

TEXTILE RESEARCH CENTRE LEIDEN

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2015



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Chairman's Comments

Even a quick and superficial glance at TRC's Annual Report for the year 2015 raises the question, how such a small institution, understaffed and working on a precariously limited budget, successfully achieves year after year such a vast amount of ever growing goals. How its international prestige still increases and how it is still standing up against seemingly impossible odds.

The answer, of course, is indefatigable enthusiasm. Our Director Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood is the embodiment of that enthusiasm and she has the rare talent to make everybody who she works with share its fervour. You will find it on every page of this report, but I would like to refer here to the contribution of Shelley Anderson who, writing on behalf of TRC's volunteers, describes how much she enjoys her work, meeting the world's best experts in the field as well as making tea and washing dishes.

Her story refers also to TRC's hospitality. The number of visitors from all over the world has increased again in 2015. After their first visit, many of them come back bringing gifts, donating books and pieces for the collection, or to buy books and trinkets from the shop. The TRC Website and the TRC Facebook-page contribute to the fame and growing popularity of our endeavour.

These successes are encouraging, but they bring their own problems. In eighteen months from now, TRC's depot will be overcrowded. We have to find new space and the money to pay for it. Leiden is proud of its long history of textile production. The municipality manages many suitable premises. Therefore we hope for their help, as TRC, however small, has become one of the town's important cultural institutions.

Prof. Lammert Leertouwer

The Stichting Textile Research Centre, Leiden

The *Stichting* ('Foundation') Textile Research Centre is an educative and research institute, which was established in 1991 with the stated aim of supporting the academic study of archaeological and anthropological textiles and dress. The most important part of our work is the building up and study of a textile and dress collection. These garments are available for research and exhibition purposes.

The Board

The board is currently made up of the following:

Chairman: Prof. L. Leertouwer

Treasurer: Prof. B. ter Haar Romeny

Secretary: Dr. K. Innemée

General board members Mrs. V. Drabbe and Dr. G. Vogelsang-Eastwood

International Advisory Board

The International Advisory Board includes: Dr. Ruth Barnes (Yale University, USA); Carol Bier (Berkeley, CA); Prof. J. Eicher, (University of Minnesota, USA), Prof. John Fossey (Montreal Museum of Fine Art, Canada); Prof. Michael Hahn (Leeds University, England), Mrs. Layla Pio (Amman, Jordan), Mrs. Widad Kawar (Amman, Jordan) and Dr. John Peter Wild (Manchester, England).

Permanent staff

Dr. Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood continues as the director of the *Stichting*. She is a specialist in ancient and modern Middle Eastern textiles and dress. Next to her, Else van Laere looks after the financial administration and shop.

The volunteers in 2015 included: Shelly Anderson, Marleen Audretsch, Tineke Moerkerk, Rasa Nabutaité, Christopher Ng, Ms, Martine de Nijs, Ms. Marieke Roozeboom, Renske Schaafsma, Ireen Tiendalli, Ms. Riet van de Velde and, as a general 'sounding board,' Mr. F. Popp.

In addition, the TRC also worked with students from Universiteit Leiden, namely Koen Berghuijs, Guus Halewijn, Deandra de Loeff, Jasmijn Nobelen, Roos Monk, Alicia Torres Porras (Mexico), Dieuwertje Roelse and Sophie Vullings.

We also worked with Wolfgang Keller, *Charity Events*, a marketing and international events organiser (Netherlands).

The Volunteers

Shelley Anderson

Being a TRC volunteer involves both the mundane and the exciting. I make tea and wash dishes, and I get to listen to world experts lecture on subjects such as the Bayeux Tapestry, Leiden broadcloth and ancient Egyptian clothing. I enjoy the variety of the tasks, from cataloguing new acquisitions, to helping mount a new exhibition, to researching entries for the TRC's digital encyclopaedia "Needles". This gives me an appreciation of all the work that goes on behind the scenes of a research centre or museum and I now look differently at exhibitions—and at the textiles all around me in my daily life.

Most of all, as a volunteer at the TRC, I get to see and touch textiles. Where else but at the TRC could I get up close and personal with Coptic fragments, 19th century Tenerife lace or the gorgeous gold thread embroidery in an Iranian court jacket? I get to share from the staff's, other volunteers' and visitors' passion for beautiful and interesting clothes and fabrics. I've learned about natural dyes from an archaeology student, about 19th century Dutch bonnets from another volunteer and about how velvet is made from the TRC director. The TRC has opened up the world of textiles for me and I hope to continue to explore this world by volunteering for many more years to come.

TRC Gallery

The TRC Gallery is used to hold temporary exhibitions about textiles and dress. These exhibitions are free of charge, in order to attract as wide a range of people as possible.

In 2015 two exhibitions were held at the TRC Gallery. The first exhibition was *Textile Visions of Egypt: Appliqués from the Street of the Tentmakers, Cairo* (January-June). The second exhibition was called *Dressing Sheba: Textiles and Clothing from Yemen* (August – December 2015).

In addition, three mini-exhibitions were organised on very different themes. These were held in the TRC workroom rather than the Gallery, as there is simply not enough space to display everything in the main room.

Further details about all of these exhibitions can be found below.

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Guided Tours of TRC Exhibitions

Every Wednesday and Thursday afternoon at 14.00 there is a guided tour of the current, TRC exhibition. These are becoming increasingly popular with visitors and we sometimes have ten people in a tour. This may not sound many, but ten very interested people means lots of questions, so some of the tours take much longer than expected! But this is the TRC and we encourage questions and interest.

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TRC Visitors

The number of visitors to the TRC increased in 2015 as word about our exhibitions and facilities has grown (in part via Facebook and items about the TRC exhibitions in *Handwerk Zonder Grenzen*). There were also various cultural groups from Leiden and localities nearby who came to hear about the TRC and its wide ranging activities. One group had to book three visits because so many of the members wanted to come!

Many of our visitors came from the Netherlands as well as Belgium and Germany, but there were also many from other parts of the world including America, Australia, Britain, Canada, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Scandinavia, Taiwan, and Yemen. In 2015, for example, we also had several visits from a group from the *Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles*, Bangkok, Thailand, who came to see what we were doing at the TRC. This group was led by Melissa Leventon and Dale Gluckman.

On a more informal level we were visited from Georg Stark, an indigo printer from Jever, Germany. Several items from the TRC collection were given on loan to Georg Stark for his exhibition about historical indigo dyeing.

For further information about the work of Georg Stark, go to: www.blaudruckerei.de

In addition, we had various more formal occasions such as visits by staff from the Yemen Embassy and the Iranian Embassy, including Dr. Sayyed Zia Hashemi, Deputy Minister for Social and Cultural Affairs, Tehran, Iran.

TRC Shop

The activities of the TRC are also supported by the TRC shop. The shop sells items relating to dress and

textiles, including new and second hand books, and particularly objects relating to textile production such as fibres, hand spindles, small items of weaving, and so forth. In addition, there are textiles, garments, bags and jewellery from various countries around the world. There is also a growing collection of postcards, based on items in the TRC collection. These postcards are currently only available from the TRC. The shop now also includes a wide range of beads suitable for embroidery and for Dutch regional dress (*klederdracht*). They include very fine seed beads, as well as metallic coloured beads and mourning beads.

Many of the items for sale in the shop also appear in the TRC's webshop (see below). The shop is managed by Mrs. Else van Laere.

TRC mini-publications

As a result of the request for more information about exhibitions and for copies of exhibition text boards, the TRC started in 2011 to produce a series of mini-publications for each exhibition. Most of these booklets are in Dutch and are based upon the texts available to the public with each exhibition, with added photographs. By the end of 2015 the following titles were available, with many more planned for 2016.

