 (1986), pp. 33–43 (p. 42, n. 25).



**Fig. 11. Cambridge vice-chancellor  
in DD congregation dress (1815)**  
*Engraving by Agar after Uwins*

### ***The habit***

During the sixteenth century the habit came to be worn less and less. However, the *cappa clausa* (Fig. 4) has continued as the DD's congregation dress at Cambridge down to modern times. It was still close to its medieval form until the late seventeenth century,<sup>25</sup> but by the early nineteenth the front was worn open, as shown in Fig. 11.<sup>26</sup> This cope is still worn by senior members, usually professors, whether DDs or not, when presenting candidates for higher degrees and it remains the official dress of Cambridge vice-chancellors and their deputies when conferring degrees.

---

<sup>25</sup> See D. Loggan, *Cantabrigia illustrata*, Plate VII, No. 20.

<sup>26</sup> See R. Harraden, *Costume of the Various Orders in the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Harraden, 1805), plate showing the vice-chancellor; T. Uwins's drawing, engraved by J. S. Agar for W. Combe, *History of the University of Cambridge* (London: Ackermann, 1815), 'Doctor in Divinity in the Ermined Robe, or Cope'.



**Fig. 12. Oxford DM  
convocation dress (1675)**  
*Engraving by Loggan*



**Fig. 13. Oxford DM  
convocation dress (1814)**  
*Engraving by Agar after Uwins*

The two slits in the front of the **chimere** version of the *cappa clausa* (Fig. 5) had moved to the sides by the late fifteenth century, making the garment resemble a *cappa nigra* or sleeveless tabard (*pace* Brightman).<sup>27</sup> This development left the sleeves of the gown worn underneath free to become much fuller during the early sixteenth century, as we have seen in Fig. 9. This type of *cappa* became the convocation habit at Oxford for all doctors (except the DMus, who never had one), slit part way down the front by the seventeenth century, and later completely open, part-lined with silk and fastened with two silk-covered buttons on the chest (see Figs 12 and 13).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley, pp. 66, 73. However, the chimere was probably still ankle-length, unlike the *cappa nigra* and tabard, which were shorter.

<sup>28</sup> See the portrait of Philip Bisse painted in 1612, reproduced in Hargreaves-Mawdsley, Plate 8; D. Loggan, *Oxonia illustrata* (Oxford: the engraver, 1675), Plate X, Nos 21 and 27; T. Uwins's drawings, engraved by J. S. Agar for W. Combe, *History of the University of Oxford* (London: Ackermann, 1814), 'Doctor in Divinity in Convocation' and 'Doctor in Physic'.



**Fig. 14. Cambridge LLD/MD  
congregation dress (1690)**  
*Engraving by Loggan*



**Fig. 15. Cambridge LLD/MD  
congregation dress (1815)**  
*Engraving by Agar after Uwins*  
*(Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the  
National Library of Scotland)*



**Fig. 16. Cambridge LLD  
festal dress (1847)**  
*Engraving by Whittock*

The *cappa manicata* (Fig. 6) survived as the lay doctor's congregation dress at Cambridge longer than Brightman thinks: a habit similar to the seventeenth-century shape, but with the front open, was still worn in 1815 (see Figs 14 and 15).<sup>29</sup> This garment does seem to have fallen into disuse soon after that date and lay doctors took to wearing the DD's cope, but with a round bonnet.<sup>30</sup> Whittock includes the vice-chancellor's cope in his plate of 1847, but no lay doctor's congregation dress.<sup>31</sup> However, his 'Dress gown of Doctor of Civil Law' appears to have the sleeves lined with silk and the facings covered with fur, which continues round the neck as a collar, making it look like a hybrid of festal and congregation dress (see Fig. 16).

The *cappa nigra* and the *tabard* (Figs 7 and 8) have not survived as items of academic dress down to modern times. Scholars at New College, Oxford, kept the tabard until the beginning of the Civil War, but otherwise it seems to have gone completely out of use in the universities after the Reformation.<sup>32</sup>

Here I would like to add an item to Brightman's list: the layman's *mantle*, which belonged to the same layer as the habit, although sometimes it was worn over the hood rather than under it. It differed from the habit in being open down one side. This is the most likely origin of the ruff worn by Cambridge proctors. It seems to have replaced the *cappa* as the formal outer dress of Masters of Arts at Cambridge

---

<sup>29</sup> Franklyn (p. 73) says that the Loggan Cambridge plate shows a *cappa clausa* with a large fur-lined hood, but this description does not distinguish the lay doctor's dress adequately from the DD's. Hargreaves-Mawdsley (pp. 117–18) mistakes the redundant fur-trimmed sleeve behind the arm in Loggan for the liripipe of the hood, and then he fails to notice it altogether, with the furred end lying on the floor, in Agar's plate from Uwins's drawing ('Doctor in Law or Physic in Congregation Robes' in Combe, *History of the University of Cambridge*). He says that by 1815 the LLD's congregation dress is the same as that of the DD, which is plainly not the case.

