

WHAT THE DUTCH WEAR

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Dutch dress or klederdrachten is a form of folk, peasant, or ethnic dress.¹ Wilcox defines this type of apparel in Folk and Festival Costume of the World as "simple dress made of strong fiber with the possibility of color and fine fabric limited in some instances by sumptuary decrees beginning early in the 16th century. It was contended that an individual's class should be apparent in his dress." In contrast, historic costume is related largely to high fashion garments of the past worn by royalty and the well-to-do. It is recognized that the two types of dress come together in some relationships particularly as silhouette as in some special feature such as sleeve length. Also, peasant dress, in being passed down in families increased in value particularly in jewelry collections. This traditional folk dress is still being worn in some regions and villages in Holland as a "way of life." It is durable, gives evidence of marital status, religion (Protestant or Catholic) and location. Those wearing this type of dress every day are definitely religion-oriented. Also, there are many situations where Dutch dress serves as costume worn on limited occasions. In the United States, Dutch dress takes the form of costume only.

The wearing of klederdrachten still occurs in many places in the Netherlands.² Constance Nieuwhoff visited fourteen places which she included in her recently published klederdrachten book. It is also found in other places not listed. Volendam with its dress recognized by the world as "Dutch," is a tourist center due to its proximity to Amsterdam and its evolution from an artist's colony. Marken, formerly an isolated island is conveniently close to Volendam for that tourist excursion. Amsterdam has "everything" so some Dutch dress is found there. Urk, a fishing village, has its costumed choirs and keeps the tradition as do Katwijk and Scheveningen. Zeeland has its Middleburg with 2-3% klederdrachten wearers; Axel, Cadzand, Walcheren, and Arnemuiden in this area were also visited. Spakenburg and Bunschoten, Huizen, Rijssen and the Veluwe area of Gelderland and Staphorst are others. Even the children and young people of Staphorst wear the "dress" but a new furnace factory in the area is making its inroads on the "old ways."

Dutch dress as "costume" is "alive and well" in many activities and localities in the Netherlands. It helps people to relate to the past, is a part of heritage, and is a cultural "cue." Folk dancers are more effective if costumed in appearances for tourist groups or community events. The Opperdan Dance Group from the Gemeente Langendyk (North Holland) was formed after the village celebrated its 900th anniversary and felt they must do something to use their costumes (typical Dutch thrift!). Fish vendors wear traditional dress (costume or possibly as "way of life"). Waitresses in the Spandler Hotel in Volendam are lovely in their costumes. Keeping klederdrachten visible is evident in polder Visitor Centers which have paintings of people in traditional dress to help people remember the old days in these new towns.

The Dutch have wonderful collections of klederdrachten in their local museums. The costume collection at Arnhem's Open Air Museum is well-known. A friend recently had an insider's view of the comprehensive accumulation of traditional clothing from the fishing village featured at the newly opened Open Air Museum at Enkhuizen. The museum is unique in that it can only be reached by boat. Commercial utilization of costume is evidenced by the

popularity of wooden shoes, costumed dolls, textiles, and post cards. My study group in Holland this summer became very excited about Dutch caps from Volendam. Many were purchased for grandchildren at home. Fabrics, with a traditional past such as the Hindelopen chintzes and Urk stripes are popular as Folklorics for current dress and sportswear fashion or for exporting to America for costume-makers. It is even possible for you and your family to be photographed in Volendam costume if that appeals.

Dutch costume is an important part of the tulip festivals, Dutch days, and happenings in the USA. It is a visible tie with the old country that often makes us "More Dutch than the Dutch!" Carol Van Klompenburg, free-lance writer from Pella (and formerly of Orange City) has been researching many Dutch - connected towns for her book. "Delightfully Dutch" to be available in May, 1984. There are the well-known tulip festivals of Holland, Michigan, Orange City and Pella, Iowa. A list of other celebrations could include those of Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, Albany, New York, New Brunswick, New Jersey, the Dutch Festival of Edgerton, Minnesota and Oak Harbor, Washington's "Holland Happenings". In Denver, Bethesda Hospital's fund raising Dutch Festival attracted 15 - 20,000 people this year. Costumes were an important part of all these events. Pella's 1982 tulip queen and attendants in their Bunscooten costumes stood out at the reception at the Chicago Art Institute for Queen Beatrix and Prince Klaus.