- *Sprankelende geborduurde gewaden en juwelen uit Jemen* (2015)
- *Textiel beelden uit Egypt: Appliqué panelen uit de Straat van de Tentenmakers, Cairo* (2015)
- *Over kant gesproken* (2014)
- *Het weven van de wereld: 7000 jaar handgeweven textiel* (2014)
- *Silhouet van Afrika: Kleur en Kleding* (2014)
- *Wat is Borduren?* (2013)
- *Meer dan de Chador: Kleding uit de bergen en woestijnen van Iran* (2013)
- *Goed geklede voet* (2012)
- *Lotusschoenen en een gelukkige toekomst* (2012)
- *Hoofd-zaken: Hoofdbedekkingen en haardecoraties voor vrouwen* (2012).
- *Voor de draad ermee! De wereld van het spinnen* (2011).
- *Spinners op merklappen* (2011).
- *Cheongsam! Glamour en geschiedenis verenigd in een kledingstuk* (2011).
- *Mooi gekleed Afghanistan* (2011).

- *Borduurwerk in de Arabische wereld* (2011).
- *Prins voor één dag – Turkse besnijdeniskleding* (2011).
- *Badla – Borduren met zilverdraad* (2011).
- *De Thob 'Ubb: de langste jurk ter wereld?* (2011).
- *Oya – Turkse kant: een springlevende traditie* (2011).
- *Kanga's: Een kledingstuk voor vrouwen uit Oost-Afrika* (2011).

It is the plan to also publish these mini-volumes in English.

The TRC Website

The Stichting has its own website, www.trc-leiden.nl, which was designed by Joost Kolkman (<http://www.joostkolkman.nl>). The site carries a wide range of information about the TRC, including its aims, annual reports, donation information, possibilities to loan objects or to hire complete exhibitions, and short items of current interest. The website information is given in both Dutch and English.

The website is kept up-to-date by Willem Vogelsang who, throughout 2015 has been continually adding new items, removing old items and working on the TRC's big project in 2015, *TRC Needles* (see below).

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TRC and Facebook

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Shelley Anderson, interest in the TRC on Facebook is growing rapidly and every week brings more and more subscribers to the TRC Facebook page. At the end of 2015 over 1250 'likes' reflected the growing popularity of the TRC site.

The TRC Facebook page is in Dutch and English and includes news about all the recent developments and events at the TRC, plus some personal comments about items on display or in the TRC collection. The most popular item in 2015 was an item about Saint Nicholas, which came on-line to coincide with *St. Nicholaasdag*, which is celebrated on the 5th December in the Netherlands, although his name day is on the 6th December according to the

Roman Catholic church.

<https://www.facebook.com/Textile-Research-Centre-456572831067411/>

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Textile Moments

The TRC has its own blog page called *Textile Moments*. This page is used by members of the TRC or indeed anyone else, who has had a WOW! moment with regards textiles, clothing, exhibitions, pictures, and so forth. They can send it in and share it with other textile enthusiasts. Items in 2015 ranged from visits to various countries (from China to Belgium, via Rome), comments about traditional textiles and dress, to seeing exhibitions in various museums, as well as items about specific and unusual items to the TRC collection.

http://www.trc-leiden.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=75&Itemid=256&lang=en

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The TRC also has a QR code, which links directly to the TRC website:



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TRC and YouTube

Thanks to the help of Andrew Thompson (RESTORIENT, Leiden), various exhibitions held at the TRC have been recorded in the form of YouTube films. These films can be found via the TRC website or the TRC's Facebook.

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The TRC and On-Line Databases

The TRC is very busy at the moment making various parts of the TRC activities, collection and databases available on-line. These include:

TRC Needles: *TRC Needles* is a digital encyclopaedia of decorative needle work and has now been on-line for just over six months. By the end of December 2015 Needles included nearly 1500 entries and more and more information and partners are agreeing to help with the entries and providing information and/or photographs. We range from the modern stitch poetry of Janet M. McDonald Davies (New Zealand) to early archaeological finds of embroidery from China.

<http://www.trc-leiden.nl/trc-needles/>

TRC Library: Thanks to the hard work of the library team *TRC Library* went on-line to the general public by the 15th August 2015. Over 2000 titles are included in the library catalogue, with cross-references, book reviews and recommendations; the search functions enable a visitor to search for a book via author, subject, land, and so forth. The library team has worked very hard getting this all ready and the list of books in the collection will be up-dated on a regular basis. If you have books you would like to give to the TRC please do not hesitate to get in contact with us.

http://www.trc-leiden.nl/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=320&lang=en

TRC Images: We now have another group working on *TRC Images*, which is a much smaller database that will include the TRC's collection of images (postcards, photographs, even stamps) relating to textiles and costume from around the world. If you have any suitable items that you are willing to donate to the TRC, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

TRC Collection: work is progressing on bringing the TRC Collection on line, but nearly 11,000 objects need to be fully catalogued and photographed, and every week people bring in new items for the collection (a luxury problem indeed!). It is taking us a little longer than anticipated, but the database is going to be a valuable asset to everyone concerned.

In addition, the *TRC Shop* has a wide range of books and objects relating to textiles that are for sale – everything we sell in the shop helps to fund the TRC's many activities.

The Library

Over the years the TRC has built up a collection of over 2000 books relating to textiles and dress. Most of these books were catalogued in 2015 thanks to the efforts of various volunteers, especially Marieke Roozeboom. The library is divided into the following sections:

- General reference books
- Museum collections, displays, conservation and so forth
- Textile techniques
- Textiles, fashion and dress theory
- Regional
- Dutch regional clothing

The library list came on-line in August 2015 and since then new books to the library have been added automatically to the on-line catalogue as they are registered.

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The Library in 2015

Marieke Roozeboom

A lot has happened to the TRC Library in 2015. At the beginning of the year, there were many donated books waiting to be included into it and about 400 were entered into the library catalogue. There was also the need to deal with a luxury problem, namely that books are still being donated on a regular basis and a backlog is beginning to develop.

Since mid-2015 the catalogue of the TRC Library became searchable online. Moreover, from the online catalogue it is possible to click through to TRC Book Recommendations (see below) and to the sale of copies elsewhere on the site. To improve the user's ability to find books in the catalogue we have also added ISBN, language, and keywords search facilities to the catalogue.

In the past various people were working on the library and the categorization of the books was not always consistent. All of the numbered books, therefore, were checked to make sure they were in the correct category. In addition, it was clear that some categories contained too many books so it was decided to divide them into several sub-groups. All in all the books in the library are becoming much easier to find, use and enjoy!

A start was also made on sorting and cataloguing the journal collection. In 2016 the collection of articles will also be inventoried.

Lots to do but it is possible and 2016 is going to

see even more activities around the library and its wonderful contents.

Donations for the library are always welcome!

Throughout 2015 the TRC was also given donations of books. In some cases, these were duplicates and the donors kindly agreed that these might be sold in the TRC shop (see above) in order to support the activities of the TRC.

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Recommended books

There are many books on textiles, clothing and accessories and related subjects now available, and we are often asked to recommend books for students, academics and the general public. So in 2014 the TRC started a webpage ('Books showcased') with an annotated list of some recent acquisitions for our library that we feel will be of interest to 'textile' people. Some of these books will be of general interest, others intended for specialists. Not all books will be new to the market, but they will form an important part of the TRC's ever expanding library.

Over seventy books were described in 2015 and a pdf list of these and other books can be [found here](#).

Since September 2015 the list of TRC recommended books has been cross-referenced to the on-line catalogue of books in the TRC library.

Acquisitions, Purchases and Gifts

The TRC now regards it as normal for people to pop in every week with items for the collection. If something does not come in during a week we get a little concerned! The range of objects that have come to the TRC is very varied and ranges from a simple handkerchief to ornate garments. We would like to thank everyone who has been so generous in thinking about us and bringing us items for the collection.