<sup>30</sup> See the figure captioned 'MD/LLD Congregation Dress' in *Gradus ad Cantabrigiam* (London: John Hearne, 1824); and the head and shoulders of an examiner in R. W. Buss's plate 'Act for the Degree of Bachelor of Civil Law—Cambridge 1842' in V. A. Huber, *The English Universities*, 2nd edn by F. Newman, 2 vols in 3 (London: Pickering; and Manchester: Simms & Dinham, 1843), Vol. II, facing p. 284.

<sup>31</sup> N. Whittock, *The Costumes of the Members of the University of Cambridge* (London: Whittock, 1847).

<sup>32</sup> Hargreaves-Mawdsley, p. 97. N. F. Robinson takes a different view in his article 'The Black Chimere of Anglican Prelates', *Transactions of the St Paul's Ecclesiological Society*, 4.1 (1898), pp. 181–220 (pp. 188–93). He believes that the *cappa clausa* with two slits was abandoned during the fifteenth century and that a sleeveless tabard, a less cumbersome style of habit, was adopted in its place. He asserts that the modern chimere and Oxford convocation habit derive from this tabard rather than a modified *cappa clausa* with two slits—a case of substitution rather than evolution. Franklyn (p. 110) agrees with him.

in the sixteenth century. It began as an ankle-length black mantle and shrank until it became a sort of loose cape draped round the shoulders and pinched in on one side with a bow close to the neck, as shown in Fig. 17. A ruff was still worn by MAs conducting tripos examinations until the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

I think the tippet attached to the gowns of proctors at Oxford may be the attenuated remains of the academic mantle, like the Cambridge proctor's ruff.<sup>34</sup> In the late seventeenth century the Oxford proctor's and collector's tippet still covered the left shoulder and was fixed there by a button, as shown in Fig. 18.<sup>35</sup> In the eighteenth century it was attached to the yoke like a barrister's tippet, although its shape was different and it had no streamer passing over the shoulder to the front. By 1770 this much-reduced type of tippet was also to be seen on the undress gowns of noblemen and baronets at Oxford (see Fig. 19), but it is not clear how this came about.<sup>36</sup> In the medieval and Tudor periods the mantle generally signified authority and superior social status; perhaps the Oxford tippet still carried these associations.

Hargreaves-Mawdsley (p. 195) believes that this item has its origins in the late-medieval scarf fixed to one shoulder and attached to a padded cap or *bourrelet*, but he is relying on evidence from legal dress.<sup>37</sup> It is just possible that the proctorial tippet derives from a cape or shoulder piece detached from the cowl of the hood, but if it is, why is it worn to one side? In my view the pictorial evidence supports the hypothesis that the origins of the Oxford proctor's tippet may lie in the mantle, whatever the origins of the barrister's tippet may be.

---

<sup>33</sup> J. H. Baker, 'The Dress of the Cambridge Proctors', *Costume*, 18 (1984), pp. 87–97 (pp. 88–91). In Loggan (1690) the ruff is gathered in to a button; in Uwins (1815) a small bow has replaced the button. As Baker observes (p. 96, n. 14), Hargreaves-Mawdsley (pp. 109–11) confuses the squared hood and the ruff.

<sup>34</sup> Clark (p. 87) refers to the Statutes of Magdalen College, Oxford (1479), in which the words *mantelle*, *liripipia* and *typets* appear to denote the same item, probably 'some kind of cloak or cape'. The figure of Thomas Baker (d. 1510), Scholar of Civil Law, on a brass at All Souls College, Oxford, wears a mantle fixed on the left shoulder and open down the same side, over cassock and gown—not tabard as Hargreaves-Mawdsley says (p. 91).

<sup>35</sup> See G. Edwards *Omnium ordinum habituumque academicorum exemplaria* (Oxford: the engraver, 1674); Loggan, *Oxonia illustrata*, Plate X, Nos 10, 17 and 18. The button is plainly visible in Edwards's plate, but indistinct in Loggan's. L. H. D. Buxton and S. Gibson say that seventeenth-century drawings of the proctor's gown show the tippet secured by two buttons, one on the shoulder and one on the back, but they do not identify the drawings (*Oxford University Ceremonies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 26).

