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Furs and fabrics : transformations, clothing and identity in East Greenland

Buijs, C.C.M.; Buijs C.C.M.

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Author: Buijs, Cunera

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A tradition of furs,

Clothing in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century

At the end of the nineteenth century, the civilization of the East Greenlanders (Tunumiit) was still based on hunting, fishing and gathering. In winter, the time of almost total darkness in the Arctic, hunters lay in wait for seals at their breathing holes in the ice of the fjords, and hunted polar bears with the assistance of their dog teams.

Hunting in winter required perfectly made fur clothing of high quality. In March and April, when the darkness gradually receded, the hunters set out to catch the *qatsimalit*, seals basking in the sun on the ice. When the ice began to break up in spring, the hunters would set out in their kayaks to catch seals, and to fish in the open waters.

In June the families of East Greenland travelled to the fishing grounds in the Sermilik Fjord. Here they camped near the *sapulit*, stone weirs that fall dry at low water, where they caught salmon with three-pointed harpoons. *Ammassaar* (capelin) were caught in dip nets. Summer was a time of abundance, of pleasure at being out on the land, with long days, and the sun setting for only one or two hours a night. In autumn women and children gathered large quantities of berries, some of which were eaten, while others were stored in seal oil for the winter. In August the first hunters and their families left the fishing grounds, and returned to their stone houses in the small, scattered settlements. The first snow fell in September, and winter would soon set in. During the nights new ice formed on the surface of the fjords, but for two or three months it would break up again because of the strong current. Under normal conditions it was therefore only possible to travel by dog sledge from December to April. Then the hunters were able to set out by sledge, taking a kayak with them to cross open water (Nooter 1984:127-129; Petersen 1984a).

The Inuit of the east coast lived a semi-nomadic life, which was influenced by the seasonal variations among the animal species they hunted and fished.¹ Mauss and Beuchat (1979) argued that in Inuit society there was a deeply rooted seasonal variation determining social, religious and political life. According to Mauss and Beuchat, in winter Inuit groups gathered for the ice hunting at the breathing holes, living in larger winter communities, each of which had a camp leader. In summer, nuclear families spread out over a larger territory, dwelling in tents near the rivers at the fishing grounds. Here a more individualistic lifestyle prevailed. According to Mauss and Beuchat, the summer and winter life of the Inuit, "have two ways of grouping, and [that] in accordance with these two forms there were two corresponding systems of law, two moral codes, two kinds of domestic economy and two forms of religious life." (Mauss and Beuchat 1979[1950]:76.) Although there were marked differences between the winter and summer ways of life, this winter-summer dichotomy was not a simple and straightforward one. Especially in East Greenland, there were many aspects of economic, social and religious life which cut right through a summer-winter contrast. In East Greenland, seal hunting was an individually oriented economic activity, performed in both summer and winter. Yet there could be co-operation in hunting. The Inuit of East Greenland not only gathered in winter; they also gathered in summer at the *aasiivit*, where drum 'duels' were held. In East Greenland the communal house (*kashim* or *qassi* in Greenlandic) was absent. The winter house may have

functioned as a kind of communal house in which people gathered. (See Gulløv 1988.) The individual compartments within the winter house divided the relatives into nuclear families. Mauss and Beuchat's interesting and stimulating dichotomy does not do justice to the flexibility and dynamics of East Greenlandic social organization.²

Within the settlements there were no permanent leaders or chiefs, but in the event of conflicts, or of decisions to be taken, the eldest male could be the ultimate authority (Robbe 1994b:324).

“No head of a family is subordinate to any other head of a family. In this sense the society is egalitarian. But by various abilities and various degrees of support from their families, some achieve more prominent status than others, for example, the one to whom others turn.” (Petersen 1984a:637.)

Outside the village during hunting trips, a person could assume the leadership where this was necessary for survival. This type of leadership is known as ‘situational leadership’.³ Hunting equipment, tents, boats, sledges, dogs, sewing materials and clothing were considered to be private property. Principles of communal ownership were revealed in exchange patterns and meat-sharing systems. The prey was divided among various hunters or hunting partners or, on arriving in the settlement, among villagers. A complex system of meat sharing had developed, with specific persons receiving well-defined parts. Since meat sharing conformed to the patterns of kinship and naming, it constituted a connection to the ancestors, the spirits and their descendants. Naming and kinship shaped social memory.

The extended family formed the basic social unit of social life, and constituted a household. It might consist of a couple and (some of) their married sons and their families. Various household groups lived together in the winter houses. Each household had its own blubber lamps, cooking area, and place on the sleeping platform. A bilateral type of kinship prevailed, characterized by a stress on non-exclusive viri-locality. Marriages were arranged without special rituals. Labour was divided according to gender. The men would go out on the land or the sea to hunt polar bears, seals and narwhals. Wives and mothers divided the catch, prepared the skins, sewed the fur clothing for their families, and took care of the children. Community structures and many aspects of daily life were very flexible, and there were always exceptions to the unwritten rules. Therefore there could easily be changes in gender patterns, patterns of co-operation and so on (Petersen 1984a; Nooter 1984; Robert-Lamblin 1981).

During the winter months various festivals were celebrated, for instance during the winter solstice. On the shortest day mothers might sew new garments for their eldest sons (Holm 1914). Rituals were subtle in East Greenland, a number of these being performed at birth, at the naming of a newborn child, and at death. Taboos had to be observed at a birth or death. Shamans travelled to the world of the spirits, aided by their helping spirits during seances. They examined the reasons for misfortune, the absence of game, bad weather, sickness and death.

A human being was the owner of a soul, *tarneq*. After a person died, the soul left the body

and started its journey to one of the lands of the dead.⁴ A human being also has a name soul, *ateq*. The name soul is connected to the name which a person receives at birth. After death, the name soul continues to live in the body of the first baby born after that death. A person not only receives the name of a deceased ancestor, but also inherits some of the characteristics and capacities of his or her deceased namesake, or of former bearers of the name. Another kind of soul, the *inuuseq* or *inua*, was the keeper of life processes, such as breath and warmth (Petersen 1984a:631).

“A person has many inuas distributed over the whole body. Each element has its own inua and each inua exists in the guise of a person, a tiny person as big as a thumb. These inuas gather together all the person’s vital force, which radiates through the mouth. When a person dies, he therefore stops breathing. (...) Animals and humans have the same inuas in the same large joints. These are often marked with a cross. The whole skeletal ornamentation can be interpreted as an expression of the marking of the inuas.” (Møbjerg, Rosing, Jorn, Francheski s.a.: 23-24.)⁵

If a person lost his or her soul, through black magic, the person would fall sick, and if the soul did not return to its body, the person died. There were phases in life:

“in which the soul was more loosely connected to the body than usual: at birth, death, or the transition from one phase of life to another, for example, at the onset of menstruation. Any act that could disturb the transition of the soul from one phase to another was taboo.” (Petersen 1984a:632.)

There were different rules and taboos connected to the spiritual life and the game hunted, since animals, just as human beings, were owners of souls.

Nineteenth-century clothing in East Greenland was made entirely out of natural materials deriving from various Arctic animals. Furs, hides, gutskin and leather from sea mammals, polar bears, polar fox, with down from eider ducks, were not only used to produce garments. They were also used for making kayaks, parts of hunting equipment, dog harnesses, tents and *umiaks*. Sealskins would be used for making garments or tents. The type of sealskin, the measurements of the hides, the needs within society, the quality of the preparation of the hides, the quantity of sealskins available, and other factors, determined the use of furs. Old garments could be used to repair boots, and ended up as dog food. The skins of seals and other animals were removed with the women’s *ulu’s* or *sakkeq*. The thick blubber layer was roughly scraped off. Then, the woman scraped the skin again to remove the remaining blubber and remnants of meat carefully. Skins were washed in urine and water. Sometimes the hairs were scraped off to produce leather. In former days, skins were dried by pinning them out on the ground with wooden pins. Later on, wooden drying frames were developed. Repeated scraping, washing and drying was necessary before the skins could be used for sewing garments. The size of the garment was measured by the dimensions of the human body; for example several hand lengths were counted for a coat (Buijs 1993). The knowledge of pattern and shape was based on experience and memory, and old garments were also used as patterns for new ones. Young girls learned by imitating the sewing skills of their mothers, grandmothers and aunts. They learned by sewing clothes for their dolls (Holm 1914). Several sewing techniques and stitches were

used, one of them being a watertight stitch used for kayak clothing. Decorative techniques such as *avittarneq* or *avittat* were used (Buijs 1993).⁶

At the end of the nineteenth century, the clothing worn by the Tunumiit expressed principles of social organization. The very stages of life were the basis for the differentiation of individuals into different social categories. This chapter is therefore divided into categories or sections linked to birth, adolescence, marriage and death, events marked by means of specific garments or clothing details.

Clothing at birth and childhood

“When a birth is impending, all the men and big children go out of the house, if the weather permits of it. Those who remain in the house put on their old garments, ‘in order that the child may be a boy’. An elderly woman assists at the birth, during which the pregnant woman lies on her hands and feet, sometimes on her back. The navel string is either cut with a sharp shell or is bitten in two by the mother herself. The baby is then washed in urine, after which the mother passes her finger, which she has previously dipped in water, over the baby’s mouth, at the same time naming the names of the dead after whom the child is to be called, beginning with the last person who has died in the district. The child is not actually called by these names, but receives a nickname. The significance of the mouth being touched with water (which takes place by the ring-finger if it is a boy, and with the first finger if it is a girl) is that the child is to gain its livelihood from the sea. The first time the mother eats after the birth, the baby receives a small share. If the food eaten is a sea-animal or sea-plant, the mother uses henceforward some salt water in cooking the food; if, on the other hand, it is a land animal or land plant, the food is cooked exclusively in fresh water. When the birth is over, all furs, and all wall- and platform-skins are washed, and all the gutskins are removed from the windows. If the child is ill, the skins are taken off and are washed out-of-doors.” (Holm 1914:62.)

There is not much information available on the clothing worn by very young children. A newborn baby was probably wrapped in soft furs, and was kept close to its mother on the platform. It is not known when a child received its first garments. A newborn baby or a small child was carried in the *amaat*⁷ worn by the mother or a female relative. First, the body of its mother encompassed the unborn child, while after birth the mother and child were encompassed by the mother’s garment. At this early stage of life, the personal identity of mother and child were linked.

It is possible that young children did not have garments, for a short period. A bundle of fur or dried grass or lichens could be put into the *amaat* to absorb the child’s urine and excrement. Children could be carried in the *amaat* until they were about two years old; however, they often left their mother’s *amaat* at a much earlier age for short periods, especially when the child was able to walk. Then, it needed more freedom of movement, and



*Figure 1. Woman
with an infant in
her amaak. (Photo:
Thalbitzer,
Ammassalik, 1906,
Arctic Institute,
Copenhagen, AI
7778.)*

stumbling half-naked through the house stimulated the process of learning cleanliness.

Receiving the first garment was probably an important event in life. Holm describes this vividly:

“The first time a child is dressed in an *anorak*, the mother receives gifts from her house mates; and when the *anorak* is taken off, she presses her mouth to the child’s breast, shoulders, hips and navel with a sucking kiss ‘in order that the child may be healthy’. This is repeated every time the *anorak* is taken off, until the child is able to walk; sometimes however, the practice is discontinued before this.” (Holm 1914:63.)

This fragment suggests that only for a short period, possibly ending within three months, the child did not have its own dress. The length of this period may have corresponded to the period in which the proper name of the child was not pronounced. In an article on the East Greenlandic *amaarngut*⁸ Bernadette Robbe (1993:137) wrote that the mother and the relatives of an unborn child tried not to become too attached to this child. Often children died during birth or in the first months of life, and death among women in labour was not uncommon.

Even before the child was able to walk it had its own dress.⁹ Thus, what did the first garment of a child in East Greenland look like? “As long as the child is carried out-of-doors, in the hood on its mother’s back, its dress consists merely of a long frock.” (Holm 1914:34). In literature, a child’s first garment was described as ‘*anorak*’ (Holm 1914:63), ‘*længere anorak*’ (Gustav Holm Samlingen 1983:18), or as ‘a long frock’ (Holm 1914:34). Almost without exception, young children are portrayed with covered heads in the photographs at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The hoods they are wearing are probably part of their children’s *anorak*, either a long one for small children or an *anorak* of the ‘normal’ grown-up type. (See Christensen and Ebbesen 1985:55,95.)¹⁰

Holm observed in 1884 that when a baby was dressed for the first time, the mother received gifts from her house mates (1914:63). The first baby *anorak* was not only a protective garment. It was also a sign that the child had reached a new phase in life. The mother received these gifts, as the personal identity of the child was still very much connected with that of its mother. By receiving its first clothing, the child became a social person; an individual with certain names deriving from deceased persons or relatives. The child is welcomed into the society through gifts, and thus becomes part of the community. The child will be a social partner with who objects, meat, future wives, clothing, or cooperation in hunting can be exchanged.