Instead, however, of listing here the range of items that have come in, it was decided to highlight several pieces and give a little of their history in order to help readers understand why an object may be accepted into the TRC Collection. As many people will be aware, the TRC is not so much

interested in pretty items, but the story behind the object.

April and May are the months of royal and historical events in the Netherlands, with numerous public holidays. In particular, these holidays include *Koningsdag* (the King's birthday), Remembrance Day (4th May) and Liberation Day (5th May). Two items that reflect such specific moments in Dutch history have recently been given to the TRC:

The first is a printed cotton panel with the image of King Willem III (r: 1849-1890) and the date 1874. It was given to the TRC on the 23rd April by the municipality of Velsen, Noord-Holland (along with a large collection of fans from China, Indonesia, Japan, etc). The panel is in bright orange (the colour of the reigning dynasty, the House of Orange) and celebrates the 25th anniversary of King Willem III's reign. He was the great-great-grandfather of the current Dutch king.

The printed text under the depiction of the king is that of the national anthem of the Netherlands until 1933, when it was replaced by the *Wilhelmus*. The text of the former anthem is based on a poem by Hendrik Tollens (1780-1856), with music composed by Johann Wilhelm Wilms (1772-1847). Nowadays the text sounds somewhat anachronistic and certainly very chauvinistic: *Wien Neêrlandsch bloed door d'aderen vloeit, Van vreemde smetten vrij ...* [Whose Dutch blood flows through his arteries, free from foreign blemishes.....]. Not a text for the politically correct.

The second item has a somewhat darker history. At the beginning of April 2015 we were given an embroidered kerchief worked in a red and beige cotton thread. The embroidery includes a central text that reads **34 Stadskanaal J.K. 17-5-1945 Ons Belang 5-9-45**. Surrounding it are some 25 signatures.

Stadskanaal is a town in the province of Groningen in the northeast of the Netherlands. *Ons Belang* ('Our interest') was the name of a company producing cardboard. The date on the embroidery is of particular importance: the nearby major town of Groningen was liberated from the Germans by mainly Canadian troops in mid-April 1945.

As a result the story has unexpectedly taken a new twist. The name of 'Ons Belang' was not only that of the local cardboard factory, but also that of a temporary internment camp for men and women arrested for collaboration with the Germans. In fact, the camp was 'opened' on 7th May, some three weeks after the liberation of the area, and remained in use well into 1946. The camp was located on the premises of the factory, 'Ons Belang', hence of course the name of the camp. The initials J.K. that

were embroidered on the kerchief, as we initially read them, should in fact be read as I.K., for 'Internerings Kamp.' One of the embroidered names is that of Tony Bijland, to whose name is added the embroidered word *zwemster* (swimmer [fem.]).

Tony Bijland was a female swimming champion who was particularly active in the early 1940s. Born in 1923/24, she trained in Hilversum with the HZC swimming club. In various war-time newspaper articles she is linked to the *Nationale Jeugdstorm* (the Dutch variant of the *Hitlerjugend*). She joined the 'European youth swimming championships' in (German) Breslau in 1941. She was interviewed for the *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden* (Thursday, 13 July 1944; with photograph).

Whether or not she sympathised with the German occupying forces remains unknown. We should not forget she was very young at the time, but it does explain her presence in the internment camp in 1945. How she ended up there, and how and why her name and those of the other people appeared on an embroidered handkerchief, remains a moot point.

TRC Reference Collections

In addition to the main TRC collection, the TRC is also involved in a long-term project to build up a general reference collection for the identification of textiles (materials and techniques) and related tools.

This collection will eventually include fibres, threads, woven and non-woven forms, natural dyes, as well as printing and painting equipment, lace and embroidery forms and tools, as well as items such as sewing tools (needles, scissors) and notions such as fastenings (buttons, hooks and eyes, zips, and so forth). These samples are intended to help the identification of textiles and related items from a wide range of sources, including anthropological, archaeological, and historical items.

In particular, over the years the TRC has acquired numerous pieces of bobbin and needle made lace. The need to build up a lace reference collection has been discussed on various occasions, but due to the lack of a specialist in this field, this part of the TRC collection has not had the attention it needed or deserved. However, following a visit to Brugge (Belgium) and a meeting with Anne Thijs ([† Apostelientje](#)) the situation has changed. Ms. Thijs has very kindly agreed to help make a suitable collection for the TRC and to act as our advisor. The TRC is now busy making suitable storage panels for the collection and working on a system of

identification that is based on that used by the [Powerhouse Museum](#), Sydney and the [Victoria and Albert Museum](#), London

The TRC is a Cultural ANBI

On the 12th April 2012 the TRC was provisionally recognized as a cultural ANBI (“Culturele ANBI”) – this is potentially important news for any Dutch tax payers. It means that individual gifts can be claimed back for 125% for a private person and 150% for a company. More information is available at the Dutch tax site:

http://www.belastingdienst.nl/wps/wcm/connect/bldc/ontentnl/belastingdienst/zakelijk/bijzondere_regeling_en/goede_doelen/algemeen_nut_beogende_instelling_en/culturele_anbi/_culturele_anbi

The status of *Culturele ANBI* was officially recognized by Brussels in March 2013. This means that any donations to the TRC made from January 2013 onwards are tax deductible at the rates given above.

Exhibitions and Displays

During 2015 the TRC organised a number of displays and exhibitions on the theme of textiles and dress. In addition, a new form of display was devised in 2015, namely mini-exhibitions

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Textile Visions from Egypt: The Street of the Tentmakers

4 January 2015 - 2 June 2015

The TRC activities for 2015 started with the official opening of the beautiful, and above all extremely colourful TRC Gallery exhibition *Textile Visions from Egypt*, on Sunday 4th January. The exhibition was opened by Dr. Rudolf de Jong, director of the Netherlands-Flemish Institute, Cairo, Egypt.



A master embroiderer working on an appliqué panel, Street of the Tentmakers, Cairo, Egypt. Photograph: Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, December 2014.

The exhibition included a large number of appliqués, in all sizes, very simple and very intricate, from the Street of the Tentmakers in Cairo. Here, in a 17th century complex of buildings in the old centre of the town, craftsmen still follow a tradition that goes back to at least the time of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh, Tutankhamun (who died in c. 1323 BC).

This TRC exhibition included historical and technical information as well as a very wide range of appliqué panels with traditional geometric designs, intricate Arabic calligraphy, ancient Egyptian tomb scenes, modern lotus designs, as well as birds, fishes, landscapes and folk stories. In fact, all aspects of traditional Egyptian life were included!

The exhibition at the TRC was made possible with the help of the appliqué makers from the Street of the Tentmakers, Cairo, and the director and staff of the Netherlands-Flemish Institute, Cairo, Egypt, and with the assistance of John and Joan Fisher, England.

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Dressing Sheba Textiles, garments and jewellery from Yemen

10 August until 17 December 2015

The image of the Queen of Sheba, dressed in exotic textiles, clothing and jewellery and dancing in front of King Solomon, has fired the imagination of artists for hundreds of years. The Biblical land of Sheba, now known as the Republic of Yemen in the extreme southwest of the Arabian Peninsula, has long been described as the source of abundant trade goods, including emeralds and rubies, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and incense (*Book of Ezekiel 27:16*).

Dutch traders in the 17th and 18th centuries went to Yemen to acquire silk (*stickzijde*) and metal threads (*goudtraet*), silk textiles and much more that came from as far away as Syria, Egypt, Iran, India, China and Indonesia, to bring these goods back to The Netherlands for its wealthy citizens. In the 20th century Yemen was still attracting trade from all over the world. Sadly, in recent days Yemen has become the scene of a bloody civil war and interference from outside.



