



# Kostuum

NEDERLANDSE KOSTUUMVERENIGING 2016

## **Kostuum 2016**

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## **Textile treasure from the sea**

Marijke de Bruijne and Sjoukje Telleman

Recently some spectacular textiles were found in a wrecked ship in the Wadden Sea near Texel, the biggest of the Dutch Wadden isles. The highlight of the find is a complete 17th-century dress. The authors carried out a preliminary investigation of the textiles in January 2016.

The 108 found fragments belonged to 26 objects. Eleven of these objects can be identified with certainty as costumes or parts of costumes. Nearly all of them belong to women's dress. Most of the other fragments seem to belong to furnishing textile.

Nearly all objects consist of silk. Only one small fragment could be identified as wool. Possibly the sea environment was better suited to the survival of protein fibres (fibres of animal origin such as wool and silk) than cellulose fibres (fibres of vegetable origin such as cotton and linen). Linen items such as underwear, shifts, collars and cuffs have probably all perished.

Particular attention was paid to the measurements, shape, material, technique, colour and construction of each object. For costume components the presence of linings, fastenings, seams and traces of sewing was also looked into. The objects were assessed for different kinds of damage, such as discolouration, dirt, distortions, loss of flexibility, loss of material, mechanical damage (traces of wear) and degradation (fibre loss). Many objects need further research in the fields of history, art history and conservation.

Sixteen object groups show different shades of red. This may have been a matter of taste or fashion, but another possibility is that other dyes were not indelible. The other fragments all show brown and orangy shades. These colours may have been caused by contamination with iron oxide. Further research may tell us more about the original colours.

Most objects are decorated with a plethora of techniques and materials, such as embroidery, trimmings and fringes, sometimes in precious metals. Under a Dino-lite microscope very fine strips of silver became visible. These were woven into several fabrics, a technique the researchers had never seen before. Other fabrics clearly show oriental influences. Further research into the embroidered and applied designs might yield more information on the origins and function of these objects.

A fragment of bright red silk satin has been embellished with a simple zigzag pattern by sewing ridges into the material. Remnants of sewing thread are still visible. Very impressive is a pair of knitted silk stockings with a palmette pattern. They are in extremely good condition and have a very fine gauge.

After nearly 400 years at the bottom of the sea, most objects are in remarkably good condition, though some are not. The most frequent problems are corrosion and erosion of metal thread, which causes loss of patterns and materials, and the serious loss of fibre in many objects. Fibre loss still continues, as can be seen with the naked eye.

At the moment the objects are stored in acid-free boxes in stable surroundings where they are protected from dust, light and fluctuations in temperature and humidity. These circumstances are however very different from those they survived in for nearly 400 years. How will the textiles react to this new situation? The existing scientific literature provides hardly any answers, because there is very little documentation of textiles being found in the sea. Future research is planned in a collaboration of several Dutch institutes with Dutch and foreign experts.

## **Beukjes: jewels of the regional dress of Walcheren**

Sylvia van Dam Merrett – van Lynden

Walcheren is one of the islands in the province of Zeeland, in the south-west of the Netherlands. Since the 18th century the dress of the farmers' wives of Walcheren has consisted of a long skirt with a tight jacket and an apron. Over time only the proportions of these have changed. Inside the

neckline of the jacket a chemisette was worn, which covered the back and the chest. In Zeeland this chemisette is called *beukje*. Whereas buying a full set of new clothes is very expensive, making a *beukje* takes only a small piece of fabric. This is the reason why so many different *beukjes* have survived, including some exquisite ones.

The oldest surviving *beukjes* date from the last quarter of the 18th century. These are short and wide. The finest examples are made from brocade. These were probably not worn with a jacket but over a *sticklief*, a kind of corset which replaced the jacket on festive occasions. The white *beukjes* mentioned in inventories were probably not special enough to keep. *Beukjes* from this period that were saved for posterity are embroidered with designs from samplers.