The first garment, the long *anorak*, may have had special protective powers, in some cases provided by amulets sewn into the garment. When the child was undressed, extra protection was given by its mother in the form of sucking kisses on the child’s body “in order that the child may be healthy” (Holm, 1914:63).¹¹



Figure 2. Group of Tunumiit, some infants and small children included, wearing different type of dress. (Photo: Krabbe, Ammassalik 1906, Nationalmuseet, Etnografisk Samling, Copenhagen, NMCL 117.)

When the children were no longer carried in the mother's pouch, clothing became important. A seal-fur anorak and sealskin boots were the first garments for children.¹² Small children probably received winter boots as well, made of seal fur turned outside, with inner boots made of sealskin, or dog-fur, dog fur with the hair side turned inwards. It is not known whether soft furs, such as polar fox, bird skin, or the furs of young animals, were used for making children's garments in East Greenland. This type of material was used in other Arctic areas, as was shown by the clothing of the mummified children, aged between six months and four years, found in the graves in Qerrortuat on the island Uunartoq in South Greenland, and at Qilakitsoq in West Greenland. These children were dressed in anoraks made of seal fur, bird skin and gutskin. The elder children had not only an inner anorak but also an outer coat. Their trousers were made of seal fur. The youngest child probably wore trousers to which the boots were sewn. The other children had boots of sealskin (Hart Hansen, Melgaard, and Nordqvist 1985:157,203). Materials such as dog fur, and the fur of young or unborn seals (*Phoca hispida*, *Christophora cristata*) are still used for making children's garments in East Greenland, and were probably also used at the end of the nineteenth century.

Some young children were partly naked. Trousers for small children in East Greenland were probably made for them before they attained the stage of cleanliness.¹³ Informants

in Tiniteqilaq mentioned both the absence of trousers with an opening at the back and front to facilitate urination, and proper (closed) children's trousers. Boy's trousers made of polar-bear fur and sealskin, with an opening in front, are known from West Greenland (coll. nos. RMV 4850-38 and RMV 360-1905). Children's clothing with an opening over the backside is known from the Canadian Inuit (coll. nos. RMV 5738-2).

Children's garments as protective amulets

Protection of the body against cold, humidity and wind, is one of the major functions of clothing, and is essential for survival in the Arctic (see Stefansson (1958), Delaporte (1978), Oakes (1988) and Buijs (1997). Garments also protected the wearer against other threats, such as evil spirits. As children were thought to be especially vulnerable, they were protected against dangerous spirits, sickness or death by means of amulets or by the use of garments especially made for protection against evil influences. Taboos connected with clothing were common in East Greenland in the nineteenth century, and amulets were sewn in to garments or in to the amulet strap worn by men.¹⁴

“When a woman is with child an amulet is inserted right above her vulva in order to protect the child; as an amulet may be used e.g. a round stone (*kalilerneq*) [*kiliilarnaq*]. When a girl is born, an amulet is placed on the anorak of the baby either on the hood or on the flap, e.g. a carved wooden figure of a man, in order that she may in course of time give birth to male children.” (Thalbitzer 1914:627-628)

Giving amulets to infants shortly after they were born provided protection against evil spirits and *ilisiinneq*, black magic, which often caused the death of children and adults. These were fastened on to an amulet strap, sewn into the child's first garments, or fastened to the bed cloth on the sleeping platform. These amulets were often kept during one's entire life (Chr. Rosing 1946:66). Occasionally a small wooden doll was carved and placed as a button on the hood of a child's anorak. It was made from a piece of rowan wood (*Sorbus*), because this tree grows faster than others. A child with such an amulet would grow faster, and would become a tall man, who would not be afraid of other men (Chr. Rosing 1946:70; E. Rosing 1994).

Christian Rosing mentioned another type of amulet. Parents, who had lost many children, provided their surviving small children with different kinds of buttons on their clothing, or with specially made clothing. Children wearing such clothing or amulets were called *piaaqquasiat* (Chr. Rosing 1946:101).¹⁵ This category also encompassed children dressed in an uncommon way, such as wearing two different types of *kamiit*, one made of water-proof leather used in summer, and the other made of seal fur for winter. Rosing saw also a child who was dressed in a common anorak of which the front was split and completely covered with sewn-on buttons. “Others drag a dog-tail along, that is sewn on the back of their clothing, and some girls are dressed in boy's clothing.” (Chr. Rosing 1946:102.) These children were dressed like this to protect them from death, which would not recognize a child dressed this way.¹⁶

Children sometimes received garments from deceased persons, probably especially from their namesakes.¹⁷ Dressing children and naming them, were of crucial importance in providing them with a social role or social position within society.

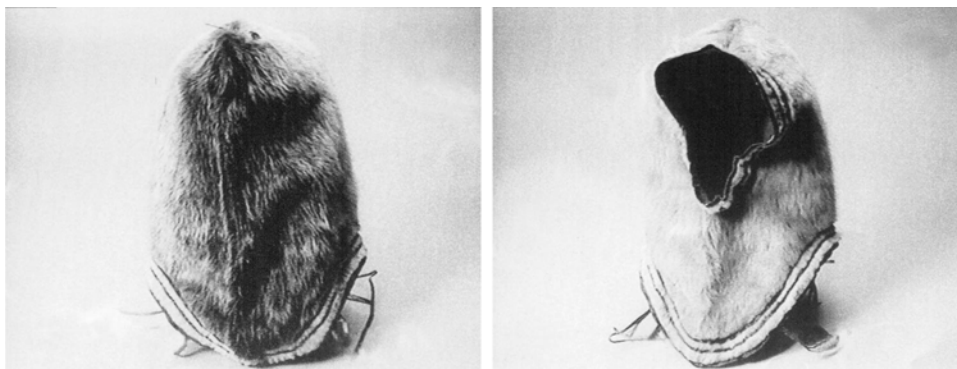


Figure 3. Children's cap dating from the end of the nineteenth century. (Nationalmuseet, Etnografisk Samling, Copenhagen, NMCL 5063 b.)

In particular, children with many brothers or sisters who had died, had to be protected. Wearing the hood of one's anorak or *amaat* up had a protective effect.¹⁸ The children's cap, made of seal fur or dehaired seal leather, and decorated with white fur or leather and skin mosaic, was made by a mother who had already lost many children. This loose cap covered not only the child's head, but also its shoulders and chest. It was called *piaaqquasiaq*, according to Thalbitzer and Amdrup, who collected a cap of this kind. Christian Rosing, Lutheran minister of the church in Ammassalik from 1904 to 1921, however, used this term in a slightly different way, to refer to children with many brothers or sisters who had died.¹⁹

"It is a so-called *piaaqquasiaq*-hood used to protect a child whose sisters and brothers have died as infants or babies. In order to prevent the last-born child from dying like the others, the mother gives it this or some other special garment as a kind of amulet to avert death from the child. This helmet-shaped hood is tied with double strings passing under the shoulders of the child; enclosing thus the shoulders, back and breast so that only the face is free, it forms such a magic remedy, averting attempts against the spirit of the child." (Thalbitzer 1914:588-590.)

This children's cap was to be combined with a children's anorak, with the hood removed. Mothers often gave their small sons a male amulet strap, a breast ornament made of seal-skin strips. At the back and front small wooden dolls or other amulets were sewn in to a small sealskin pouch (see photograph AI no. 7668, Thalbitzer 1906.) Amulet straps and armlets with amulets had to protect the child from black magic, when a sorcerer wanted to kill him, or it had to stimulate the child to eat different types of food when the mother could not feed her child (E. Rosing 1994:34). Girls often received armlets to protect them against illness and death. Boys wore armlets to strengthen them, and to help them to learn how to throw a harpoon. The holes in the beads of an armlet would enable pain in the arm to depart. (E. Rosing 1994:31, see also Men's Adornments this volume.)

Children's clothing according to gender

According to Holm, at a very early age children were dressed according to their sex. The clothing they received after their first long anorak was probably already of the adult type.

“When they are too old to be carried on the back, their dress is like that of the grown-ups, only without naatsit, and the girls have no head-dress.”

(Holm 1914:34.)

Besides the gender-oriented clothing there may have been, small girls as well as small boys were dressed in an anorak made of seal fur, probably until the age of five or six years. These garments may have been the same for children of both sexes, although an anorak is a typical male garment.

Boys usually wore inner anoraks made of seal fur, similar to those of their fathers. In winter, they had seal-fur anoraks with the hair side turned outside over their inner garments. The boy's trousers were made of seal fur in winter, and their boots were also made of seal fur or seal leather. Their boots consisted of inner boots, fur-side turned inwards, and outer boots, fur side turned outwards in the case of winter boots. Summer boots were made of seal leather, sometimes decorated with skin mosaic, like those of the adult males. Especially when boys accompanied their fathers or uncles during hunting trips in winter, special garments were made for them, such as trousers made out of polar-bear fur and a dog-fur anorak. In summer, boys would wear kayak anoraks and gutskin anoraks, especially when practicing kayaking or summer hunting.

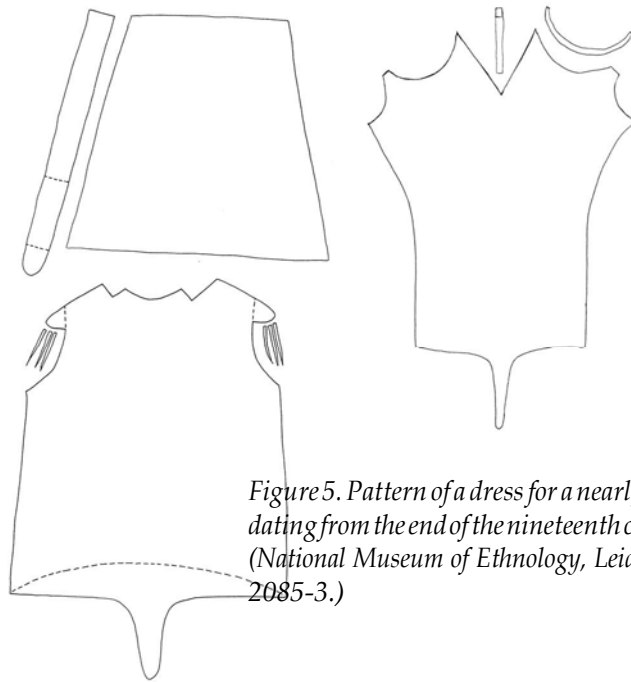
“At what age the boy gets his kaiak, depends very much on how well-off the parents are; but the usual age seems to be about twelve. Before they get their kaiaks they take part in all kinds of hunting on the ice, and on land in the hunting of white grouse, foxes and ravens. A thirteen year old boy Kakartok had already caught thirty seals, the first one at the age of ten, and most of them in the spring, when the small ringed seals have crawled up on the ice, where they lie basking in the sun.” (Holm, 1914:63-64.)²⁰

All these boy's garments were shaped and sewn in conformity with the garments of adult males. Besides these garments, there was a hoodless anorak for small boys, made of seal fur, which was combined with a loose cap, and was probably used especially in summer. Instead of a hood sewn on, this anorak had a triangular incision at the neck opening (NMC L 5063A). A loose cap may have provided protection against evil spirits, and may have had some connection with the *piaaqqusiat* mentioned earlier. Amulets were sewn into a boy's clothing to protect and procure good hunting results. Sometimes parents added a small piece of polar-bear sinew to the armlets their sons wore on their upper arms, so they would become as strong and brave as this predator. This provided a good protection against enemies, and the boys' arms would grow strong enough to cast a harpoon successfully (Chr. Rosing 1946:68,70).

Compared to the variation in the garments worn by adult males, the variation in boys' garments is less pronounced.



*Figure 4. Dress of an almost adult girl, dating from the end of the nineteenth century.
(National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, RMV 2085-3-6.)*



*Figure 5. Pattern of a dress for a nearly adult girl
dating from the end of the nineteenth century.
(National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, RMV
2085-3.)*



Figure 6. Decorated girl's boots made of seal leather, dating from the end of the nineteenth century. (National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, RMV 2085-6.)

Small girls, up to five or six years old, would wear seal-fur anoraks of the same shape as those for boys. While children were very young, there was not much difference in clothing for boys and girls. Some of the girls aged between three and six years old photographed at the end of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century, were already dressed according to their gender. These girls wore long cotton anorak-like skirts. These garments appeared under the influence of the Danish colonizers at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century. Girls could wear also short anoraks made of cloth (like those worn by boys).