*Yemeni dagger sheath and gold embroidered belt.
(2012; TRC collection).*

The local geography of deserts, mountains and long coasts has meant that Yemen developed a diverse range of textiles, clothing and accessories that reflect local cultural and economic characteristics. This diversity is reflected in the many textiles and outfits that are displayed in the new TRC exhibition. They include men and women's outfits from the four corners of the country, including items from the Haraz, Sana'a, Tihama, Wadi Hadramaut, with indigo dresses with chain work, dresses and pieces with

intricate embroideries of many types, locally hand woven textiles for men and women, including headgear, waistcoats and hip wraps, examples of the famous eye face veils, and the intriguing and colourful red velvet and satin bridal dresses from the Hadramaut. Over one hundred items of Yemeni textiles, dress items and accessories are on display.

Yemen has also for long been famous for its silver jewellery. Thanks to the generosity of Paul Spijker ([Toguna](#), Amersfoort), a range of silver items worn by Yemeni girls and women were also on display, decoration that was used to complement the dress outfits and to say "look at me, I am someone, but don't touch."

The exhibition also focused on the exquisitely embroidered dagger belts worn by men, which were produced by women of the Al Buraai family in the remote Haraz Mountains, north of the capital, Sana'a.

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All of the past TRC exhibitions are available for loan to suitable venues, both within the Netherlands and internationally. If you are interested in having further details about TRC exhibitions, then please see our website www.trc-leiden.nl or contact the TRC at info@trc-leiden.nl.

Mini-Exhibitions

In 2015 the TRC started a new series of mini-exhibitions. This is a display of one or two boards on a particular textile or theme. Each exhibition is only there for a short period of time, from several weeks to two months. Such displays are made by different volunteers and are intended to reflect their personal interests, favourite textile or a particular story they are interested in. Three mini-exhibitions were produced in 2015, the first was about a woman's blouse from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The second was about a form of appliqué/patchwork from Chile called an *arpillera*. The third mini-exhibition was about embroidered postcards from World War 1. This display was on view in November to celebrate the British Remembrance Day and the ending of the war on the 11th November, 1918.

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Textiles and Politics

Shelley Anderson: June 2015

On the recent acquisition by the TRC of a very special blouse, TRC volunteer Shelley Anderson writes: “Textiles tell stories, and some textiles tell stories more clearly than others. I saw an example of this recently at a women’s peace conference, held in April 2015, the Hague (the Netherlands). There was a market place at the conference, where women’s groups could sell things (candy bars, posters, publications, etc.) in order to raise money for their work. A group of women from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) had commissioned a printed fabric with the conference’s logo and title on it. They had made blouses and bags from the factory woven cotton fabric. This reflects a long tradition throughout Africa of marking political, social and sometimes personal events through textiles. It is one of these blouses that is now on display at the TRC.



The woman’s blouse from the DRC now in the TRC Collection.

These objects were commissioned by the Congolese section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The roller printed motifs on the fabric include a blue circle with a dove, the logo of the WILPF, which had organized the conference to celebrate its 100th anniversary. The conference’s title “Women’s Power to Stop War: Uniting a Global Movement” is also portrayed on the fabric along with the names of countries around the world.

The crinkled look of the fabric imitates batik. In the 19th century, wax resist dyed fabrics (batik) from Indonesia became popular along Africa’s Gold Coast (modern Ghana). The wax print spread throughout West Africa and into Central Africa and remains popular today.

But there’s even more to the story. The 2015 WILPF conference celebrated the organisation’s founding at an International Congress of Women also held in the Hague in April 1915. There, some 1,130 women suffrage activists, from twelve different countries (many of the countries then at war with one another), met to try to stop World War 1. Their governments denied them passports, threatened to jail them—the British government suspended ferry service in the North Sea to prevent these “blundering Englishwomen”, these “Pro-Hun Peacettes”, as they were labelled in the media, from attending.

One month before World War 1 began, delegates from the International Women Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) delivered a Manifesto to all European embassies, and the British Foreign Office, in London. This Manifesto called on governments “to leave untried no method of conciliation or arbitration for arranging international differences which may help to avert deluging half the civilized world in blood.” The delegates came up with a 20-point peace plan. It was printed in English, French and German and addressed to European government leaders and to the US Congress. Copies were sent to prime ministers throughout Europe; in Germany alone, hundreds of copies were sent to politicians, prominent citizens, and civic organizations. The plan demanded a permanent international court of justice; “democratic control of foreign policy”; a delinking of business interests with political institutions; a Society of Nations where member states could settle disputes non-violently; general disarmament; and the political enfranchisement of women.

Five women, including the influential Dutch activist Dr. Aletta Jacobs, were elected to spend the next few months lobbying foreign ministers and the heads of state of nearly every country in Europe. They had a private audience with the Pope and spoke with US President Woodrow Wilson, who incorporated some of the Women’s Congress’s demands in his famous Fourteen Points policy.

The history of one simple blouse can tell a story that spans centuries!

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Arpilleras

Shelley Anderson; September 2015

A workshop on *arpilleras* was offered at a festival on adult education, in Lelystad (the Netherlands) in August 2015. The festival also featured an exhibition of approximately 25 *arpilleras*, from Chile, Colombia, England, Northern Ireland, Peru and Zimbabwe. Workshop leader Roberta Bacic explained that *arpilleras* are a South American folk art, which uses colourful appliqué, patchwork and embroidery to depict scenes of everyday life. Small, three-dimensional cloth dolls are a common feature. *Arpilleras* are not intended for practical use: the borders are blanket stitched or edged with crochet or a colourful fabric, so that the pictures can be hung on walls.

The word *arpillera* comes from an old Spanish word for burlap, as most of these cloth pictures were originally sewn on a background cloth of burlap or flour sacking. The most famous *arpilleras* and *arpilleristas* (the women who make them) are from Chile. “*Arpilleras* are really an art of poverty,” Roberta explained. “They were originally made from scraps and pieces of used clothing. They were made by poor women working in groups. The conversations the women had while sewing together helped create a sense of sharing and of solidarity.” That solidarity was essential for survival.

In the 1960s there was a cottage industry in Chile of *arpilleras* depicting happy domestic scenes. These were made from colourful woollen yarns. The military coup of 1973 changed this. Unemployment grew, wool became scarce, and opponents of the Pinochet military dictatorship (1973-1990) began to disappear or be detained. Families of the disappeared (*desaparecidos*) were banned from many jobs and refused hospital services. Poor women in and around Santiago began making *arpilleras* in an income-generating project organized by the Roman Catholic Church’s *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*. Church workers donated clothes as fabric for the appliqué, paid for the finished *arpilleras* and organized their sale. Many of the women were members of the group *Agrupación de los Familiares de los Detenidos Desaparecidos* (AFDD), an association for families of people illegally detained and made to disappear by the regime. The women gathered once a week at different workshops and chose a theme to embroider, which they began at the workshop and finished at home. There were rules: torture scenes could not be depicted; the Andes mountains were usually stitched in the background as a symbol of Chile; only one *arpillera* a week per woman was accepted. If a

woman needed more money, she was allowed to make two *arpilleras* per week. Work was unsigned in order to protect the maker's identity

Over 250 women became involved in the project. The women talked in the workshops about the trauma of missing husbands, sons and daughters as they embroidered the stories of their lives: communal kitchens to feed the hungry; demonstrations in front of police stations or government buildings where women held photographs of their loved ones and demanded information as to where they were; police raids on homes; a family sitting around a table, with an empty chair. The Church smuggled thousands of *arpilleras* out of Chile for sale elsewhere. The textiles helped raise awareness of the human rights abuses taking place inside Chile. As criticism of Pinochet increased, the government made it illegal to own or publically show *arpilleras*.