In several collections many *beukjes* surviving from the 1850's and 1860's have been embroidered in cross-stitch in wool. This type of embroidery is called *Berlin Woolwork*, because the woollen yarn and the patterns came from Berlin. The discovery of synthetic dyes provided many new colours, of which fuchsia and purple were great favourites. In addition to traditional sampler patterns, embroidered flowers, birds and baskets of fruit were popular. Towards the end of the 19th century all colour disappeared from Walcheren dress. In the many photographic portraits of this period we usually see white *beukjes*.

For *beukjes* made of darned netting, crowns for caps were used. These crowns were embroidered on net in a nearby part of Belgium, for use in the different caps worn in regional dress all over Zeeland. The net crown was sewn flat onto a white cotton *beukje*. This was partially covered by a white flounce of embroidered net which came down over it like a collar. It is assumed that blue paper was inserted between the embroidered crown and the white cotton background to make the embroidery stand out.

The most interesting white *beukjes* are the so-called 'pearled' ones, embroidered with thick thread on a piqué background. These were worn circa 1890. Patterns include hearts and stars embroidered in a stitch that according to experts is unique to Walcheren: a very fine honeycomb pattern. The description 'pearled' refers to the small circles embroidered in buttonhole stitch which look like small beads or pearls.

In contrast to the *beukjes* embroidered in cross-stitch, the 'pearled' *beukjes* are never signed or dated. This and the level of craftsmanship leads to the assumption that they were made to order (for a wedding?) by professional jacket seamstresses and not by amateur embroiderers. The discovery of artificial silk circa 1915 made it possible to make gathered *beukjes* because this fabric was more resistant to wrinkling. The neckline of the jacket gradually descended to beneath the breasts, so the flat *beukjes* didn't fit any more. This gathered type is worn to the present day. The top of the *beukjes* is often decorated with smocking, lace, braid, beads, sequins or buttons. Women usually possessed a stack of *beukjes*, all of which were representative of their personal taste.

## **Inside out**

A visual essay

This visual essay focuses on the inside of six garments from different periods. This ties in with the theme of the fifteenth anniversary of the merger of the Dutch Costume Society and the lace society 'Het Kantsalet', which was celebrated this year. The objects are from the collections of three Dutch museums and three Dutch collectors.

The first object is from the Zaan Museum. The Zaan area is situated just north of Amsterdam, and in the 18th century it had a distinctive regional dress. The museum preserves examples of this dress, including the jacket shown here, which dates from the last quarter of the 18th century. The patterned blue silk dates from slightly earlier. The lining is a glazed woollen fabric. The jacket is beautifully sewn, but it also shows less careful alterations. These probably date from the period the jacket was used for dressing up.

The beautifully embroidered cream silk gala dress from the Amsterdam Museum dates to ca 1780. The large picture shows how the linen lining of the bodice is laced at the back to obtain a good fit.

The green woollen dress printed with carnations dates to circa 1840. It belongs to a private collector. The large picture shows how the small cartridge pleats of the skirt are attached to the close-fitting bodice. The waist seam is finished with piping.

The captain's tunic from the Museum Rotterdam dates from between 1894 and 1907. It was worn by an officer from the Rotterdam civic guard, which was abolished in 1907. The lining is stitched in a concentric pattern in yellow thread. This was done to make the chest stand out, as befitted a military man. The metal buttons on the inside anchor the shiny metal buttons on the outside.

The children's jacket was worn on Marken, an island in the former Zuyderzee, now IJsselmeer. It probably dates from around 1900. It belongs to a private collector. The dense woollen fabric is printed with a pattern of green grapes and vine leaves. Green was a mourning colour on Marken. In contrast to the beautiful outer fabric, the jacket is lined with what came to hand: in this case a striped cotton fabric from an old petticoat and a blue cotton fabric printed with white letters.

The grass suit is from Hans Ubbink's 2011 collection. He designed a male and a female version. This female version belongs to a private collector. Ubbink used a photoshopped photograph of grass in his garden for the fabric on the outside. For the lining he used several fabrics and patterns, one of them featuring printed English texts.

## **Tambour embroidery**

Sometimes on the front, sometimes on the back

Tony de Kaper-van Aalst

At the coronation of the Dutch King Willem-Alexander in 2013, Queen Máxima wore a blue gown designed by Jan Taminiau. The lace-like embellishment on the transparent fabric was a special type of embroidery, carried out by Maison Lesage.