As an overall example, Pella's costume related events include the festival, parade, street scrubbing, costume show honoring Tulip Time royalty and their families, Kermis, Sinter Klauss, slide shows and movie presentations. Great effort is made to be as authentic as possible. A slide show of Pellans in Dutch costumes delighted Nursing Home residents as they recognized friends and relatives participating in Tulip Time. Pella's Strawtown Inn features Marken costume as the uniform for its hostess, waiters, and waitresses. Dutch costume is frequently featured in television Christmas Shows or Miss Universe "Spectaculars". Dutch costume may be used in illustrating books and publications. Pella's "Collectors Cookbook" has a Volendam scene for its cover and authentic Dutch costume drawings on divider pages. As in the Netherlands, museums in Dutch communities here in the U.S. have costumes in their collections.

Reasons3 for the continuance of Dutch dress until this time in the 20th Century are (1) It is a point of conformity, group identification, and strong community feeling. (2) Other dress, because of deep religious conviction, is considered worldly or "attention attracting". (3) This clothing meets a psychological need which is related to feelings about the self (4) Traditional dress gives status to the wearer. A large, older woman from Urk impressed me as being more of a "somebody" than if she had been wearing a polyester double knit. She said, "I'm proud of it; I grew up with it." A friend from Huizen confided that there was a klederdrachten wearer from her town who had a special "western dress" wardrobe to wear when she is on holiday in Spain. (5) It has also continued because of its non-static quality and the creativeness of the wearers. An example would be the addition of a green chiffon scarf to the Marken woman's costume. This innovation was pictured on a Holland Herald cover. I was very upset! The next months issue stated, "For you purists, that is the way they do it in Marken now." This summer, I noted that a Deventer dance group wore scarves in the same manner.

Marilyn Conant, an Iowa State University student on the Span Program, gives reasons for the decline of Dutch dress following a special study during a 3 month period in the Netherlands.⁴

- (1) The end of isolation.
- (2) The difficulty in obtaining special fabrics required because of expense.
- (3) Maintenance of klederdrachten parts requiring special starching and processing is not related to 20th century lifestyles.
- (4) Dressing time is doubled and this isn't practical.
- (5) A disaster such as the Zeeland flood made it impossible to replace the traditional garments.
- (6) Due to advances in transportation, the differences between town and country were minimized.
- (7) An increase in mass communication has brought change and progress to every aspect of life.
- (8) With the influx of tourists, many did not enjoy being stared at or photographed.

In the "Katholieke Illustratie" it is expressed thus: "It is not only the visible that disappears but also the attitude toward the spirit or philosophy behind the dress. When there is an inner change in philosophy or way of thinking, then this is expressed in dress. When people no longer realize or personally understand or have that conviction, then the dress becomes less significant; it deteriorates and fades away."⁵

Therefore, when we consider what costumes have been through, it is their survival and not their tendency to disappear that is remarkable.

Dutch dress is a very visible way of relating to the homeland, here and abroad. I predict, that as costume, it will continue and be important in the Netherlands and USA.

Dutch dress "as a way of life" is being worn only by older people, mostly women; an exception is Staphorst.⁶ The Klederdrachten book author, Constance Nieuwhoff, and I predict it will be discontinued in 15 to 20 years and with it will go a "way of life"!

Footnotes

1. R. Turner Wilcox, "Folk and Festival Costume of the World." Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1965, Foreword.
2. Constance Nieuwhoff. "Journey Through a Living Tradition" Holland Herald. Volume II, Number 10. pp. 25-30.
3. Marilyn Conant, "A Physical and Sociological Study of Regional Women's Costumes of the Province of Zeeland, The Netherlands, Span Study, Iowa State University, Ames. 1970, p. 43.
4. Ibid. pp. 45-46.
5. Ibid. pp. 45-46.
6. Constance Nieuwhoff and Willem D.C. Vortuys, "Klederdrachten, Een Reis langs De Levende Streekdrachten Van Nederland, Contact, Amsterdam. 1976.

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1. Thienen, F.W.S. Van and J. Duyvetter, Klederdrachten, Contact, Amsterdam, 1968.
2. Wilcox, R. Turner. "Folk and Festival Costume of the World" 1965, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.
3. Nieuwhoff, Constance and Vortuys, Willem D.C., Klederdrachten, Een Reislangs De Levende Streek - Drachten Van Nederland, Contact, Amsterdam, 1976.
4. Nieuwhoff, Constance, "Journey Through a Living Tradition" Holland Herald, Vol. II, Number 10.
5. Conant, Marilyn, "A Physical and Sociological Study of Regional Women's Costumes of the Province of Zeeland. The Netherlands, Span Study Iowa State University, Ames, 1970.
6. Iritani, Evelyn, "Dutch Costumes, Practical and Ornamental" Supplement to Whidbey Times. April 22, 1977.
7. Personal Observations and Research involved in ten trips to the Netherland from 1965 to 1983 (Three week period spent in Holland in summer, 1983).
8. Slide show (to follow speech) slides purchased in the Netherlands or taken by Mina Baker.