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Embroidered postcards from World War I

Gillian Vogelsang, October/November 2015



Part of a sheet with embroidered designs waiting to be cut out for the WWI postcards. The war ended in November 1918, before these designs (dated 1919) could be used (TRC Collection).

Since a child, and after listening to my grandfather who actually fought at Ypres ('Wipers,' as my grand dad called the place), I have been fascinated by a particular type of silk embroidered postcard that British troops in World War I used to send home from France to their loved ones. Because of the TRC

having a series of mini-exhibitions in its workshop it was decided to create a small exhibition about these cards to coincide with the anniversary of the ending of the War on the 11th November. And just last week, the TRC received three panels with series of embroidered designs intended to be used for these postcards. I would like to thank Dr Ian Collins from St. Albans, England, for his help in acquiring these fascinating items.

This type of card is decorated with a wide variety of designs and messages worked in floss silk in various bright colours. The decoration is worked in small, silk gauze panels with colourful, free style embroidery. These embroidered panels were stuck to a card frame that was embossed with a decorative edging.

These cards were a popular form of communication from the early 1900s until the 1950s. They were especially favoured during and just after the First World War. During the war, the range of designs worked was very varied and included obviously military subjects, such as the flags of the allies (notably Belgium, Britain, France, Italy, and the USA), names of regiments, figures of famous generals, and more popular subjects such as Christmas, birthday and New Year best wishes. In addition, many cards included butterflies and flowers, as gentler, more sympathetic images. It has been estimated that up to ten million embroidered cards of this type were produced during this period, mainly in France. Comparable cards were made in Germany, but with different designs!

In the past, various questions have been raised about these cards, especially as to how the cards were decorated, and by whom. There are several possible answers. It has been suggested that the images were hand embroidered by Belgian and French women who had been afflicted by the war. But would they have really been able to hand embroider millions of cards? Another explanation, and far more likely, is that they were machine made, but this brings us to the question, which type of machine was used? The vast majority of these embroidered postcards were made using what appear to be hand stitches of various kinds, including the back stitch, basket weave stitch, individual cross stitches, herringbone stitch, reverse herringbone stitch (to create a shadow work effect), double running stitch (Holbein stitch), satin stitch, stem stitch, as well as various composite stitches.

A machine that could imitate the appearance of these hand stitches is the hand-embroidery machine that was invented in 1829 by Josué Heilmann in Mulhouse, France. It was developed over the following decades by various engineers and

companies in Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland. Basically, this hand-embroidery machine uses a pantograph system to transfer the stitches. Each stitch is drawn out on a large scale design and then its position traced by an operator using a point on one arm of the pantograph. A series of needles responds to the movement of the pantograph arm. Each needle has an eye in the middle for the thread, and two sharp ends. The needle is passed backwards and forwards through the ground cloth using a pincer system, so imitating the action and appearance of hand embroidery. Each colour in the design is individually worked (so all the blue parts, for example, are worked, and then the machine is re-threaded with a new colour), until the design is complete. This type of machine, in various sizes, was and is used in both domestic and factory settings.

Based on surviving examples of the materials used for the postcards, it would appear that wide strips (domestic) and very broad sheets (factory) of organza cloth were embroidered. Using hand-embroidery machines it was possible to produce hundreds of images on a sheet in one go. Once embroidered, the strips/sheets were cut up and the individual images were stuck into an embossed card frame. They were then sold to the public, especially the soldiers, at a very high price. The companies making and selling these cards could well have made a considerable profit. Perhaps this is the real reason behind the stories of poor refugee women working all hours to hand embroider these cards in order to feed their desperate families..... Wouldn't you be more willing to buy such cards thinking you were helping the needy as well?

On the 21st December 2015 the TRC added a pdf catalogue of the postcards that are held in the TRC collection onto the TRC website. [Click here to download it.](#)

TRC Projects

The TRC is involved in a variety of different projects concerning textiles and dress from around the world. In 2015 the main projects were:

Encyclopedia of Embroidery from the Arab World

The Encyclopedia of Embroidery from the Arab World, was compiled by Gillian Vogelsang-

Eastwood, director TRC.



Thanks are due to many people, including everyone at Bloomsbury Academic Publishers, as well as photographer [Joost Kolkman](#) and illustrator [Martin Hense](#) for the constant support with getting the illustrations all ready.

This monumental work includes 45 separate articles about the techniques, decorative forms and uses of embroidery from Morocco in the west to Iraq in the east, from the period of Tutankhamun in ancient Egypt to the present day.

The manuscript and over 800 images (750 in colour) went to the publishers in the autumn of 2015, with the proofs arriving shortly afterwards. At the beginning of December 2015 the book went to the printers. The book will be available on the 28th February 2016, and a book launch is planned at the University College London, on the 3rd March 2016.

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TRC Needles: The TRC digital encyclopaedia of decorative needlework

For thousands of years, men and women have made, worn, traded, and admired various forms of decorative needlework, from small daintily embroidered handkerchiefs to giant gold embroidered texts that bedeck the *kiswah* in Mecca. Decorative needlework was and remains a feature of life throughout the world.

The Textile Research Centre (TRC) set up in 2014 a digital encyclopaedia called *TRC Needles*, which covers this enormous field of human

creativity, focussing in particular on appliqué, beading, darned knotting, embroidery, needle lace making, *passementerie*, patchwork and quilting. The encyclopaedia includes information about different forms from all over the world, from the Americas to Asia. It looks at the earliest surviving examples from ancient Egypt to present-day forms, with an emphasis on handmade examples rather than industrially produced items.



Detail from an appliqué panel from Cairo (TRC 2013.0442).

TRC Needles includes references to tools and materials, to iconography, the uses of decorative needlework, to influential people and makers, historical examples, relevant institutions, paintings or similar imagery that depicts decorative needlework. The encyclopaedia also discusses relevant references in various forms of literature, as well as relevant details relating to economic and social history.

TRC Needles came on-line in September 2014 and since then hundreds of entries have been added. These entries have been written by various specialists around the world as well as a team from the TRC itself. Access to information and (free) images have been provided by a number of museums including the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, both in London, ULITA in Leeds, etc.

During 2015 the number of entries was increased to over 1700 actually on-line. Many more will be coming in 2016.

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Shirlastain Investigated Deandra de Loeff

As part of my work on the identification of fibres associated with archaeological textiles, I have been carrying out some experiments with *Shirlastain Fibre*

Identification Stains. These are various commercial stains used for the identification of fibres and textiles. For example Shirlastain A is meant for the identification of non-thermoplastic fibers (wool, silk, cotton, etc). Shirlastain C is used specifically to differentiate between cellulose fibers. My research objective is to find out if and how Shirlastain can be used in archaeological research.

Lately I have conducted an experiment in which I looked at how both Shirlastain A and C reacted on cotton (mercerized), cotton (raw), flax, hemp, ramie, silk (cultivated), silk (tussah), and naturally coloured sheep wool. I also looked at the influence of time on the Shirlastain tests. In my experiment I tested samples for one, two and a half, and five minutes in the Shirlastain.

For further research I want to look at how the Shirlastain tests react with historically accurate replicas of textiles, dyed with traditional methods, to mimic as closely as possible archaeological textiles found today.

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Visit to the Netherlands Forensic Institute

Deandra de Loof

For a few days, as TRC volunteer and *stagiaire*, I was a guest of the Netherlands Forensic Institute (NFI) in The Hague. This visit took place as part of my research project at the TRC on fibre identification and archaeological textiles. Under the supervision of a forensic scientist, I was introduced to the various methods and techniques that were used by forensic research, especially in relation to textiles. During the visit I was taught to use various microscopes, especially with a high resolution and magnification, and the identification of various, different fibres (animal, plant and synthetic forms) using microscopic techniques, including polarisation and crystallisation of plant fibres, in order to make the differences clearer.