This technique is called tambour embroidery. With a sort of crochet hook chain stitch is worked on fabric. This fabric is stretched in a frame, for instance a tambour-like frame, hence the name. The origins of this technique lie in India, where it is called Aari embroidery. The chain stitch is visible on the front of the fabric; the back shows small, straight connected stitches. Between 1850 and 1950 tambour embroidery was practised all over Europe. With a machine-made net as a base, a lace-like product could be made cheaply. Muslin was also used as a base.

Tambour embroidery made in Lier in Belgium was called Lier lace, for which cotton net was used as a base. The crown of the caps worn in several types of Dutch regional dress was made in this technique.

During the first half of the 19th century several attempts were made to develop a machine to do tambour work. Ercole Cornely from Paris was very successful with his Cornely machine. To compete with this machine the manual workers had to offer something the machine could not easily reproduce. In Bourg-le-Roi they decided to use different colours. The result looked like tapestry work and was called 'Point de Beauvais'.

For the workshops for manual tambour work, another way to distinguish themselves was the incorporation of beads and sequins. This industry was aimed at fashionable clothes and accessories. In India beads and sequins were also used in Aari embroidery. There beads were sewn on the side of the silk where the chain stitches were. In Europe however, they were sewn on the side with the straight stitches. This last method works faster.

In Lunéville, in Lorraine, white tambour work was made from the early 18th century. There the workshops specialised in working with beads from circa 1865 onwards. They received a lot of commissions from the big couture houses in Paris. In their haute couture work the embroiderers in the Lunéville workshops achieved a three-dimensional effect in their beadwork through all kinds of

techniques. This three-dimensional Lunéville work with its unlimited possibilities is called 'Broderie d'Art'.

One of the Lunéville workshops establishing itself in Paris was the house of Michonnet, which later became Maison Lesage. It still works for the big couturiers, amongst whom are several Dutch fashion designers such as Viktor & Rolf and Jan Taminiau. Taminiau uses Broderie d'Art a lot, for example on the glittering gowns he designed for Queen Máxima.

Recently Maison Lesage renewed the connection with the age-old Indian Aari embroidery: an Indian workshop that embroiders on leather, is now embroidering shoes for Christian Louboutin and others shoe designers, commissioned by Lesage.

## **Erasmus' bonnet**

Geeske M. Kruseman. Isis Sturtewagen and Jane Malcolm-Davies

The black bonnet worn by Desiderius Erasmus, the great Dutch humanist (1466 -1536), in his portraits by Quentin Massys, Albrecht Dürer and Hans Holbein, appears not just similar, but identical, in all surviving portraits made from life, while varying quite widely in the portraits made from memory or from another portrait. This iconic bonnet is instantly recognizable, but has never been studied from a technical point of view.

The first part of this article traces Erasmus' bonnet in the extant portraits; the second investigates the typology of men's bonnets before and circa 1500 in contemporary depictions; the third explores descriptions of such bonnets and their making in archival sources; the fourth summarizes the relevant data from archaeology; and the fifth builds on these for experimental work to gain new and fundamental insights in bygone technologies and materials.

The evidence indicates that Erasmus' bonnet was neither sewn from woven fabric, nor shaped from felt, but rather knitted, then fulled and moulded, napped and finished. Typologically, it appears as an interesting intermediate stage between the cup-like shapes seen from the early 14th century, and the disc-shaped bonnets of the 16th century.

Erasmus chose his own favourite from among the varied, but finite, choice of bonnets considered proper for a scholar of his generation, at a time when knitted bonnets had specific variants for men of all ages in nearly all walks of life. Both the prices commanded by such bonnets in inventories, and the fact that surviving bonnets number over one hundred, testify to the (previously underestimated) economic importance of the knitted bonnet, and its special significance for the female workforce.

Further study of the surviving bonnets, and further experimental research, are expected to bring growing mutual benefits as they focus more on exact and thorough scientific data. The authors hope that the writer of 'The Praise of Folly' would spare a smile for such attention lavished on his bonnet. After all, he was the man who wrote to a friend: '...as soon as I receive the money, I shall first get some Greek authors, and then some clothes'.