East Greenlandic girls received their first *amaarngut* or *tattulaq* (inner and outer coat to carry a child) probably at an age of five or six years. Small babies' or children's *amaarngut* are lacking in museum collections, as well as in early photographs. The smallest preserved garments fitted children of approximately five years old.²¹ Small girls usually had dolls (Holm 1914:646-649), which they probably carried inside their first *amaarngut*, just as adult women did with babies and small children. A girl was able to carry a small child in an *amaarngut* at the back, at an age of approximately seven years. She could not only use her own *amaarngut*, but also borrow an *amaarngut* from her mother, elder sister, aunt or niece in order to carry a child for a short period. The smallest *tattulat* in museum collections are all undecorated, lacking the two white decorated fur stripes at chest height.²² Receiving one's first *amaarngut* or *tattulaq*, e.g., when a girl was big enough to take care of smaller children and carry them on her back, may have been a special social event. For girls, there were coats made out of gutskin. Sometimes the shape of these coats resembled that of the *amaarngut*. Gutskin coats with small hoods also existed.

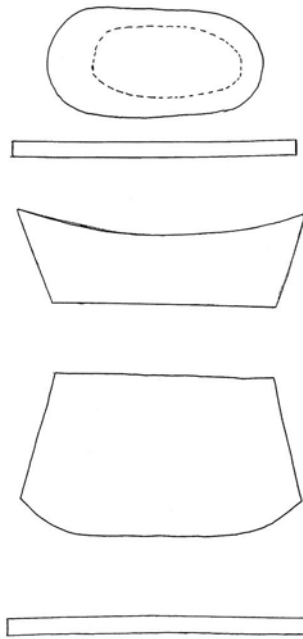


Figure 7. Pattern of decorated girl's boots made of seal leather, dating from the end of the nineteenth century. (National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, RMV 2085-6.)

Girls usually wore boots and trousers shaped rather like those worn by their mothers. There were differences in detail. Girls wore undecorated boots, made of depilated seal-skin (leather). Even the first girls to be baptized in April 1899 were portrayed with undecorated leather boots (Hansen 1976: plance 120). Decorated girl's boots are shown in the collection of the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen and the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden.²³ Inner boots were used especially in winter. Fur boots for girls were probably less common.

Clothing expressing puberty

Pregnancy, (first) menstruation, puberty, marriage status, miscarriages, birth, and death were significant events in Inuit life. These transitions had social and spiritual implications.

"The Inuit, just like other primitive people, saw these transitions from one stage to another as extremely dangerous for the surrounding world - it was in this phase that the "inua-power" of body or soul could be extremely violent. Therefore it was necessary to protect oneself against these strong powers during rites of transition." (Bjørn 1996:42, translated from Danish by C. Buijs.)

Transitions in social life were often marked by clothing, special garments or clothing-related details. Thus *naatsit*, inner breeches, were adopted at puberty. In the wardrobe of young girls as well as boys in East Greenland, they were still lacking. Children, like the grown-ups, would undress themselves indoors.

"The children go about quite naked in the houses and tents and continue to do so till they are almost grown-up. They do not put on the *natit* till they are about sixteen, 'for then they are ashamed of going quite naked'. As soon as the youth has put on his *natit* [*naatsit*], the women 'begin to smile at him and he is ready for marriage'. The young girls go about with their hair down, but shortly after they have begun to wear *natit* in the house, they put up their hair in a top-knot, a sign that they are ready for marriage." (Holm, 1914:64.)

Girls adopted *naatsit* in their daily dress at puberty, after they had menstruated for the first time. This garment indicated the sexual maturity of the wearer. Spiritual aspects may also have been connected with the *naatsit*. The wearing of *naatsit* by young women did not indicate any intention to marry. That was expressed by arranging one's hair in a topknot. For boys, their status regarding puberty, fertility and marriage was exclusively expressed by wearing a *naatsit*. They should already have shown their ability to be providers by catching their first seal, at about the age of ten years old (Holm 1914:64); having their own kayak at an age of c. twelve years old (Holm 1914:63); getting dressed for ice hunting, and so on. Many of these events were, indeed, marked by clothing, by magic chants, or by gifts.

"The magic chants (...) are sung in the same way as the drum chants, but without a drum. The words used in them are intelligible, and they are more openly used than the charms. They are used for instance, the first time the lad gets his *kaiak* or the first time he comes home with game." (Holm, 1914:88.)

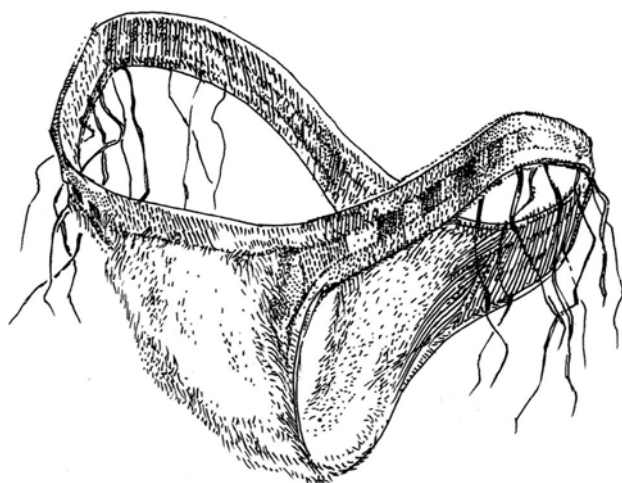


Figure 8. Woman's sinner breeches, naatsit, decorated with leather strips. (Buijs and Vogelsang-Eastwood, 1993:37.)

An emphasis on first events seems to be a common feature of Inuit life. In the language of the Canadian Inuit, an equivalent for 'doing something the first time' can be found in the suffix *-ging* or *-ring* (Michelle Therien 1996). The importance of first events in life was also obvious when a new-born child received its first clothing at the time its mother was given presents (see page 15).²⁴ It may also have been a special event when a girl was dressed in an *amaarngut* for the first time (at the age of five or six years old) indicating that the child was now able to take care of smaller children. An important event in a boy's life, his first catch of a bearded seal, was described by Holm:

"A boy who had recently got his kaiak and had never been out hunting before, harpooned a bearded seal. The animal was dragged into the tent and cut up there, whereupon the boy's hair was cut for the first time, the claws of the fore and hind flippers of the seal were cut off, and the hair and claws were then thrown into the sea. When an old woman was about to prepare the hide for boot soles and was scraping off the hair, she chanted a magic charm ("ija, ija, I have eaten the bearded seal; yea, I have eaten the greater part, ija, ija ...")." (Holm 1914:49.)

First events were expressed in modifications of the body as well as in changes of clothes.

Clothing at maturity and after marriage

The *tattulaq* stresses the maturity of women in a very pronounced manner. An essential feature of the women's fur coat, in which small children were carried, were the decorated white dog-fur stripes at chest height. Women received their first *tattulaq* probably from their mothers, or made it themselves after their first child was born. The decorated white stripes (*qagivat*)²⁵ were worn exclusively by adult females. Before the first menstruation, girls would wear undecorated *tattulat*, from which the white stripes were lacking. They may also have worn these undecorated coats in the short period between first menstruation and the time they were preparing to find a partner. Adult women might also wear

undecorated coats, but “only when white dog fur was not available. Otherwise, they would have decorated them.”²⁶ It is not quite clear whether these stripes indicated motherhood or the marital status of women. Marriage in East Greenland was not formalized, and a range of individual choices prevailed with respect to the age at which a couple married. Some of the men married before they were grown-up, as soon as they were able to support a wife, while others married much later. Variations occurred with respect to the period in which the first children were born, varying from before marriage until several years after the first marriage was arranged. A person could be married many times in his or her life (Holm 1914:65-68).

“The wedding itself is conducted without ceremony. A young man must sometimes make the father a payment in the shape of a harpoon or something similar for the privilege of marrying his pretty daughter; and, vice-versa, skilful hunters often receive something from the fathers for marrying their daughters. A girl is compelled to marry, if their father desires it; she often pretends to be reluctant, although she is really quite willing, and is therefore often taken by force.” (Holm 1914:67.)

Special garments such as festive dress or a wedding costume did not exist in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century, but there were variations in the degree of decoration on garments, especially on women’s clothing (the decorated *tattulaq* has already been mentioned), and men’s boots. Since marriage arrangements were not ceremonially performed, and no festivals were celebrated on that occasion, clothing probably did not express the transition, although the *tattulaq* decorated with the two white stripes may have been an exception to this rule.

The adult women’s wardrobe

Women’s coats

Women wore outer and inner coats made out of seal fur. They wore gutskin coats less frequently. The shape and pattern of women’s coats show some variety, and women sometimes used different clothing in summer and winter.

Women with children usually wore outer coats, *tattulat*, made out of seal fur, with a broad back part used to carry a child. The back of the coat and the hood were made from one skin. The hair side of the fur was turned outwards, and the outer coat was worn over an inner coat. Ringed sealskin (*Phoca hispida*) was used to make such coats, but the skins of *Cystophora cristata* (*niiniatervanga*), *Erignatus barbatus* (*annernga*) and *Pagophilus Groenlandica* (*attateq*) were sometimes also used. The front part was made out of one skin, and the sleeves were made of one or two skins, depending on the size of the coat. The *tattulaq* was broad on the upper side and narrower at the bottom. The front part was shorter than the back part, and was connected to it at the shoulder seams, in the middle under the chin, and at both sides (Hatt 1969:46; B. Robbe 1994:135).

The hoods of the women’s coats were pointed, to allow sufficient room for the women’s topknot. The seam in the middle on top of the hood was usually beautifully decorated with a dark strip of fur between the lighter-coloured furs of the hood itself. Holes in the

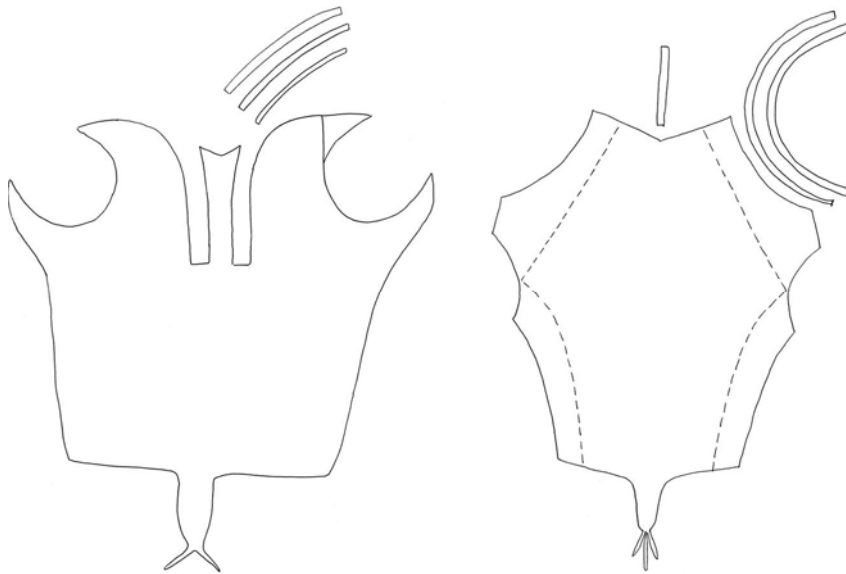


Figure 9. Pattern of a woman's souter coat, *tattulaq*. (Buijs, NMC Nr. Ld 129.2.)

sealskin, caused by removing the animal's eyes, can be seen at the top of the hood on both sides. These eye holes probably protected the wearers of the coat against evil spirits (B. Robbe 1994).

These coats were decorated with two long white stripes made out of dog fur, set in at breast height as a continuation of the hood stripes.²⁷ They were often accentuated by small leather strips at the end of the fur stripes, sometimes decorated with beads. These stripes might perhaps enable evil spirits to leave the body, or prevent them from entering it. These white stripes made of dog fur were a typical feature of East Greenlandic women's coats, and were not found in other Arctic regions.²⁸ These white stripes or 'hood roots' probably had a functional purpose, and they were sewn into an incision especially made in the front part of the coat. The pressure caused by the weight of the child at the back was divided over the seams of the sleeve and the inset, and over these extra seams at the chest. In the previous section we saw that the two white stripes stressed the adulthood, fertility, motherhood and marital status of the woman wearing a *tattulaq*.