The polarisation microscope involved two polarisation filters. When they are at a particular angle to each other, no light is let through except through the fibre being observed. Such fibres light up in different ways and with a variety of colours, whereby the fibres can be identified. Microscopes can also identify the type of fluorescence of the fibres.

The NFI also makes use of a Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) for the making of special photographs of fibres. The SEM can be used at a

very high magnification, for example to measure the cross-section of a single fibre.

My visit focussed on the use of microscopes and the identification of fibres under the microscope and left me with an even greater interest in the scientific identification of fibres from archaeological sources.

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A catalogue of the Crowfoot Collection of spinning and weaving equipment in the TRC

Jasmijn Nobelen and Shelley Anderson

Thanks to the generosity of John Crowfoot, grandson of Grace Crowfoot, the TRC has recently been given a most unusual gift. This includes items of spinning and weaving equipment collected by Grace Mary Crowfoot, a Grande Dame of textile archaeology. She collected the items between 1909 and 1937 when she and her husband, John Crowfoot, worked and lived in the Middle East. The objects include Sudanese, Palestinian, Syrian, as well as European items, notably a collection of spindles and whorls, a Bedouin spinning stone, sword beaters, weaving shuttles, pin beaters, and samples of Sudanese cotton. All are neatly labelled with information as to where the objects come from.

In addition to these items, the TRC was already in possession of a number of letters written by Grace Crowfoot to Mr. Robert Charleston in the 1940s. Mr Charleston later worked at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The letters discuss various aspects of textile history and work in progress. For the Charleston letters, the TRC is currently engaged in a separate programme.

It was the aim of the TRC to make an annotated catalogue of all its Crowfoot holdings and to make this digitally available in 2015. However, at the beginning of December 2015, John Crowfoot got in contact with us and said they had found some more Grace Crowfoot boxes that include textiles. These will be sent to the TRC in January 2016 [received by early February 2016], so bringing the catalogue on-line has been postponed until these items have been included.

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Kangas

Kangas are large cotton cloths that are worn by women living along the whole of the East African coast, especially in Kenya, Tanzania and on the

island of Zanzibar. Their characteristic feature is a short text printed on the cloth. The texts are often funny. They reveal some 'home truths', or they may tell something about the wearer's political opinion, etc. The TRC collection contains many examples of these garments, and in late 2009 / early 2010 the TRC mounted an exhibition on the subject.

In the late spring of 2015, the TRC was visited by a 'new Leidener', Kate Kingsford, who is busy working on a PhD about dress and identity in Africa. In particular, she is interested in kangas. She mentioned that she would be going to Tanzania and so the opportunity was taken to increase the TRC collection and to produce a catalogue of the TRC's examples. In the following section there is a description written by Kate Kingsford (September 2015) about her experiences acquiring some new kangas for the TRC.

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Kate writes: Shopping for kangas in Tanzania is always a very social activity. As I searched through the piles of kangas at the market in Moshi, Tanzania, the shopkeeper made tea and helped me decipher the layers of meaning in the messages. My favourite: "Mimi ni pweza mambo yangu hayatoweza". Literally, this means, "I am an octopus, you can't mess with my affairs". Several local women passing the shop were happy to explain why they might wear it - as a warning to another woman who was flirting with your husband, or a way of telling a neighbour to stop spreading dangerous gossip, or perhaps to tell your mother-in-law not to interfere with your family.

Kangas are a way of saying the unsayable, and always open to interpretation. But the Tanzanian elections are only a month away, and political kangas are much less subtle. Fatuma, the shopkeeper, was happy to sell me a dress in the bright red and blue of Chadema, the opposition, but was adamant that I wouldn't find anything in the colours of CCM, the ruling party for the past fifty years. A little further into the market, however, I came across one small shop decked out in green and yellow, offering discount prices on CCM kangas. A lot of people have bought CCM kangas and Chadema dresses, apparently, but no one is wearing them in the streets; while there is still a chance that the elections will be violent, it's better to wait to see who wins before flaunting political affiliations. "Keep it for after the election!" warned another woman at the market. Walking home, I followed her advice and wore the octopus kanga with pride.

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Prayer Bead Collection

Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood

In 2007 the TRC was involved in hosting a conference at Leiden University and the National Museum of Ethnology on the forms and uses of prayer beads from various religious and spiritual backgrounds. There was also a small exhibition on the same theme based on items out of the TRC's extensive collection of prayer beads. Because of the TRC moving to its current premises, etc., the Prayer Bead Project was put on hold with the expectation that we would return to it. This has now happened and a book on this theme is nearly finished. It looks at the history of prayer beads, as well as the main Buddhist, Christian, Eco-Spiritual, Hindu, Islamic, Neo-Pagan and Sikh forms, to name just a few. Many of the prayer beads in the TRC collection are used to illustrate the book (photographs by Joost Kolkman). It is the intention that the book will be published by 2017 and that there will be an accompanying exhibition at the TRC.

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Robert Charleston's textile letters

Shelley J. Anderson and Marleen Audretsch.

Robert J. Charleston (1916-1994) was the keeper of Ceramics and Glass at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. He helped to build up the collection that is considered to be one of the most comprehensive in Europe. He published extensively and, as one of the most eminent experts on glass, served as a consultant to museums and collections around the world. A keen amateur historian and archaeologist, Charleston also had another, less well-known passion, for textiles.

This project will scan, transcribe and translate, for the first time, the TRC's unique collection of Charleston's early correspondence regarding his research into Roman textiles. This collection includes letters to and from pioneering archaeologists such as Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Grace M. Crowfoot, and R. Pfister, among others. The letters, written during and shortly after the Second World War, reveal a remarkable pan-European scholarly cooperation among British, German, French, Italian and Hungarian researchers. Mr. Charleston gave the letters to Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, director of the TRC, in May 1985 and they were given to the TRC some years ago.

The project is divided into three stages: (a) transcribing and annotating the letters between

Charleston and Grace Crowfoot, (b) transcribing and annotating the letters with other experts, (c) preparing the annotated letters for digital publication. It is anticipated that the letters will come on-line in the autumn of 2016.

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Coptic Identity

Tineke Rooijackers

PhD thesis: Dress Codes: A comparative study of dress and religious identity within the Coptic community in past and present (to be completed in 2015; with the defence of the PhD in 2016).

Through dress we convey silent messages about our identity, thereby visualizing and reinforcing a sense of community. My research investigates the connection between religion and dress, or more specifically; the role of dress within the creation, confirmation and renegotiation of religious identity.

To discuss this general topic, a specific case study is examined in detail: that of the Coptic community. Issues of dress and identity are investigated, both at its origins in the past and in the present.

Past dress codes are examined through ancient textiles, images and texts, while present Egyptian and diaspora communities are studied through in-depth interviews and the documentation of markers of religious identity. By comparing the past and the present, changes within dress codes can be examined, but also the influence of different receptor societies on religious identity and its accompanying dress codes, how history has shaped present ideas of identity, and how history and a notion of continuity, visualised through dress and art, is used to maintain a sense of community.

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Dutch and European lace caps

Ms. Riet van de Velde

The TRC has an extensive collection of Dutch lace caps, and also examples from other parts of Europe. They date from the mid-19th century to the present day. They represent an important garment worn by girls and married women throughout Western Europe. These caps were used to give information about the marital, social, regional, religious and indeed economic status of the wearer.

The TRC collection is being catalogued and photographed so that a detailed description of their construction, appearance and use can be presented to

the general public. In addition, Dutch lace caps are often described according to their regional origins – Rijnland, Volendam, Zeeland, and so forth, but seldom with reference to the use of lace caps in urban and regional forms from other parts of Europe.

The ultimate aim is to have the TRC's collection digitally available so that it can be used by researchers elsewhere to identify and discuss similarities and differences. This project will be of particular interest to social historians.

