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Clothes make the man : early medieval textiles from the Netherlands

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Clothes make the man

Early medieval textiles from the Netherlands

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in 1975

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Preface

In the autumn of 2008, after having worked as a municipality archaeologist for more than 10 years, I decided it was time for a new challenge. A PhD-research had been in the top 3 of my bucket list for many years, so I wrote a research proposal to investigate the early medieval textiles that had been found in The Netherlands during the last few decades and submitted it at Leiden University. After a few discussions with Prof. Dr. Willem Willems († 2014) my project was approved and I started a research that eventually continued until 2015 and took me towards nearly every corner of the country.

Why textiles? That question has been asked more often than I can remember. The short version of my answer always was: “I have this thing with threads...”, followed by a (often) longer explanation why it would be useful to look into the way people made and used cloth and clothing in this period of our history. Textiles and clothing provide information about the identity of people (or the identity they want to have), their status, their age and their social contexts to name a few. Because clothes act as a social messenger even today, it brings us very close to the people, whose past archaeologists try to unravel.

Since no comprehensive research had been conducted into early medieval textiles from The Netherlands it seemed a good idea to fill this gap in our knowledge.

At the outset of my research some publications were available in which textiles from the early middle ages were described in more or less detail. However it soon became evident that several museums and depots still contained many textiles that had never been published before. These textiles were hidden in boxes of which the exact content was often not known. Therefore, I had to undertake miniature excavations within the storage rooms of the museums to (re)discover unique finds. The research has resulted in the

publication of eight articles of case studies covering textiles from both settlements and cemeteries. These case studies have been included in this thesis as chapters and can all be read individually. The first and final chapters of the thesis summarise the results of the case studies and place them into a broader geographical and theoretical context.

Having finished my research I now come to the pleasant part of being able to thank all those who have helped me in the last years. First of all I would like to thank the late Prof. Willem Willems for guiding me in the first years of my PhD-research. From the early days I had also received help from Prof. Dr. Frans Theuws and thankfully he agreed to take over the role of Willem Willems after his demise. I thank him for the way he acknowledged my research as an important contribution to his own cemetery-project and for involving me in the discussions regarding burial practices. His guidance during the final phases of my research has been of great help. A special thanks is due to Prof. Dr. Lise Bender Jørgensen for sharing her knowledge on textile research, discussing the theoretical and practical dilemmas of the topic, for her guidance and for her supportive and kind comments on earlier drafts of my texts.

Special thanks are due to my paranymphs Dr. Yvonne Lammers and Irene Gerrits. Yvonne, thank you for your critical review of my texts and guidance in the do's and don'ts of defending a thesis. Irene, dear friend, I thank you for your friendship and your help over the years.

This thesis could not have been written without the generous help of many people who shared their knowledge and provided access to the textiles. I am indebted to Dr. Gillian Vogelsang (Textile research Centre Leiden) and Sandra Comis for sharing their knowledge about textile research and for opening their libraries on archaeological textiles.

Furthermore, many thanks are due to Dr. Penelope Walton Rogers of the Anglo-Saxon Laboratory, York, for conducting the necessary analyses on fiber and dye samples and for sharing her knowledge built up in many years of textile research of the early medieval period.

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Mirjam Kars, Maaïke de Haas en Martine van Haperen for their discussions on burial practice and chronology; Dr. Piet van der Velde for his theoretical contribution; Paul Rossel who shared his documentation of the textiles from Sint-Servaas church; Wim Dijkman, Sjoerd Aarts and Dr. Titus Panhuysen for providing access to the textiles and documentation of the textiles from Maastricht and Dr. Raphael Panhuysen for providing the physical anthropological data on the burials. Likewise I would like to thank Dr. Annemarieke Willemsen, Marianne Stouthamer, and Robert Ritter for the opportunity to analyze the finds in the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden. I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Egge Knol (Groninger Museum), Evert Kramer (Fries Museum), Dr. Ernst Taayke (provinciaal depot Nuis), Vincent van Vilsteren (Drents Museum) and Henk Hendrikse (Stichting Cultureel Erfgoed Zeeland) for providing access to the textiles in their collections as well. Lastly I thank Dr. Stijn Heeren, Joep Hendriks, Floris Reijnen and Ronny Meijers for enabling me to analyse the textile finds from Nijmegen.

My colleagues from Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken deserve a special word of thanks. It would demand too much paper here to thank you all personally, so thank you all for your support and our refreshing and often hilarious discussions regarding the subject of my thesis.

Nick and Julie, thank you! You know why...

I would like to thank my parents for their unconditional love and support, throughout my studies and career.

Dear Eeke, Aeneas en Leander, writing this dissertation has lasted most of your childhood. Instead of complaining about having an absent-minded or busy mother you were happy and loving whenever we were together. From now on time will be undivided for you.

Lastly, and most importantly, I thank my dear husband Job for his infinite support throughout the years and for keeping the family running while I was busy writing this thesis.