The seams of the sleeves ran down the front of the sleeves. The sleeves were sewn on to the garment in such a way that they were directed slightly forward, in order to withstand the pressure on the seams caused by the weight of the child at the back. The construction of the sleeves, including their relative shortness, had advantages for the work that a woman had to perform: rowing an *umiak*, bending to scrape hides while keeping her dress clean, picking berries, etc., (Kaalund, 1987:138; Robbe 1994:135). Another characteristic feature of the East Greenland *tattulat*, which can also be found in the inner coats, is a bulge of approximately 7 cm at the junction of the sleeves and the front part of the coat, at shoulder height.

“In the front of the armhole, where the front seam of the sleeve meets the seam of the armhole, there is a peculiar projecting bulge, which is formed partly by the sleeve and partly by the front skin, and which points inward. The importance this bulge has, or has had, is unknown to me, but it is typical for the women’s furs from Angmagssalik, and I have not observed it in furs of any other locality.” (Hatt 1969:46.)

However, this bulge is formed by the typical pattern of the sleeves and not, as Hatt states, by the sleeve and front skin.²⁹ So there may have been different methods of designing the bulges. Tiny leather strips have been sewn on to the inside of the bulge in a nearly adult girl’s *tattaluq* held in the collection of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, The Netherlands. This may suggest a custom of fastening amulets, often dolls, inside these bulges. However, no such strips were found in the bulges of other *tattulat*. An East Greenlandic informant explained these bulges: “they were used to fasten the hood string and to keep the hood up”. This explanation may be correct, as these bulges are prevalent not only on the outside of the outer coat, but also on the outside of the inner coats. Yet not all women’s inner or outer coats of this type are provided with a hood string, whereas all of them have these bulges. Decorative, aesthetic or religious factors may also have played a part in providing the women’s coats with bulges. The same may be true of other decorative details inside the coats, such as the decorated fringes at the end of the white stripes, fringes at the end of the bulges, and a small pointed strip hanging loose at the top of the hood. Since these bulges and fringes are constructed on a woman’s shoulder, these decorations may be considered to be joint marks. In other Inuit areas, joint marks were regarded as the location of souls, and the seams were therefore decorated (Chaussonnet 1988: 222).³⁰ In East Greenland not all joints were marked, whereas the edgings of garments were always carefully decorated. (See also page 39 ff)

On the front of the women’s coat a long leather strap, used to hold the child in place, was sewn in between the end of two white stripes. This strap was fastened in front. A second strap was connected to the hood. A mother wearing *atattulaq* was unable to pull up the hood, because it was too wide and the child was behind her. The hood could therefore be pulled up by means of a long leather strap or hood string, in order to protect mother and child from the elements.³¹ At the bottom, the *tattulat* had flaps at the front and back (Thalbitzer 1914:572).

“The frock is always worn over the breeches, and the points or tails at the front and back are much longer than those of the men. They are sometimes as much as a foot long, and they are meant to be tied together between the legs in snowy or cold weather.” (Holm 1914:32.)

The flaps were made out of the tails of seals. They are beautifully accentuated with contrasting fur strips, which also formed the decoration for the border of the coat. Jens Rosing (1998:157) explained in his article ‘Fortællinger om Inua’ that a connection can be made between the U-shape of the women’s coat tails and the female pudendum. Also, in a woman’s face the U-shape appeared in the form of a tattoo on the forehead.³² Amulets could be sewn into the garment, either on the flaps or on the hood, in order to protect mother and child against danger or, if the child was a girl, to help her one day to give birth to male offspring (Thalbitzer 1914:627).³³

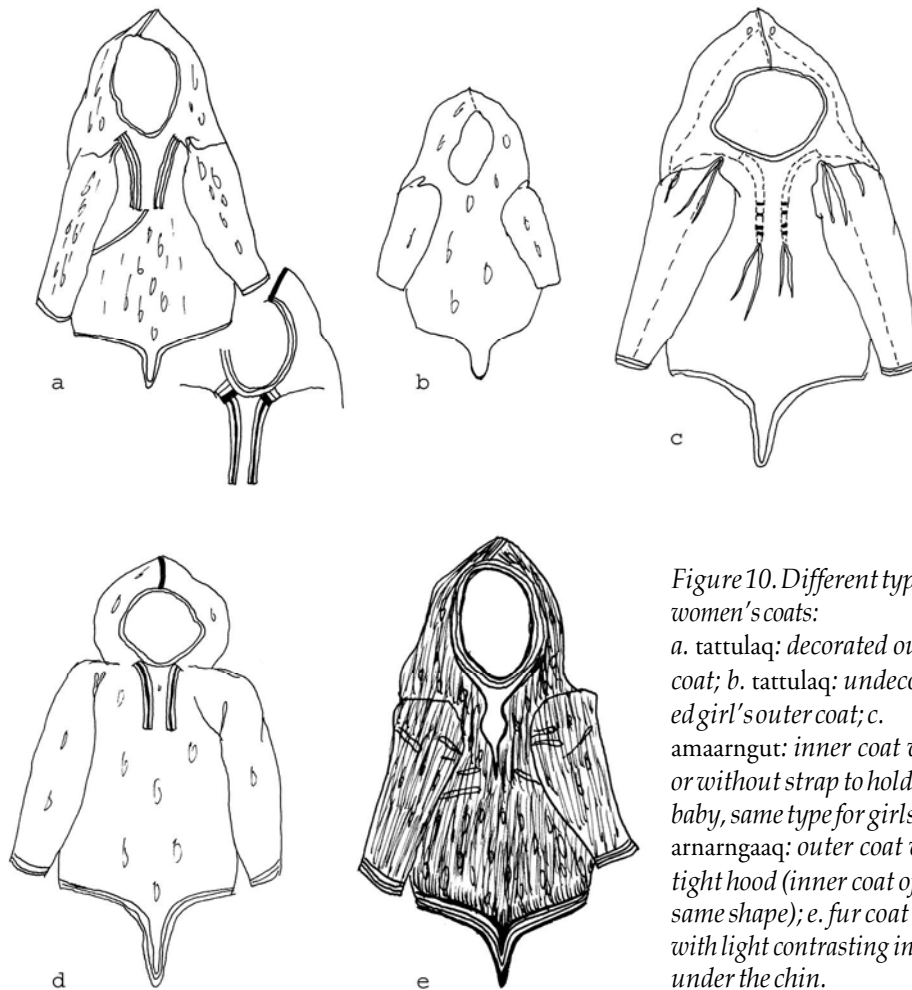


Figure 10. Different types of women's coats:

a. *tattulaq*: decorated outer coat; b. *tattulaq*: undecorated girl's outer coat; c.

amaarngut: inner coat with or without strap to hold the baby, same type for girls; d.

arnarngaaq: outer coat with tight hood (inner coat of the same shape); e. fur coat with light contrasting insert under the chin.

The *tattulaq* was rich in symbolism. Complete sealskins were used to make this garment, and the seals' eyes on top of the hood, emphasize its animal symbolism.

The outer coat, *tattulaq*, was combined with an inner coat of similar shape, the *amaarngut*.³⁴ This garment was made out of sealskin (usually ring seal *Phoca hispida*) and the hair side was turned inwards toward the naked body of the wearer. The outer coat could be pulled over the inner garment and was worn with the hair side outwards. The combination of both garments constituted an excellent protection for the women against cold, wind and humidity, since an insulating layer of air was kept between the two garments (see Buijs 1997:14). Not only was the soft fur, turned inwards, exceptionally suited to keeping mother and child warm; the construction of the *amaarngut* also served this purpose to an outstanding degree. This garment did not have an opening in front,

and the warm air inside the garment could not escape easily. Air circulation between the shoulder blades of the mother could be regulated by means of the hood. When it was too warm, the hood was pulled off and the child looked out over the mother's shoulder. A wide hood enabled the baby to look out, and provided the infant with fresh air inside the garment, even when the child was small and sitting much deeper inside the *amaarngut* (Driscolle 1980:14). As the child was carried and rocked naked on the mother's bare skin, it would smell its mother and feel her warmth and movements.³⁵ It was easy for a mother to observe her child's signals, and to anticipate to its needs. The garment was wide enough to allow the mother to pull the baby under her arm to the front, to breast feed it, avoiding the need to take the naked child out of its warm shelter. This garment provided the child with indispensable physical warmth, and left the mother enough freedom of movement to do her work. A woman was thus able to travel even with young children. In summer, only the inner-coat *amaarngut* was worn. Then, it served as outer clothing. The white scraped skin on the outside of the garment was beautifully decorated with decorative stitching at chest height, and beads were added to loosely hanging small strips of skin. The bottom edge might be decorated with bead fringes. In some way, this garment was a expression of prestige, both because it allowed the mother to carry the child on her back (an indication of social status) and because of its bead decorations, which were in that time highly valuable and expensive (indicating wealth). The bead-decorated edges were extended at the turn of the century, and made the garment even more beautiful and valuable. Heavily decorated inner and outer *amaatit* were probably worn during festive gatherings such as *aasiviit*.

Holm described another type of women's (outer and inner) coat with tight hood, *arnarn-gaaq*, used by women who had no children. This coat *arnarn-gaaq*³⁶ resembled that worn by a man. According to him:

"Women who have no children have frocks the cut of which is more that of the men's, but their hoods are always pointed, but barely large enough to be passed over the head." (Holm 1914:32-33.)

In fact, these women's coats were quite different from those of men, and their pattern resembled the *amaarngut* and *tattulaq*, with the difference of the small hood. These hoods were pointed, just like those of *amaarngit* and *tattulat*, to make room for a woman's top-knot.³⁷ This type of woman's coat was worn by a woman without children. For a man, as well as for his childless wife, lack of offspring was a reason to look for a second wife. Since having children was highly valued within this society, the position of childless women was not a favourable one. Adoption was a common solution to the problem.

In addition to seal fur, gutskin was used as material for clothing. Gutskin coats, *ikkiait* for the men, were common, whereas these types of coats for women were probably more rarely used. "Above the inner skin frocks, the women sometimes wear in damp weather beautifully embroidered gut frocks." (Holm 1914:33.) These coats were probably provided with a pointed hood, since this shape was typical of the women's coats. A great variety of men's coats made out of gutskin has been preserved in museums. Unfortunately, there are only a few women's coats.³⁸

Women's trousers

Women's coats were combined with outer and inner trousers, made of seal fur. The trousers were rounded at the upper edge, leaving the women's belly uncovered. The coat tail in front covered the abdomen and only part of the trousers. As long ago as 1884, there were several types of women's trousers in use, varying in the length of the outer trouser-legs and in the type of decoration. The East Greenlanders used two different terms for these outer trousers³⁹. Women's undecorated outer trousers were called *qarterpaat* (see appendix 1). This term referred to trousers in general, as well as specifically to undecorated trousers, regardless of their length. The same holds true for the men's trousers; a single term being used regardless of their length. Other characteristics, such as decoration, resulted in different terms for 'trousers' (such as *qarterpaat* and *seeqqiniit*). (See figure 12.)

Usually, women wore short trousers typical of East Greenland. The collection of the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, holds an example of longer women's trousers, without decoration. The extraordinary length of the legs is caused by the proportions of the garment (the legs are relatively narrow) and the trousers therefore give an impression of being quite long.⁴⁰

The garment was held in place by means of a leather strap through the upper edge of the trousers. The *qarterpaat* was not completely undecorated; usually they were provided with a decorative edging on the legs. This consisted of alternating light and dark stripes of fur or leather. The central front part of the trousers was usually made out of light-coloured seal fur, accentuating the wearer's sexual parts. Dark seal fur was used on both sides of the trousers.

In both summer and winter, women in East Greenland wore short outer trousers, combined with long boots reaching up to the knees. The (short) trousers and the boots did not cover all of the legs. Women's upper legs were bare, in a style typical of East Greenland (Thalbitzer 1914:570). The women's thighs were often dark in colour from sunlight or frostbite. In the past, West Greenlandic women would sew extra fur onto the trouser-legs, as can be seen from the mummies found at Qilakitsoq (Hart Hansen et al 1985:147). This was not the custom in East Greenland. Here, women would only tie pieces of fur or leather around their thighs, during long and cold journeys (Holm 1914:33).

The decorated short outer trousers, *seeqqiniit*, were identical in shape to the short trousers, *qarterpaat*. The pattern of these trousers is very similar, but there is a striking difference in decoration. The *seeqqiniit* were decorated with vertical fur mosaic on both legs, consisting of white, shaved dog-fur stripes, alternating with narrow, dark-coloured stripes, made out of leather or seal fur. The term *seeqqiniit* is comparable to the term used for the skin mosaic on the legs of the trousers. (See appendix 1.)