TRC Courses and Workshops

2015 saw the development of a wide range of courses and workshops that will be built upon over the next few years. The main item in this respect is the establishment of the Wednesday workshop series.

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Wednesday Workshops



Detail of a Jebel Haraz region dress with some of the various forms of chain stitch to be practised in the Wednesday Workshop on the 26th August (photograph by Joost Kolkman).

In 2014 the TRC started to experiment with various types of workshops and we found that having a three-hour workshop with lectures/talks and a practical, works best for us and our guests. The first workshop in this series was the one by Prof. Gale Owen-Crocker about the Bayeux Tapestry. The second was Embroidering Tutankhamun's Tunic.

It was decided that from 2015 the last Wednesday of every month would be dedicated to a Wednesday workshop on a wide variety of subjects. The popularity of the Wednesday Workshops was confirmed in 2015, when most workshops were sold out months in advance. The range of subjects included:

January: “Egyptian Appliqué” (Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood)

February: “The World of Samples and Samplers” (Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood)

March: “Japanese kimonos” (Anne Beerens)

April: “Straits Chinese beadwork” (Christopher Ng)

May: “Medieval decorative needlework” (Chrystal Brandenburg)

June: “Egyptian appliqué” (Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood)

August: “Yemen embroidery” (Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood)

September: “Leids laken” (Anton Reurink)

October: “Straits Chinese beadwork” (Christopher Ng)

November: “Medieval decorative needlework” (Chrystal Brandenburg)

Because of Christmas, the December workshop took place on Saturday 19th December as part of the Yemen Open Day at the TRC (see below). The theme of the December workshop was Yemeni chain stitch embroidery.

TRC Leiden, Intensive Textile Course

The TRC’s intensive textile course was held five times in 2015, four times for the general public and a special for a private group. Participants for the courses came from a variety of countries including Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the USA.

The course is taught in English by Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, textile and dress historian and director of the TRC. It is a mixture of theoretical and practical elements, with an emphasis on trying out the various techniques of textile production (spinning, dyeing, weaving), on holding and examining fibres, textiles and finished items, all in order to learn and understand what is happening and why various combinations take place. The aim is to make textiles less ‘frightening’ and allow people to look at a textile, from virtually any historical period or culture, and be able to understand it.

Tutankhamun Wardrobe

29th May 2015, Leiden



On the 29th May Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood gave a lecture and demonstration about the textiles and garments from the tomb of Tutankhamun for Sijthoff, a Leiden based art group.

The audience was very enthusiastic, especially when they had the chance of wearing the various garments. It was an informal and intense evening!

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Archaeological Textiles (5, 8 October 2015, Leiden University)

In October 2015 Dr. G. Vogelsang-Eastwood gave a lecture (5th October) and 3x practical (8th October) about textiles to the first year students from the Department of Archaeology, Leiden University. There were over one hundred students, which meant that the practical session had to be divided into three. Nevertheless, the chance to learn basic spinning techniques proved to be very popular.

Other Activities

In addition to the exhibitions and research projects, the TRC was involved in a variety of other activities and events. As will be seen, some of these were social, others were more formal.

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Leiden Textile Festival

13 – 16 May 2015

A national textile festival in Leiden was organised by *Stichting Textiel Informatie en Documentatie Centrum* (STIDOC; <http://www.textielfestival.nl/>). There were over forty venues in Leiden with exhibitions, workshops, displays of ancient and modern textiles and related items. It was a very busy

and exciting period. Thousands of visitors came everyday to Leiden to visit the many venues.



The TRC was also involved in the Festival and hundreds of people came to see its colourful and inspirational exhibition about the appliquéés from the Street of the Tentmakers (the exhibition was extended until the end of June 2015 in order to make sure that the Textile Festival was included in the dates.

*

The TRC, Facebook and Radio Romania

At the beginning of July 2015 we were contacted by a Romanian lady, who is working on an EU project proposal about the history of the decorative blouse and chemise as a symbol of Romanian women and Romanian cultural and social history in general. When she visited the TRC, several of our Romanian blouses turned out to be of particular interest, including one blouse from c. 1900.

The blouse in question originates from Transylvania. It was also the first outside donation to the TRC collection, many years ago. It was bought in a Dutch flea market in the 1970s for a *rijksdaalder*, and although very dirty it was clear to the discerning eye of the buyer that here was something special.

Following the visit, the blouse was mentioned by our Romanian visitor on Facebook and the next morning we were contacted by Radio Romania about the possibility of an interview over the work of the TRC and our Romanian blouse in particular! A few days later the interview took place and was processed to make two or three smaller interviews for broadcasting in Romania.

*

Iranian Festival, Edinburgh 7-8 February 2015

Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, director of the TRC, was asked by the organisers of the Iranian Festival in Edinburgh (7 February 2015) to give a brief talk about the history of the *chador* on Saturday 7 February, at the National Museum of Scotland. Other

participants included Dr Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (Edinburgh University), Dr Nacim Pak-Shiraz (Edinburgh University) and Dr Friederike Voigt (National Museum of Scotland). A wide range of subjects were discussed, from early cut-to-shape Iranian garments, 19th century garments for men, and a small collection of beautiful women's garments from the Qajar period now in the National Museum.

This talk was followed by a full length lecture about Iranian regional dress at *The Nomad's Tent* on Sunday (8 February).

But the weekend was not just about lectures. There was a chance to see an amazing and very beautiful range of clothing in a fashion show, called *Persian Chic: Contemporary Iranian Fashion*, which presented the work of four modern Iranian fashion designers, including that of Naghme Kiumarsi, 'Zarir', Diba Mehrabi and Kourosh Gharbi. The work of Gharbi was impeccable.

*

Members of the TRC staff have also been attending courses and workshops in order to expand their range of experience and help build up contacts with other groups involved in cultural activities in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

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Batik Workshop Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Shelley Anderson
August 2015

TRC volunteer Shelley Anderson took part in a batik workshop in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in August 2015. The official introduction to the workshop told: "Batik is everywhere in this city, which has been called the cultural heart of Indonesia. While the shirts and dresses used for daily wear are factory produced, the patterns are based on traditional batik designs. A popular downtown department store offers batik demonstrations and sells supplies; young fashion designers here and in the capital Jakarta incorporate batik into their work."

Batik comes from two Javanese words which translate as 'to write dots'. This wax resist dye technique was used in ancient Egypt, in China and India, and in Africa. A pattern is first drawn on the fabric. The same pattern is then redrawn with hot wax, applied either with a canting (a small piece of wood with a metal container with a spout attached) or a metal block stamp called a cap. The fabric is

then dyed until the desired colour or colours are reached. The wax is removed, either by brushing or by boiling the cloth.

While batik may not have originated in Indonesia, it certainly developed into a highly respected art in Java. A pattern is first drawn on the fabric. The same pattern is then redrawn with hot wax, applied either with a canting (a small piece of wood with a metal container with a spout attached) or a metal block stamp called a cap. There were special batiks used in ceremonies for mothers-to-be, for new born babies, for a ritual when a baby took its first steps, and for the dead. The patterns and colours used in a batik showed one's ethnicity and status. Certain batik patterns were reserved exclusively for royalty—and royal batiks were among the goods thrown into volcanoes during ceremonies to prevent eruptions. In 2009 UNESCO declared Indonesian batik a part of humanity's intangible heritage. This textile has quite a history!

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Silk Road Conference

Hangzhou, China
11th – 13th October 2015
Shelley Anderson

TRC volunteer Shelley Anderson attended the symposium "Silks from the Silk Road: Origin, Transmission and Exchange", organized by the China National Silk Museum in collaboration with, among others, the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Textile Research (CTR).

