

A male headdress

The whole adventure of developing a new new cap for Martin started when we saw one of our friends in a hat that we liked.



We drew the pattern and sewed it up in a gray cloth. It was more like a kind of Scottish Beret. And our friend 15 century reenactor! A little too late for us, who have not yet left the 14 c.

As always when you become aware of something, you find it in several places. When we looked around among medieval people we discovered more caps of this kind..



And from where did our friend get the model? It turned out that he had seen *The Borgias* and liked the caps there. And had it sewn up.

Now we are on an even later time. For the person in the family Borgia it is about is Rodrigo Borgia, who was pope 1492-1503 under the name of Alexander VI.

And we understood that this cap must be a clerical headdress. Indeed, it has many similarities with the modern biretta. Maybe it's the same hat?

Now began the search if we could find this cap in historical depictions..

The questions we asked ourselves was:

- How far back in time we could we find it?
- Who were the persons wearing it?

We followed the ecclesiastical track and then started with Joseph Braun "Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient; nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolism "(1907) and then we consulted the Catholic Encyclopedia (1917).

One of the earliest images we found in the search is this one: Grabstein des Peter von Thure (1282). It also proved to be the first example Braun takes up.

”Es stellt hier eine mittelhohe, runde, seitlich sich etwas ausbauchende, oben aber abgeflachte Mütze dar, die in der Mitte des Deckels mit eine Knöpfchen versehen ist”.



So we continued to follow Braun's list and found more pictures online. We found the tombstone of Dean Hartmann von Landisberg (1339) in the Stiftskirche zu Oberwesel.



The look of the biretta has changed a lot, so the round cap has got marked corners. Or maybe the differences in the first is a plain grave slab and the other a wallmounted relief. We are anyway approaching Borgias time.

The changing fashion show Braun at it this way:

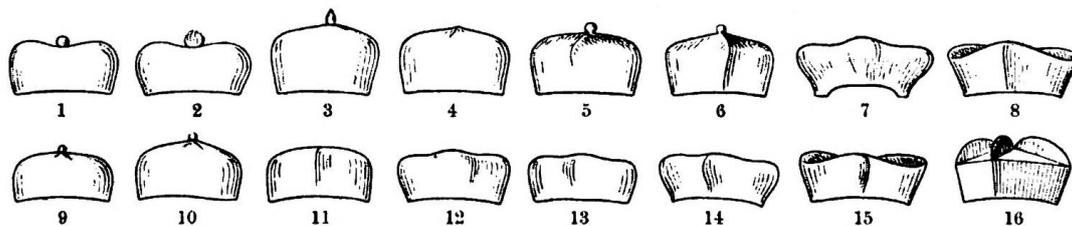


Bild 256. Übersicht über die Entwicklung des Biretts an Hand der Grabplatten in den Domen zu Augsburg (A), Bamberg (B), Regensburg (R) und Würzburg (W).

1. A 1342; 2. R 1428; 3. R 1460; 4. R 1471; 5. R 1505; 6. R 1550; 7. R 1564; 8. R 160(5?); 9. W 144 (?); 10. B. 1483; 11. W 1493; 12. W 1521; 13. W ...; 14. W 1565; 15. W 1610; 16. B 1626.

All examples are later than the two pictures that we found online. To go backward, we must go to the texts. Braun writes:

Das Birett läßt sich unter dem Namen pileus bis in die Frühe des 12. Jahrhunderts, unter der Bezeichnung infula aber bis zum Ende des 10. zurückverfolgen.

Braun is consistent with the Catholic Encyclopedia, which states as follows:

We hear of the birettum in the tenth century, but, like most other questions of costume, the history is extremely perplexed. The wearing of any head-covering, other than hood or cowl, on state occasions within doors

seems to have originally been a distinction reserved for the privileged few. The constitutions of Cardinal Ottoboni issued by him for England in 1268 forbid the wearing of caps vulgarly called "coyphae" (cf. the coif of the serjeant-at-law) to clerics, except when on journey. In church and when in the presence of their superiors their heads are to remain uncovered. From the law the higher graduates of the universities were excepted, /.../ at Bologna the insignia of the Doctorate were the cathedra (chair) and the birettum.

Although the question is very complicated, there seems no good reason to reject the identification, proposed by several modern writers, of the old doctor's birettum with the square college cap, popularly known as the "mortar-board", of the modern English universities. The college cap and ecclesiastical biretta have probably developed from the same original, but along different lines.

It is interesting that it was not permissible for the priests to wear coif. And that the birettum was also an academic headdress. The ecclesiastical and academic cap may have a common origin in the Roman "pileus quadratus".

The headgear has always been used to mark the affiliation, social class, status, office, rank. The look has changed as the fashions have changed. And also the name of his cap had shifted.

Wearing a hat is something practical - when, for example, it is cold in the churches. But just as important as knowing when to have it on it is to know when to take it off.

At the investiture, when someone received a benefice, could the one who gave hand over a biretta as a symbolic sign. It was associated with the jurisdiction and worn when doing something in the office, for example, when the cardinals were going to choose a new pope. Worldly there may be a line when the english judge takes on "the black cap" when pronouncing a death sentences.

With this background, we wanted to see if there were medieval illuminations where we could find headgear similar to the birettum. We went through The Holkham Bible (c 1327-1335) and searched. Was there any birettum? Who was it that wore it?

We found that when the picture showed Nicodemus, he always had a birettum on. He was one of the councilors, a certain lawyer in the Academy. The Pharisees also carries birettum. Here it seems to be a cap of the learned society. The birettum of the Arch Priests is similar, but with a pattern around the hill. Maybe they distinguish themselves as cultic people. The Apostle Thomas, who feel the wounds of Jesus after the resurrection, has a cap resembling to the birettum, as well as several apostles at the second fishing trip at the lake.

A figure with a cap similar to the birettum fall outside the scope - it is the smith who has a damaged hand so that his wife is to forge the nails to the cross of Jesus.

The pictures of the Holkham bible showed on the next side with comments:

First line from: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_47682

Second line from: W.O. Hassall: Holkham Bible Picture Book

f. 20v, Christ and Nicodemus
fol.20v. Nicodemus (in academic dress)
comes by night.



f. 27v, Pharisees /.../ wearing
phylacteries, or scriptural
quotations, on their foreheads.
fol.27v. Pharisees with seat of
Moses, thorns to remind them
of the law and phylacteries.



f. 33v, Soldiers are ordered by a man of law to guard the tomb.
fol.33v. The guards instructed.

f. 37r, Christ's appearance by the lake; the fish
being prepared.
fol.37. By the Lake. Fish grilled.



f. 36v, Christ's two appearances at Jerusalem;
St Thomas touches Christ's wounds.

fol.36v. Two appearances at Jerusalem.
St. Thomas "of India".



f. 31r, the nails for the Crucifixion are forged
by the smith and his wife.

fol.31. A smith says his hand is too bad to
make nails. His wife at the forge.



Escape to Egypt, Martebo Church Gotland. Joseph has a cap similar to that on
the smith. Perhaps the birettum is not only a spiritual and academic cap, but
also something that distinguishes a master craftsman?



The experiment with the birettum resulted in a number of caps displayed here, along with the modern birettum Martin once got from the protopresbyter Christofer Klasson.

Some extras ...



Lorenzo Magalotti, 1637-1712
cardinal



Modern play on Luther



Canterbury cap