Traditionally, the decorated women's trousers were short. After contact had been established with West Greenlanders, the East Greenlanders adopted a much longer type of decorated outer trousers, differently shaped.⁴¹ This West Greenland type of trousers can be found in East Greenland as long ago as 1899.⁴²

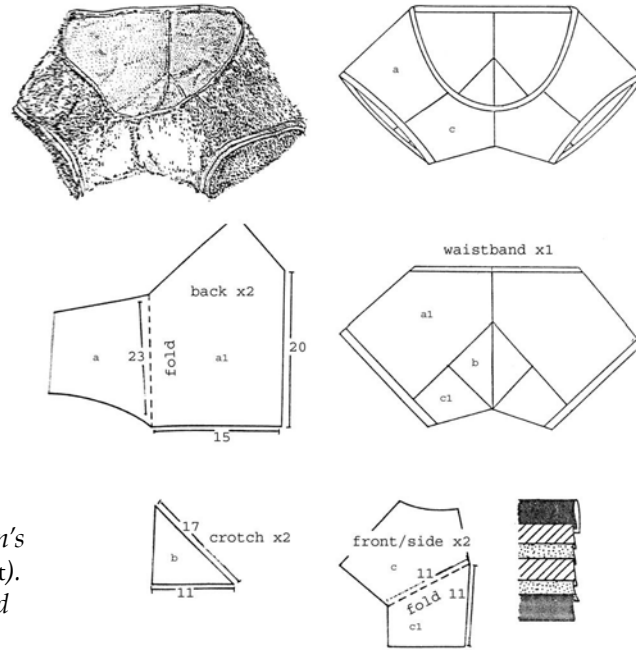
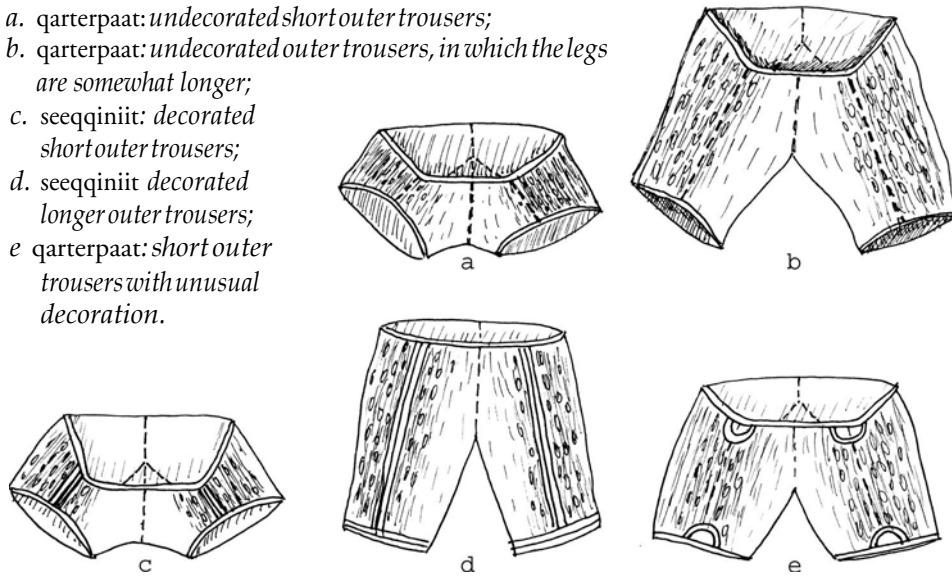


Figure 11. Pattern for a woman's short outer trousers (qarterpaat). (Buijs and Vogelsang-Eastwood 1993:54.)

Figure 12. Different types of decorated and undecorated trousers for women:

- a. qarterpaat: undecorated short outer trousers;
- b. qarterpaat: undecorated outer trousers, in which the legs are somewhat longer;
- c. seeqqiniit: decorated short outer trousers;
- d. seeqqiniit decorated longer outer trousers;
- e qarterpaat: short outer trousers with unusual decoration.



The undecorated short trousers were probably used more by girls before puberty than by adult females. The decorated short trousers may have been preferred for special occasions such as *aasiviit*. Adults were portrayed with undecorated and decorated short trousers.⁴³ At the turn of the century, a preference for the West Greenland type of breeches (*seeqqiniit*) became apparent. First, these trousers were worn at baptism. As far back as 1899, when Pastor Rüttel baptized the first East Greenlanders, women as well as girls were wearing the long West Greenlandic type of breeches with the white and dark decoration on the legs.⁴⁴ Later on, these trousers became part of the Sunday's costume.

“Women spend the greater part of their time on the platform, where they sit with their legs crossed, wearing no clothing but their *naatsit*. Here they sit hour after hour preparing skins, twisting sinew thread and cord, sewing clothes and doing embroidery.” (Holm 1914:60.)

The only garment an adult woman usually wore indoors was a small undergarment, known as *naatsit* (see appendix 1; see also Holm 1914:33; Thalbitzer 1914:565-566; Bahnson 1997:78). These breeches were made out of very small triangular pieces of

Figure 13. The first East Greenlanders to be baptized by Pastor Rüttel in Ammassalik, in April 1899. (Photo: Rüttel, Ammassalik, 1899, Arctic Institute, Copenhagen, AI50.)



leather or fur. Usually different types of seal fur with the hair side turned outwards, or seal leather, were used, but probably other skins as well, such as Arctic fox or rabbit skin. The broadest part of the triangular skin would fit over the private parts, while the garment was held in place by means of small, decorated leather or fur straps over the hips. The back part consisted of a small piece of fur.

As this garment was the only one used inside the house, great efforts were made to make it as beautiful as possible. The inner breeches were beautifully decorated with fur or leather mosaic along the straps over the hips, using white fur for the private parts, and small loosely hanging leather strips with beads on both sides.

The *naatsit* were used exclusively inside the house. Women as well as men seemed to find it improper to go outside the house or tent without outer trousers, and probably also without their coats:

“The grown-up people on the other hand are not seen naked outside the house, and a woman would consider it very indecent to appear in her home-dress outside the door-opening; I have the impression that they are forbidden to do so on religious grounds. When I wished to photograph Maneekuttaq’s wife, and asked her to take off her frock outside the tent, she called her husband, who was angakoq apprentice but not full-fledged and

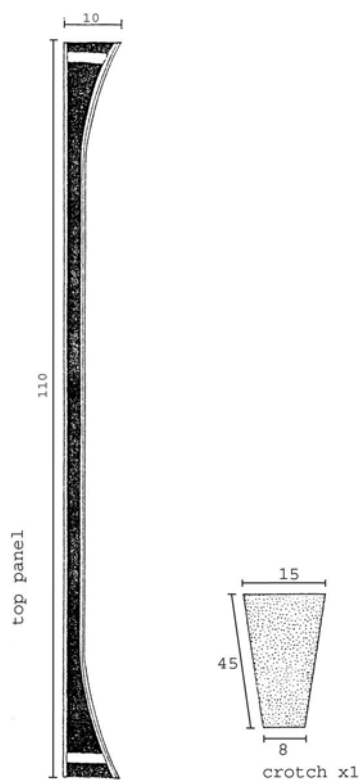


Figure 14. Pattern of woman's breeches *naatsit*.
(Buijs and Vogelsang-Eastwood 1993:53.)

he declared somewhat excitedly, that “only wives of the baptized behaved in that way, our women must not undress in the open air but only in the tent or the hut.” (Thalbitzer, 1914:565-566.)

In contrast to adults, children, even almost grown-up girls, were allowed to go naked, even outside the house. Children probably did not have inner breeches, since Holm states: “When they are too old to be carried on the back, their dress is like that of the grown-ups, only without *naatsit*, and the girls have no head-dress” (Holm 1914:34). As we have already seen in the chapter on children’s clothing, children did not put on a *naatsit* until they were almost grown-up: “till they are about sixteen, for then they are ashamed of going about quite naked” (Holm 1914:64). The girls started to dress their hair in a beautiful top-knot shortly after they began to wear *naatsit*, “a sign that they are ready for marriage” (Holm 1914:64).

The *naatsit* was not just a practical undergarment; it had also a special connotation of fertility. Wearing a *naatsit* stressed the personal and social identity of the wearer within the small communities, indicating for young women, as well as men, that they were ready for marriage.

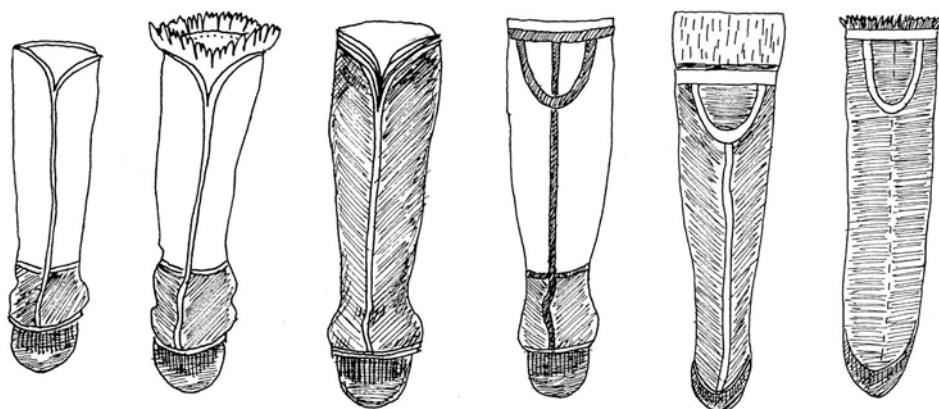
Women’s boots

The women’s boots were long, and reached up to the knees. Holm described them as “large riding-boots, with very wide uppers and with a notch in front at the top” (1914:33). They were usually made of depilated sealskin (leather) and sewn with sinew and a water-tight stitching; some of them were almost entirely made of white skin, whereas others were made of dark brown skin. Besides these boots of different colours, there were two different types of boots varying in shape.

The long women’s outer boots *kamilivartit* or *kamiit takikkaajut* (see appendix 1), with bracket-shaped incisions on the upper edges, seem to be the most traditional type of women’s boots in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. These boots were found in two or even three sub-types. First there were the white leather boots, combined with brown leather on the lower part of the boot, at the ankle. The boot legs consisted of two parts, one made of white leather, the other at the ankle made of brown leather. A second type of boot was identically shaped, but was made entirely out of brown leather. The boot legs also consisted of two parts. A variation on this second type of boot was made in the same way, only lacking the extra lower part and extra white decorative stripes at the ankle (the boot leg consisted of only one piece of skin). Sometimes the upper edges of the outer boots were decorated with white dog fur or white polar-bear fur (Holm 1914:33). Since inner boots could also be decorated with white dog-fur edgings, a double fur edging was sometimes the result. Sometimes women’s boots also lacked fur. The boot soles were each made out of one piece of sealskin, probably bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*), and were sewn onto the boot legs in the typical Inuit manner, forming creases at both heel and toe. On the lower part of the boots, a bulge-shaped broadening was the mark of East Greenland boots. It was not found in other Arctic regions, and can be seen as a regional characteristic of the material culture of East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁵

A second type of long women's boot was the *kamiit ajipertingarartiilit* found in East Greenland at least as far back as 1898 and possibly earlier.⁴⁶ In shape the boots resembled the first type of women's boots. The broadening on the lower part of the boots, and the combination of white leather upper legs and brown leather at the ankle, were the same. The boot soles were sewn onto the boots in the same way, but the upper edging and decoration were different. The upper edge of the *kamiit ajipertingarartiilit* was straight. The pattern of decoration showed a rounded line, forming half a circle, (U-shaped, sometimes with a vertical line in the middle) accentuating the wearer's knees. This knee piece was called *ajipertinga*, and gave the boots their name.⁴⁷ This type of decoration is known as 'joint marks' in anthropology. Also the bracket-shaped decoration on the first type of long women's boots (*kamilivartit*) may have marked the joints. Joint-mark decoration was most striking in the boots, and less evident in other types of East Greenland clothing. In East Greenlandic clothing the sexual parts, or sexually related parts, were usually accentuated. The U-shaped knee decoration already existed in West Greenlandic clothing in the centuries before this, and can already be found in the Qilakitsoq clothing dating from the fourteenth century. It was characteristic of the East Greenlandic boots of the nineteenth century. Whether these knee decorations derive from West Greenland is unclear. The details of the boot decorations, made out of small leather strips of contrasting colours, were characteristic for East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. These skin mosaic decorations can also be found on the first type of boots, on the inner and outer breeches, on small skin bags, and on the men's leather half jackets, for example. The long women's boots, with bracket-shaped edging on top and the border of polar-bear fur or dog fur, were used exclusively in East Greenland. This type of boot did not occur in any other Arctic region, and there was no broadening at the ankle in the West Greenlandic boots of earlier centuries, and they were not found in the graves at Qilakitsoq, Qerrortut and Pisissarfik (Hart Hansen et al 1985:156-158; Bahnson 1997; Issenman 1997a).