<sup>36</sup> See C. Grignon's engravings, after drawings by W. Huddesford and J. Taylor, printed to illustrate the new statutes of 1770 (loose prints; repr. Oxford: Taylor, until 1807); and the coloured drawings by J. Roberts of 1792 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Top. Oxon. d. 58).

<sup>37</sup> See also W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A History of Legal Dress in Europe until the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 90–91.



**Fig. 17. Cambridge proctor  
(1815)**

*Engraving by Agar after Uwins*



**Fig. 18. Oxford proctor  
(1674)**

*Engraving by Edwards*



**Fig. 19. Baronet in undress  
at Oxford (1770)**

*Engraving by Grignon after Huddesford*

The word ‘tippet’ has been used, in old regulations and records and by modern writers, for: (1) what is now, in Hargreaves-Mawdsley’s phrase, the ‘small pyramidal tippet’, a piece of cloth fixed by a button to the lower left-hand corner of the yoke on a modern Oxford proctor’s gown; (2) the preaching scarf; (3) the liripipe; (4) the whole hood; and (5) the cape of the hood. To judge by the many early documents cited by Clark and others, it seems to refer most often to the first two or three of these items in Oxford and to the last two in Cambridge. Usage has

remained divided between the two ancient universities: Hargreaves-Mawdsley and Brightman, both Oxford men, insist on (1) and (2) respectively as the only possible meanings; Clark, Regius Professor of Civil Law at Cambridge, clearly favours (5) and several other writers do the same. It would be interesting to know whether it was a Cambridge graduate who drafted Canon LVIII in the Canons of the Church of England of 1604, which prescribed ‘a decent tippet of black, so it be not silk’ in place of a hood for non-graduate priests.<sup>38</sup>

Parallels between academic, ecclesiastical and legal dress endorse our scheme for categories of garments and the layers in which they were worn.<sup>39</sup>

- The simple undertunic (*subtunica*) was common to all three in the late Middle Ages and developed into the cassock for clerics and was eventually replaced by the suit for laymen.
- The overtunic (*supertunica*) was also common to all three and evolved into the undress gown and, for senior academics and lawyers, the full-dress robe. In ecclesiastical dress the alb is the eucharistic and the surplice the non-eucharistic equivalent, and the bishop’s rochet also belongs to this layer.
- All three had two types of ‘habit’:
  - The medieval *cappa* is analogous to the bishop’s and priest’s chasuble, the processional cope and the prelate’s chimere, and to the judge’s *armelausa* or mantle—all garments based on a circle or semicircle.
  - The tabard is analogous to the deacon’s dalmatic and sub-deacon’s tunicle, and to the serjeant-at-law’s parti-coloured tabard—garments based on an oblong. (King’s and Queen’s Counsel later superseded serjeants-at-law.)

This suggests that the following parallels between academic, ecclesiastical and legal ranks apply, at least so far as dress is concerned:

doctors/masters	=	bishops/priests	=	judges
bachelors	=	deacons/sub-deacons	=	serjeants-at-law

Bishops might wear chasuble, dalmatic and tunicle together, indicating that they combine three grades of ordination in the ‘fullness of the priesthood’; academics and lawyers wear only one habit at a time.

---

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas Groves shows that the word was used, following Cambridge usage, for a hood, or possibly a cape without a cowl, in eighteenth-century Norwich (“‘A Hood for the Minister’”: Some Thoughts on Academic Hoods as Recorded in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Church Inventories’, in this volume of *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, 5 (2005), pp. 59–63.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, M. G. Houston, *Medieval Costume in England and France* (London: A. & C. Black, 1939), pp. 19–32, 91–94, 144–50; J. Mayo, *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (London: Batsford, 1984), ‘Glossary’, pp. 128–78, *passim*; Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A History of Legal Dress*, pp. 46–48, 52–53, 58–59, 74–79, 88.

- The hood, in various forms, is still worn—but by no means invariably—by graduates in full academic dress, by clergy over a surplice, and by judges in full robes. A remnant of the hood forms part of the ecclesiastical cope.