The symposium opened with a weaver weaving damask silk on a large hook-shaft pattern loom, with a connecting rod. This sophisticated loom was built based on the remains of four model looms, made from wood and bamboo, uncovered in a Chinese tomb in 2012. This remarkable discovery included baskets of silk threads and dyes, and several wooden figurines that represent weavers. The artifacts have been dated to about two thousand years ago. It's a "truly exceptional" find, said CTR Director Marie-Louise Nosch. "It's unique because finding organic matter so well preserved is rare. It bridges many gaps in our knowledge, as until now we did not know what type of looms were used. This shows the high technology of Han China, and will become a landmark in archaeology and textile research."

Beautiful examples of silk fragments and textile tools were also on display in a special exhibition in the West Lake Museum (Hangzhou, China), where the symposium took place. Silk was a vital part of early Chinese economy, and the economies of other

cultures that lived along the Silk Road. It was durable and light-weight, unlike dried fruits or gold, which were also traded up and down the Silk Road, along with jade, furs, spices and other commodities. You could buy camels, horses, slaves or servants with bolts of silk; soldiers' salaries were paid in silk and debts settled with the textile.

One highlight of the exhibition for me was Yingpan Man. This richly dressed corpse was discovered in the abandoned city of Yingpan in 1995. Yingpan was an important Silk Road trading centre until it was destroyed by Genghis Khan's troops. The arid desert atmosphere mummified the corpse and preserved the textiles he was buried in. And what textiles they are! He has a long double weave red woollen robe over purple silk trousers, another light yellow silk robe, and felt socks. He wears a funerary mask with a gold diadem, and a miniature silk caftan of embroidered damask silk had been placed on his chest. The motif of his red robe (of bulls and naked putti) leads some scholars to believe it was produced in the eastern part of the Roman empire. DNA tests, his brown hair and height (he is over six feet tall), and the non-Han Chinese custom of a funerary mask, point to an European ancestry.

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Textiles from the Nile Valley Conference

Antwerp, 27-28 November 2015

Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood, director of the TRC, attended the 9th Textiles from the Nile Valley conference at the *Katoen Natie Museum*, Antwerp, Belgium. This is a biennial event that brings together specialists in many different fields, but all connected by their scholarly interest in the early history of Egyptian textiles. The range of papers presented was equally diverse and included excavation reports, particular textiles of note, art historical comparisons, museum collections, and the work of various people in the past, notably Louise Bellinger, a grand dame of textiles from the 1940s and 50s. Most of the papers referred to textiles from the first millennium AD, and in particular those linked to the Coptic period.

There was also a fascinating example of why replicas are important, both in terms of learning how they are made and how they are worn, namely in the form of a sprang cap that was re-created during the re-cataloguing of part of the Louvre Museums collection of Egyptian textiles. This talk (with practical demonstration) came shortly after a fascinating discussion about the history of

nåldbinding in Egypt and the making and repairing of socks made in this manner. Both of these talks stressed the importance of non-woven forms of decorative textiles within the textile repertoire of Egypt. Something that tends to be lost among the vast numbers of decorative woven forms, notably the so-called Coptic tapestries.

As with all conferences it was the chance to meet 'old' colleagues, as well as new ones. It is good to know that there are so many students working at various levels who are opening up new areas of research within the field of Egyptian textiles. The conference papers are regularly published in a series of well-illustrated volumes that are available from the [Katoen Natie web shop](#). These are well worth having for the range of information presented in a 'proper' book form. A big thanks goes to both the staff of Katoen Natie, and Caroline Dekyndt and Cäcilia Fluck in particular for their organisation of such a pleasant, informative and inspiring weekend.

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Petrie Museum Workshops **London, 11-12 December 2015**

Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood participated in a two-day event at the University College London (UCL) and the nearby Petrie Museum.

Friday 11th December consisted of a special workshop held in the Institute of Archaeology, UCL. The theme of the workshop was needlework in ancient Egypt. It was organised by Dr Jan Picton of the Petrie Museum and led by Dr Vogelsang-Eastwood. There was the chance to try out different seams and hems, mending, patching, as well as Egyptian and Mitanni style embroidery. In the afternoon, the group was able to see various items of textile equipment and textiles now in the Petrie Museum, a teaching museum in the middle of the UCL, which has a vast collection of antiquities from Egypt. The collection, as the name suggests, was built up by the early 20th century Egyptologist, Sir Flinders Petrie.



Ancient Egyptian sewing bee at the University of Archaeology, University College London, 11th December 2015, under the guidance of Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood.

The visit to the museum was followed by a workshop on appliqué techniques from ancient Egypt. There were fourteen participants at the workshop, which meant that those attending could ask many questions and have personal attention. This workshop will form the basis for an Ancient Egyptian Sewing Bee that will be held at the TRC on Saturday 9th April ([see here for more details](#)).

The following day was again at the UCL and consisted of a full day about textiles and clothing in ancient Egypt. It went by the eye-catching title *Tutankhamun's Knickers and other Knotty Problems*. Again the day was organised by Jan Picton and members of the Friends of the Petrie Museum. The day was divided into several sections, including a starting lecture about the production of textiles in ancient Egypt (Dr Vogelsang-Eastwood), followed by a lecture on the textiles from the royal palace site of Gurob (Jan Picton). The morning was finished with a demonstration of various types of clothing worn in ancient Egypt (daily life garments by Janet Johnstone, and Tutankhamun's royal clothing by Dr Vogelsang-Eastwood). The afternoon then continued with a lecture on Tutankhamun's clothing (Vogelsang) and ended with a lecture about draped and wrapped garments from ancient Egypt by Janet. As may be realised, there were many questions at the end of the day.

***Zijden Pracht* ('Silk Splendour')** **Japanmuseum SieboldHuis, Leiden** **and the TRC's visit**

On Friday 17th April a group from the TRC went to see an exhibition called *Zijden Pracht* ('Silk Splendour') at the Japanmuseum SieboldHuis, Rapenburg 19, Leiden, The Netherlands. The kimonos on display come from the Kubota Collection, Japan. The exhibition is curated by Linda Hanssen.

The exhibition focused on the hand dyed kimonos made by the Japanese master textile dyer, Itchiku Kubota (1917-2003). Some of the kimonos took forty dye baths, 300 colours and up to a year to be created. The garments can be viewed (and worn) as individual items, but some of them were made and decorated as part of a series ('winter', 'autumn', 'universe') and can thus be placed next to each other to create a scroll-like painting, with the design moving from one kimono to the next. The attention to detail, in the main design, background patterns, and the overall effect, was truly amazing. These are the work of someone who has not just mastered his craft, but has shown to be a true genius.

There were sixteen kimonos on display and they were truly unbelievable. The intense amount of work involved in creating just one of these kimonos, let alone the various series was vast.

The group from the TRC was guided around the *Japanmuseum SieboldHuis* by Dr. Kris Schiermeier, the director of the museum. We were given a short history of the building and the collection which added to our understanding of the Japanese/West cultural connections, and a deeper appreciation of the kimonos on display.

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Medieval Church Embroidery **Exhibition and a TRC visit**

Various members of the TRC went to see the Medieval church embroidery exhibition at the [Catharijneconvent Museum](#), Utrecht. The exhibition is called "Het Geheim van de Middeleeuwen in Gouddraad en Zijde" (The Secret of the Middle Ages in Gold Thread and Silk) and it ran from the 10th April 2015 until the 16th August. The garments were displayed in such a way you could really see them - on podiums and without glass. The light was subdued and diffused through thin paper, so it was easy to see the objects rather than trying to see 'something' in a

blackened room with few bright spot lights. The Utrecht display was good for the garments and the viewers.

The *Stichting* TRC will be happy to answer any questions that readers may have about our work. In addition, gifts of clothing, books and visual material are always welcome! And anyone wishing to help financially or take part in the activities of the *Stichting* should contact us at:

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