Figure 15. Different types of women's long outer boots within the Ammassalik area of East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century: left *kamilivartit* or *kamiit takikakajut*; right *kamiit ajipertingarartiilit*.



There was a third type of boot. East Greenland informants also called these long brown leather women's boots *kamiit ajipertingarartiilit*, since they were provided with the same type of U-shaped decoration at the knee. However, the broadening on the lower part of the boots was lacking, and the soles were sewn onto the boots in a different way. These boots bore a much closer resemblance to the West Greenlandic types of women's boots. (See fig. 15.)

The outer boots were usually combined with inner boots or stockings: *alersit*. They were made in the same shape as the outer boots, but the material used was seal fur. Dog fur could also be used, possibly to make the nether parts of the inner boots, and an edging of dog fur was sometimes added. Outer boots with a fur edging, combined with an inner boot with a similar edging, resulted in a double layer of white fur on the upper side of the boots. It must have been warm and comfortable, and may have been considered beautiful. Later on, when the West Greenlandic type of boots came into use, an alternating seam was applied; the seam of the inner boot ran to the left, whereas the seam of the outer boot was turned to the right, resulting in a watertight boot, even at the seams.

Women in East Greenland may not always have used winter boots of seal fur at the end of the nineteenth century. Only seal-leather boots are mentioned in the literature and preserved in museum collections. No women's boots with the hair side turned outwards have been preserved.

The various types of boots may have had different social connotations. After the West Greenlandic type of boots became more generally used, the traditional East Greenlandic women's boots, with the bracket incision at the top, may have been used more by elderly women, who were used to wearing them from childhood on. Then they may have acquired the social connotation of 'elderly woman'.⁴⁸

According to Sonne (2001:188-191) women's boots were associated with fertility.⁴⁹

"A young girl in Thule and East Greenlandic areas, who wanted to show her interest in a male guest, would politely remove his boots. If a married East Greenlandic woman appeared to be pleased by receiving the gift of a hind flipper from a married man, she agreed to his arranging a wife exchange with her husband." (Sonne [s.a.]:8.)

Dogs and dog fur, which was often used for the lower part of the inner boots or as an extra inlay to keep the feet warm and comfortable, had the same connotation. Since dogs would have many offspring, they were related to fertility. Boots could have magic power. A reference of boots, dog hair and magic was found in part of Thalbitzer's work 'The Memories of Youth of a Female Angakok'.

"If you began to have a husband, you shall cut off (some) of his hair, with a hair cutting knife. When he starts off in his kaiak you must throw [the cut hair] (after him) from the place where he left (the shore). If his hair cannot be cut off (then) the hair of a dead dog (is to be placed between the soles of your husband's kamiks. These dog hairs (...) you shall place them between the hairs of his boot soles. If you place them there, he will be robbed of his soul, he will die." (Thalbitzer 1923:457.)

There was a connection between living dogs and fertility. Here, the opposite holds true; a dead dog (or its hair), the opposite of fertility, is connected to the loss of the man's soul. There are indications that boots and boot soles have been attributed with special powers, and could act as amulets (Thalbitzer 1914:627-628).

At the end of the nineteenth century a woman's wardrobe, boots⁵⁰ included, showed specialization with respect to women's activities, such as taking care of young children by means of an *amaarngut*. Procreation, sexual attraction, and childbearing were expressed strongly in women's clothing.

Women's adornments

“The women do up their hair in a broad head-dress, which is tied with a strip of skin, from which strings of beads hang down over the hair (...). On the forelocks are strung small beads, which hang down over the forehead (...).” (Holm 1914:33.)

In the section on clothing and puberty, we have already mentioned that the topknot was an indication of excellence of puberty: “(...) they put up their hair in a topknot, a sign that they are ready for marriage” (Holm 1914:64). Adult females would wear topknots as part of their daily dress.

Topknots were held in place by means of a decorated seal-leather or fur-strap *qalermeeq*, which was usually decorated beautifully with loosely hanging beads or small leather strips. *ammassaar* vertebrae were sometimes used. Thalbitzer (1914:603) mentioned the use of “bird's feet sewn together (especially the feet of the black guillemot, which are red) or of red-coloured skin. Sometimes they were adorned with beads cut from ptarmigan-wings.” Amulets could be fastened to the women's topknots.

In West Greenland the colour of the hair band indicated a woman's social status. Red was used for a young unmarried woman, blue for a married woman, green for an unmarried woman with a child, and black for a widow. According to Kaalund, this custom was introduced by Moravian missionaries (Kaalund 1979:147). These distinctions were not found in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century (Thalbitzer 1914:603).

Adult women wrapped a beautifully decorated leather or fur headscarf, *qaangut*, around the head. This garment was shaped and decorated in a manner typical of East Greenland, not found anywhere else.⁵¹

“When it is cold, they wrap round their heads a skin, which is often beautifully embroidered. They sometimes use the grain side of bearded sealskin to make a kerchief of this kind. It is black and has the appearance of cloth (...).” (Holm 1914:33.)

Whereas Holm mentioned a functional reason for using a headscarf, Kaalund provides an aesthetic explanation. Elderly women especially, wore these headscarfs to hide their temples, which had become bald from the hair being pulled tight to make a topknot every day (1987:139).

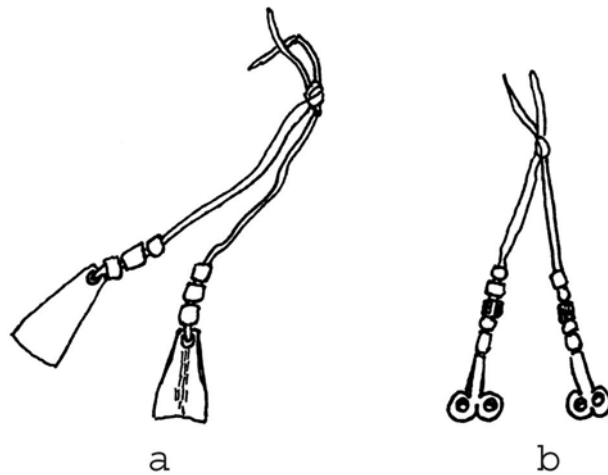


Figure 16. Two types of ear decorations (*tusaammit*) from East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century:

- a. *orseetan*;
- b. *avalarpaq*.

At the end of the nineteenth century, women of East Greenland used two types of ear decoration, *tusaammit*, made out of pieces of carved tooth. Holm and Thalbitzer (1914:604) collected a triangular ear decoration, *orseetan*, and an older one called *avalarpaq*, which was also used as a pendant on a needle skin. It corresponded in shape and name with the “nostril edges” (see appendix 1.) Ear decorations were hung in pairs over the ears by means of tiny leather strips.

Women’s necklaces, *nuisarnqat*, were made out of leather, *ammassa*t vertebrae, and bone or ivory beads (Gustav Holm Samlingen 1985:214,215). As early as the end of the nineteenth century, necklaces for women were already being made out of glass beads deriving from barter with Europeans and West Greenlanders (Holm 1914:33; Thalbitzer 1914:601; Christensen & Ebbesen 1985:99). This adornment consisted of a leather strip, decorated with several rows of beads placed in a horizontal direction. These beads were strung on sinew thread or tiny pieces of leather strips, hanging down over the women’s breasts.

Women sometimes wore bracelets, *arsaqquulit*, made of seal leather and decorated with small beads (RMV 2803-4). A special type of wrist band may have been used by women as well as men, but these were not mentioned by Holm and Thalbitzer. (See appendix 1.) Christian Rosing has reported that women sometimes wore two skin or fur bands, one on the left wrist, and the other on the right ankle. Small items, such as a snail’s shell, were fastened to the inside of these bands. These small objects could cure the wearers or their children of the sickness caused by *ilisiinniilitsat*, black magic, by grabbing at the air with the left hand, or kicking in the air with the right foot (Chr. Rosing 1946:71; E. Rosing 1994:50).⁵² Often armlets were decorated with beads, the holes in the beads enabling pain to leave the body (E. Rosing 1994:31). Bead holes also provided a passageway for spirits.

Tattoos

Tattooing on the arms, legs, breasts and faces of young women occurred in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century, although many grown-up women were not tattooed (Holm 1914:28-29). Unfortunately, there is not much information available on tattooing, and we do not know why some women were tattooed while others were not.

Tattoos have some aspects in common with dress. Tattoos, as well as garments, can be considered as body decoration, and decorative aspects of clothing sometimes have parallels in tattoos. In some Arctic cultures, tattooed lines marked the joints or other parts of the body, just as armlets, bracelets, and clothing decorations did. "These lines, as lifelines, as a sign of passage (from childhood to adulthood), or as protection against spirits, were ornamentally or stylistically more prominent in certain areas, whereas other groups reserved them as a magic or shamanistic rather than artistic motif." (Chaussonnet 1988:223.)

Thalbitzer observed with respect to East Greenland:

"The woman is tattooed at the age of 13 to 15. Her mother or a friend assists her and by means of an ordinary sewing needle the sooted sinew thread is drawn through the skin of the chin, arms, legs etc. The men are rarely tattooed. The angakoq Mitsuarnianga, when young, himself, tattooed 6 black dots on his arm. The Ammassalikers call the tattooings *kakinneen* 'stung things, stitches'. I obtained no new information with regard to the original reasons or explanation of the tattooings. Since the arrival of the missionaries this custom has ceased." (Thalbitzer 1914:608.)

The design of the tattoos in East Greenland is composed of black dots and lines. Less often, circles and squares were tattooed, but they were sometimes seen on women's legs and arms, decorations that also occurred on little seal sculptures made of ivory. Usually, only women were tattooed, but sometimes men also had tattoos:

"Egede's reference to tattooed lines between the eyes was confirmed by Johan Petersen, who told me that in his youth he had seen an East Greenlander over on the west coast who was tattooed between the eyebrows 'in order to prevent a shark he had once harpooned from recognizing and pursuing him; in West Greenland namely the shark is considered as a specially sagacious animal'." (Thalbitzer 1914:608.)

It is not easy to unravel the reasons, motives and aspects connected with tattooing in East Greenland, since sufficient information is lacking. Several ideas about tattooing have been developed by Chaussonnet (1988). She mentions several functions of tattooing, such as stressing prestige or status, the use of tattoos as amulets and protection against evil spirits and disease, or as fertility charms, markers of the passage to womanhood. Tattoos could stimulate the abilities of women in their work: sewing, and flensing activities inside the house. The tattooing of men was thought to provide them with extra strength in throwing the harpoon (Hart Hansen et al 1985:132; Gessain 1984:86; Kaalund 1979:153). They stimulated success in the hunt, and hunting skills. In this respect tattoos constituted a parallel with sewing; better hunting results could also be obtained by wearing beautifully made garments.⁵³

Furthermore, tattooed women were thought to reach the upper world after death, together with great hunters, as well as women who gave birth to many sons. Bad hunters and women without tattoos would go to the underworld after they died (Hart Hansen et al 1985). Tattooing was probably connected with ideas on giving birth, and tattooed women may have thought they would have less pain when delivering their babies. The painful experience of being tattooed may have helped to cope with a painful delivery later on.

Tinna Møbjerg and Jens Rosing connect tattoos to protection:

“As a rule only women have face tattoos, having the whole chin tattooed with vertical stripes which could allude to a beard and thus mean that she is changing sex. The spirits thus become confused and she is protected against barrenness. Occasionally extra eyes are tattooed so the woman is given many faces. These too confuse the evil spirits and she is thus protected.” (Møbjerg et al [s.a.]: 36.)

Tattooing was also related to the killing of other human beings and to death. “When a person had died, a new tattooing dot was made”.⁵⁴ Therefore some dots on the legs or arms may have been a visual representation of persons or relatives who had died. Gessain observed that tattoos expressed the life story of a woman:

“The design on forehead, cheeks and chin, made by puncturing the skin with needles coated with soot or by passing a sinew thread under the skin, had significant meanings. They recorded the stages of a woman’s life, and their number increased as a woman marked important events: first menstruation, marriage, birth of a child, birth of a son, and first seal killed by the first-born son (on this occasion, vertical lines were tattooed on the chin). A tattooed face told everybody the successes of a woman’s life.” (Gessain 1984:86.)

Therefore, the practice of tattooing can be considered as tattooing that tells a life’s story or “telling-tattoos” (Gessain 1984:86).

To be concluded

At the end of the nineteenth century the clothing of women showed little functional differentiation, but was well adapted to a woman’s work. The direction in which the sleeves were sewn onto the woman’s coat *tattulaq* made it easier to carry the weight of the child on the back, and the direction of the sleeves made it more comfortable to do the work of scraping, cutting up the seal, rowing an umiak, and gathering berries.