Perhaps the most elaborate academic dress in modern times is the convocation dress worn by Oxford doctors when attending certain university ceremonies and church services, presenting candidates for degrees, or conferring degrees in the role of pro-vice-chancellor; they will be wearing five distinct layers of garments (discounting their underwear).<sup>40</sup> Cambridge proctors wearing the ruff with full dress also have five layers. Vice-chancellors at Cambridge take off their gown before putting on the cope and entering the Senate House, and this appears to have been the practice for doctors in congregation since the seventeenth century; they therefore do not have the full complement of layers.<sup>41</sup> Most people in full academic dress wear four layers; in undress, three; out of academic dress, two. A general rule applies: the higher the rank of the wearer or the greater the formality of the occasion, the more layers worn.

Although it is not unusual for a layer to be left out, items do not shift from one layer to another as they evolve.<sup>42</sup> If we remember this crucial principle in studying the evolution of academic dress, many unnecessary complications and confusing misinterpretations can be avoided: for example, we would have been suspicious from the outset of the suggestion that the BA's gown was a modified tabard or the MA's a modified *cappa manicata*.

In this paper I have concentrated on the evolution of the cassock, gown and habit as academic dress. Of course, the cap is also an article of academic dress, but it is not one of the layers of body garments and therefore has been relegated (for present purposes) to the status of an accessory. The hood has a very complex history and has understandably received more attention from writers on academic dress than these other items. It must be included in the scheme of layers and so it takes its place in the summary chart below.

---

<sup>40</sup> Since 2004 the vice-chancellor at Oxford has worn a newly introduced robe of office instead of convocation dress. It resembles a bedel's gown trimmed with a very modest amount of gold gimp lace.

<sup>41</sup> In the engravings by Loggan (1690), Uwins (1815) and Whittock (1847) the DD or vice-chancellor wears a scarlet ankle-length, fur-trimmed cope over a black cassock with a cincture, and no gown or robe in between. Harraden's plate (1805), which Hargreaves-Mawdsley describes (*A History of Academical Dress*, pp. 108–09 and Plate 13), shows a black cassock, an open, pudding-sleeved scarlet robe (if the colourist has got it right), and a scarlet cape that reaches only to the wrists. However, Harraden may be less accurate than Uwins. All these plates show a large fur hood draped round the shoulders.

<sup>42</sup> The only exception of which I am aware is modern: it is said that the scarlet 'habit' at Durham used to be worn over the robe or gown by university officers; it has come to be worn under it and, perhaps as a consequence, has metamorphosed into a cassock.

## The layers of garments worn as academic dress from the Middle Ages to modern times

*Accessories such as caps, ties, bands, gloves, stockings and shoes  
are not included here*

Medieval— 14th to mid-16th century	Modern— from mid-16th century			
shirt	→ shirt and collar / blouse	<b>Layer A</b>		
<i>subtunica</i> , undertunic / cassock	→ cassock / suit	<b>Layer B</b> (Brightman's i)		
<i>supertunica</i> , <i>tunica</i> , <i>roba</i> , <i>gona</i> , overtunic, tunic, robe, toga, gown	↙ undress gown (all styles) ↘ full-dress robe or festal gown	<b>Layer C</b> (Brightman's ii)		
habit {          mantle	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p>cappa {</p> <p>tabard {</p> </div> <div> <p><i>cappa clausa</i> with one slit (DD, DCanL) →</p> <p><i>cappa clausa</i> with two slits, chimere or <i>pallium</i>* (BD, BCanL, lay doctors; later all doctors) →</p> <p><i>cappa manicata</i>, or sleeved chimere (alternative for lay doctors) →</p> <p><i>cappa nigra</i>, or sleeveless chimere (masters and above) →</p> <p>sleeveless tabard (masters and above) →</p> <p>sleeved tabard (bachelors and above) →</p> </div> </div>	<p>Cambridge DD's congregation dress/ vice-chancellor's cope</p> <p>Oxford doctors' convocation habit</p> <p>Cambridge LLD/MD's congregation dress (until 19th cent.)</p>	<b>Layer D</b> (Brightman's iv)	
		→		→
		→		→
		→		→
		→		→
		→		→
hood—sometimes attached to the <i>cappa</i> amess or almuce (DDs)†	→ hood	<b>Layer E</b> (Brightman's iii)		

\* The ecclesiastical *pallium* worn by certain archbishops is a completely different thing, both in origin and its later forms.

† The amess or almuce, a hooded cape lined with fur, was an ecclesiastical rather than an academic garment, worn over a surplice and sometimes under a cope. However, it appears occasionally on memorial brasses in place of the hood as part of academic dress. In this function it was restricted to Masters of Theology/Doctors of Divinity and was worn over a gown,