Details of the women’s garments were markers of the stages of social life itself. Outer trousers and *naatsit* stressed the women’s sexual parts. Sexuality and childbirth were important aspects of a woman’s life, connected with cosmology, hunting and animal life. Garments such as the *naatsit* laid emphasis on the passage to the phase of puberty in East Greenlandic girls, whereas dressing the long hair in a beautiful topknot indicated the intention of finding a partner for life. Clothing, or clothing-related aspects such as tattoos, stressed the transition from one stage to the next in women’s lives.

A beautiful garment showed clearly a woman’s abilities as a seamstress. Women’s qualities

were expressed not by means of specific clothing details, but by the way in which the furs were prepared, and by the construction of the clothing, the quality of the seams, and the aesthetics of the decorations. This was expressed not only by the women's clothing, but also by the men's and children's clothing, since the women produced garments for their husbands and children as well.

The quality of sewing was connected with cosmological and spiritual conceptions, and was subject to taboos connected with death. Amulets were sewn into the garments to protect women or their offspring (even their future sons) and their husbands from death.

The wardrobe of adult men

At the end of the nineteenth century the clothing of Inuit men in East Greenland was made by women, primarily out of sealskin, polar-bear fur and gutskin, while smaller and inner garments were made out of polar-fox fur and bird skin.⁵⁵ Warm clothing was of crucial importance to the hunters, who spent much more time than the women outside the communities. A man's costume consisted of inner and outer coat, inner and outer trousers, combined with inner and outer boots. In summer they usually wore seal leather and seal-fur garments, whereas in winter they needed much warmer clothing made out of seal fur or polar-bear fur. Completely dressed in seal fur, a hunter was able to imitate the appearance of a seal, and to approach sufficiently close to the animal to harpoon it (Kaalund 1979:130). Excellent quality in the clothing was a prerequisite for the East Greenlanders' mobility, hunting and survival.

Men's coats

In summer, men wore usually an inner coat, without an outer coat. The hair side was turned inwards, and the white, scraped side turned outwards. Watertight boots made of seal leather were suited to the wet summer conditions. Men sometimes used smaller outer boots over longer inner boots. In summer, watertight gutskin coats were practical, and were used in the kayaks. In winter, men wore outer garments made of fur over their inner clothing. Different types of coats could be combined. A gutskin coat was often worn over a fur coat made of sealskin, fox fur or bird skin, but seal fur or polar-bear fur coats could also be worn over the inner clothing when the weather was colder. Various garments were used and combined, depending on season, weather, occupation, religious taboos, etcetera. There was great variety in men's outdoor clothing. It was more specialized than women's dress, since each season and hunting activity required its own clothing. A complete seal-skin outfit was used when hunting *qatsimalit* on the fjord ice in spring, when the weather was pleasantly sunny. A much warmer polar-bear fur outfit was worn by hunters in winter or spring, in severe weather conditions. Outer coats varied in shape, material and pattern. Some types of coats were already disappearing or were less common in Holm's time, for instance inner coats made out of bird skin and fox skin.

“In winter they wear outside the *anorak* a hooded outer frock, with the hair out and with a thick bear-skin border both along the bottom and about the face (...). The fur reaches a good way down over the hips, and at the back

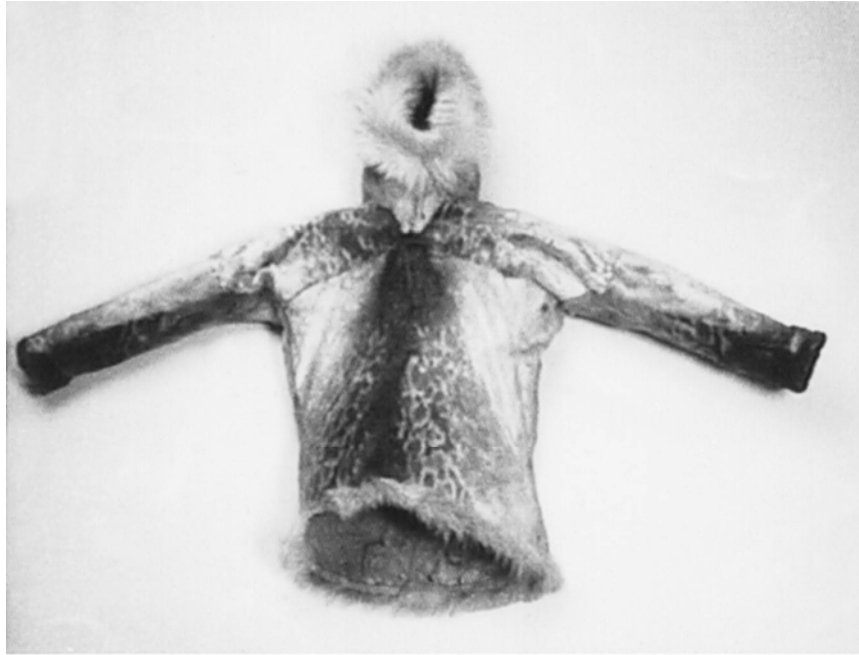


Figure 17. Man's outer coat (alatsik) made out of seal fur. (Nationalmuseet, Etnografisk Samling, Copenhagen, NMCLd 119.)

ends in a flap. Just above this flap is seen in the skin the seal's tail, which has first been split and then sewn in." (Holm 1914:30.)

This type of seal-fur coat, *alatsik*, was normally used in winter, but could also be used in summer when the weather was cold. Like other types of coats the *alatsik* was cut wide at the shoulders so that the wearer could pull his arms inside when it was cold. The hunter would also have enough space to throw a harpoon. Seal fur is not the warmest kind, but it is supple, and provides enough warmth. Sealskins were available in large quantities, and women had an enormous amount of experience in preparing these skins and sewing them into garments. The hoods of the *alatsit* were tight and rounded, in contrast to those worn by women, which had pointed tops to accommodate their topknots. The coats narrowed towards the sleeves and border beneath, and were decorated with edgings of polar-bear fur, white dog fur, or the white fur of unborn seals. The hood was very tight, with a thick edging to keep the face warm and protect it from frostbite.

The various parts of the seal are clearly visible as parts of the coat, because of the coat's pattern and the way in which the skins are used. The holes left by the animal's front legs are seen at the front of the shoulders. "At the bottom of the back the skin is Y-shaped, [an effect](...) produced by the tail of the seal being sewn together with the skin of the hind legs" (Hatt 1969:47). On the coat breast, just below the horizontal seam, the seal's ear holes can be seen. Sometimes the seal's front legs are situated at both sides, towards the bottom of the front part of the coat. The hood is made out of a separate skin. For this part of the garment, the head skin or upper part of sealskin was used, and the hood was sewn onto the garment (Hatt 1969:47). The hind-parts of seal fur coats could also include the hood.

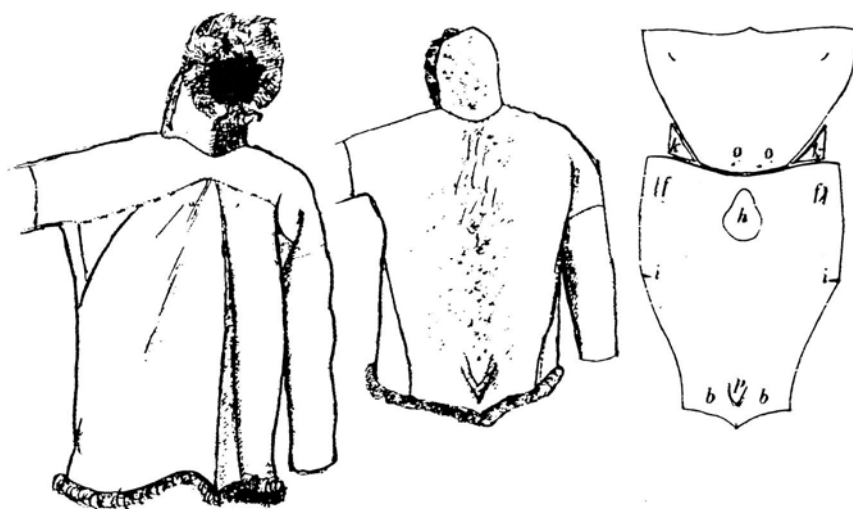


Figure 18. Pattern of a man's souter coat (*alatsik*) made out of seal fur. (Hatt 1969.)

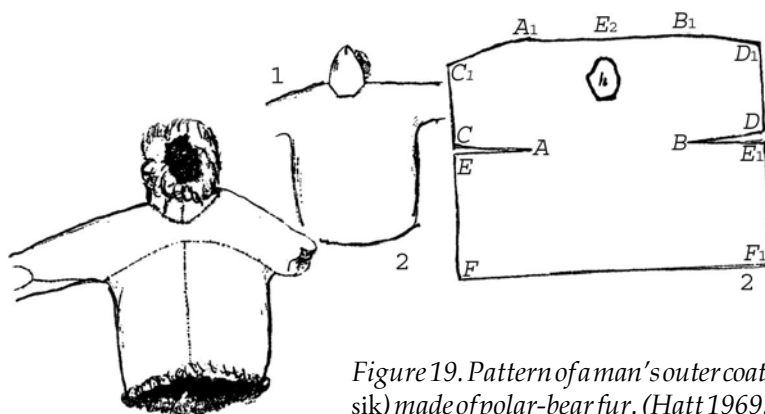


Figure 19. Pattern of a man's outer coat (*nani uliivia alatsik*) made of polar-bear fur. (Hatt 1969.)

Some of the men's coats were slightly tailed, while others were cut straight. There was a connection between cutting one's hair, cutting the tails of one's coat, and cutting the flippers of a seal (Holm 1914:49). Sometimes the seal's tail was cut up and sewn on to the backside of the garment. In other coats the seal's tail is lacking. It is not known what considerations played a major role in cutting the edging of the coat straight. Younger hunters or more western (modern) oriented hunters may have opted for straight cuts.⁵⁶

The appearance, pattern of construction, and the use of a polar-bear fur coat, *nani uliivia alatsik*, were quite different from that of a sealskin coat. This coat was constructed almost completely out of one piece of fur. Only the hood was made from a separate piece of polar-bear fur and added to the coat. This pattern resulted in a minimal number of seams for closing the sleeves, the front part of the abdomen, and the seam on the chest. This construction corresponded to the size of the polar-bear skin, making shoulder seams completely superfluous. The shoulders and forelegs of the skin of this animal were used for making the shoulders and sleeves of the man's coat. For the hood, the head fur of the polar bear was used.

The use of the 'flicker' - the direction of the polar bear's hair - in this type of garment is fascinating. By making the animal's parts correspond with those of the hunter, the flicker is very well suited to repelling moisture and snow from the garment, just as it did before, to protect the animal from snow and humidity. A polar-bear fur coat was especially needed for the hunters setting out over the land and the ice in winter. If a polar bear was killed, the one who first saw it received the skin. Polar-bear fur clothing may have conferred prestige. The man in the moon was believed to be very powerful, fearsome, and terrifying. He was dressed in polar-bear fur clothing (Chr. Rosing 1946:89). The polar bear was feared because it could, and sometimes did, attack human beings, yet according to Jens Rosing, human beings and polar bears were also related. Saladin D'Anglure stressed the resemblance between human beings and polar bears. The Inuit and polar bears were both hunters (they even shared the technique of hunting at the breathing holes); they both ate

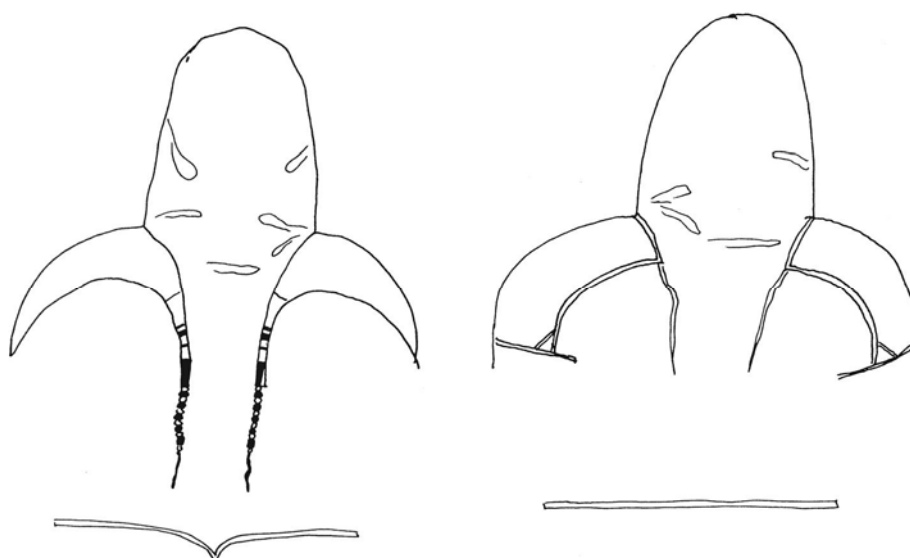


Figure 20. Two different shoulder patterns, and corresponding bottom edgings, on the back of men's inner coats made of seal fur, from East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century.

seal meat and they both made winter shelters. Polar bears were metaphors for masculinity and fertility. Shamans often had spirits of polar bears as their most powerful helping spirits. This symbolism was also connected to the Inuit's polar-bear fur clothing (Saladin D'Anglure 1994; J. Rosing 1998:169-170).

The men usually wore inner coats *arnarngaat* made out of seal fur, the hair side turned inwards.

"The men wear a long frock-like garment put on over the head, *anorak*; it is made of sealskin with the hair inwards, and reaches down over the hips (...). It is provided with a hood for drawing over the head, and at the bottom it is as a rule somewhat pointed, both at the front and at the back. The *anorak* is so wide over the breast that the arms can easily be drawn out of the sleeves and held close to the body, which is very often done when it is cold." (Holm 1914:29.)

The men could use these coats in winter as an under garment, combined with an outer coat of sealskin or polar-bear fur, or in summer as an outer garment. Then the white scraped back of the sealskin was seen on the outside of the coat. The seams were sometimes beautifully decorated with white contrasting strips of leather or fur. The tail of the seal was often attached to the inside of the inner coats. The material used was taken from the (young) ringed seal (*Phoca hispida*) or (young) hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*). The hood and back part of the inner coat were usually sewn out of one skin. The coat ran down from the front part of the shoulder. Especially on the back, the coats were beautifully decorated with line stitching and with sewn-on strips with beads, accentuating the shoulders.

These beads and the decoration at the back part of the coat may have been some kind of amulet protecting the man's back. The seal's tail may have served the same function. Two of these decorative patterns can be seen on the drawing above (figure 20).

There was a choice between a combination of a rounded-shoulder line and a little tail edging on the bottom of the garment, or a straight shoulder line combined with the straight edge of the coat. The latter pattern probably developed later under Danish and West Greenlandic influences, dating as far back as Holm's time.

In the past, East Greenlandic men had inner coats made of bird skin, *aligeq*. For centuries, the Inuit in the Arctic relied on bird skins for making (inner) clothing. According to Issenman, the Inuit preferred the skins of diving birds (eider duck, murre, cormorant, loon), since their skins are tougher than those of other bird species (Issenman 1997b:74). Unfortunately, there is not much information available on bird-skin garments from East Greenland. We know from the observations made by Gustav Holm that an inner coat made of different types of bird skin existed in East Greenland, since: "Raven and auk skin are too said to be used for *anoraks*" (Holm 1914:29). In West Greenland, bird skins for inner garments were used in the past, as can be seen from the remains of the mummies found at Qilakitsoq. Here, five different kinds of waterfowl were combined in one inner coat (Hart Hansen et al 1985:154). "Skins with short, dense plumage are used at spots where warmth is most important, and more open feathered skins are placed by the wrists and neck openings to let heat out." (Issenman 1997b:75.) The people of East Greenland may have used bird skins in the same way for making inner garments and sometimes caps. Even less information is available on the use of fox skin for making inner coats. Holm mentioned these garments in his publication on the East Greenland culture: "Sometimes the frock is made of fox-skin, over which is placed thin seal-skin, which is sewed on in strips of white and dark skin (...)" (Holm 1914:29).

Specialized waterproof garments

Gutskin frocks, *ikkiat*, were usually made out of the intestines of bearded seals, always aligned vertically. They were often beautifully decorated with parallel embroidered lines, narrow strips of black depilated skin, and beads. Striking decorative details are the two triangular pieces of gutskin on the chest of a man's coat (KNM 220, RMV 1071-2 and RMV 1076-29). They are decorated with three pieces of dark brown leather, as 'hood roots'. The pattern of the back of the coats and the hood construction emphasize the shoulders blades by means of parallel dark brown lines, decorated with tiny sewn-in strips of dark skin (KNM L 5007). On the upper part of the hood, the middle seam was often beautifully decorated. On the sleeves, a semicircle was sometimes made with brown leather strips, interrupted by a straight line decorated in the same way. This semicircle decoration may be a joint mark.

"In the *kaiak* they wear in winter, or when the sea is rough, outside the *anorak* the above mentioned gut frock and over it again a hooded *kaiak*-jacket of 'waterproof skin', which is often pretty embroidered and decorated with artistically cut buttons and beads. (...) The gut frock is frequently



Figure 21. Gutskin coat, ikkiaq. (National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, RMV 1071-2.)

used not only in the kaiak, but also on land, especially in damp weather. These frocks are either clear and transparent, or white and dull. In order to render the guts white and dull, they are put out to freeze, so that they are dried by the cold before they are prepared.” (Holm 1914:30-31.)

East Greenlandic hunters used gutskin coats for many purposes. The jacket could be used as camouflage in a kayak. A gutskin coat was also used as an outer garment over the seal-fur inner coat (*arnarnngaaq*) or over the seal-fur outer coat (*alatsik*), to protect the wearer against moisture. Women also wore gutskin frocks when the weather was damp (Thalbitzer 1914:575). However, women’s gutskin coats were probably less common.

The (long) kayak anorak, *qajarsiit*, was a highly specialised garment. It was a close-fitting jacket worn by Inuit hunters in their kayaks, and was made out of brown leather, and then impregnated with seal oil to make it watertight. The seams were sewn with a waterproof stitch. The kayak anoraks were sometimes decorated with contrasting white leather strips sewn into the seams, but plain brown kayak anoraks also existed. The anorak could be fastened tight by means of leather cords around the head, the armholes, and around the man-hole in the centre of the kayak. The cords were pulled so tight that the hunter could turn over together with his kayak, and make an ‘Eskimo roll’ without getting water into either his anorak or his kayak. Two small leather laces were sewn onto the hood on either side, to draw the hood tight over the face, so that the hunter was able to look back without the hood blocking his view. Sometimes *qajarsiit* were provided with two leather cords on which beads were strung, running over both shoulders from the back to the front part of the garment. At the front, they were pulled through a double button made of ivory. These cords served to pull up the jacket in front, so that no water would remain in the folds (Thalbitzer 1914:575-577; Holm 1914:30).

Gudmund Hatt observes:

“In ordinary Eskimo men’s furs, the sleeve is usually at right angles to the main body of the fur. It is here pointed a little upward, and the considerable width just below the armhole makes it easy for the kayaker to lift his arm into the air, which is, of course, necessary for throwing of hunting weapons.” (Hatt 1969:47.)

The seams connecting the sleeves to the main part of the man’s garment, were situated half-way along the upper arm to prevent too much pressure on the seams when a man was throwing the harpoon or paddling in the kayak. Details, manufacture and use of this garment were highly sophisticated, in order to meet the demands of the natural environment, as well as of the hunters’ specialised activities.

The white kayak anorak or ‘half-jacket’ *qaaloqqoq* was made out of white depilated seal-skin, from which the epidermis had been removed. This garment was only found in East Greenland, and is not known from any other Arctic area.

“It is possible that the half fur is the only occurrence of the skirt within the arctic area; it does not seem to have had influence at all on the development of other Eskimo dress forms.” (Hatt 1969:47.)

The short kayak anorak can be considered as a characteristic feature of East Greenland's material culture. It was combined with a kayak skirt, *aqivilisat*, that was fastened around the kayak manhole.

The skirt was provided with leather straps adorned with beads. The straps were pulled over the shoulders and the skirt was fastened in front. According to Thalbitzer, the half jacket and skirt were used in summer in good weather.

There is not much information available on the loose kayak sleeves *aarngat*. Thalbitzer observed: "further, they use loose half sleeves tied round the wrist and above the elbow." (Thalbitzer 1914:37.) East Greenlanders also mentioned these garments: "which were used while kayaking as extra sleeves, to keep the sleeves of one's jacket dry". (Interviews 2001)⁵⁷ All these kayak garments were usually combined with kayak mittens, provided with an extra thumb. (See page 53)

The whaling suit or *spring pels* protected the nineteenth-century Inuit whalers of East Greenland against moisture.⁵⁸ This suit consisted of a coat, trousers, boots and mittens, all sewn together and protecting the whole body, leaving only the face bare. It could be put on by means of an opening in front, which was closed with a leather cord. The *qarlippaassalik* could be blown up like a float, so that the hunter would not drown if an accident occurred while he was hunting whales (Holm 1914:31; Thalbitzer 1914:580; Gustav Holm Samlingen 1985:32).

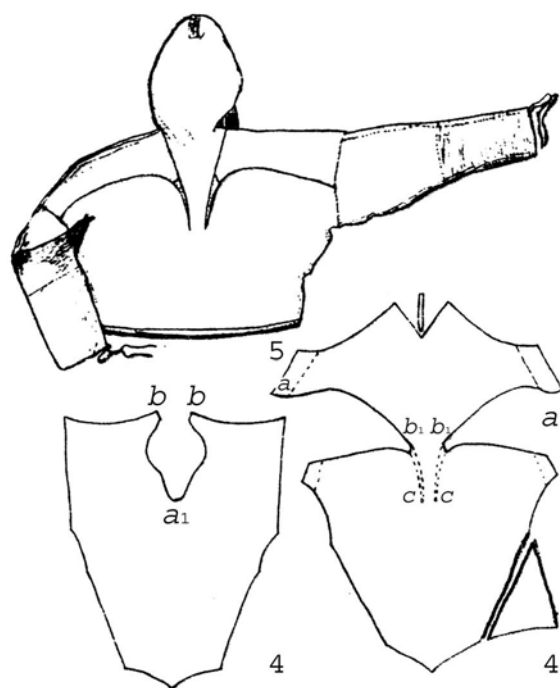


Figure 22. Pattern of a short kayak anorak, qaalooqqoq. (Hatt 1969.)



Figure 23. Short kayak anorak qaaloqqoq. (Grønlands Landsmuseum og Arkiv, Nuuk, NKA 1418 Ld 66.)

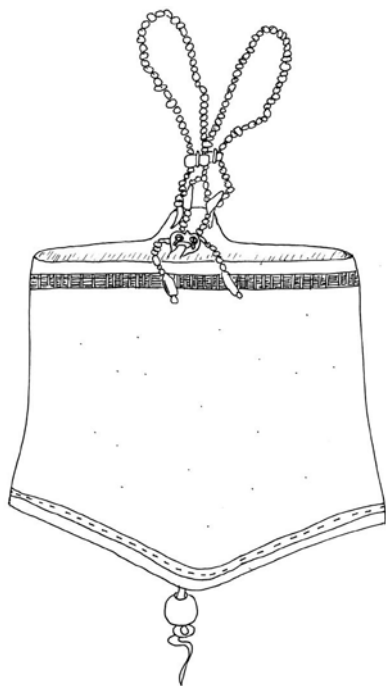


Figure 24. *Kayakskirt, aqivilisaq, (back).*

This garment was made out of oiled sealskins joined together, and was waterproof. Whale hunters used this specialised garment in summer. Holm mentioned a specific type of whale hunting in which the whaling suit could have been used. It was said that whales were stealthily approached by umiaks as they lay sleeping (Holm 1914:56). Probably the crew of an umiak was dressed in such blown-up suits. “If the umiak was turned over by the whale, the Greenlander could then still save himself by floating on the water, as the jumping suit acted as a big swimming bladder.” (Hatt 1969:96-97.) If such an accident happened near the coast at high tide, a person only had to wait for low tide, and would then simply wade through the water to the land.⁵⁹ By blowing up the garment, extra warmth was provided, as the air layer around the hunter’s body provided insulation from the cold water. The *qarlippaassalik* was also used while flensing the whales, protecting the hunters’ fur garments from dirt and grease. The hunters were able to do part of the flensing under water, and they were not obliged to pull the huge animal entirely on to the shore.⁶⁰

This type of *qarlippaassalik*, with an opening in front, was probably found only among the Inuit of Greenland, and stemmed from a period when whaling was of great importance (such as the Thule-culture period). A comparable whaling suit is known from the Inupiaq of North Alaska, where whaling was of great importance. Here, the face aperture was wide enough to allow the wearer to enter the garment that way (Issenman 1997b:80). The East Greenlandic garment had almost disappeared when Holm and Thalbitzer reached the East Coast of Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. Holm wrote:

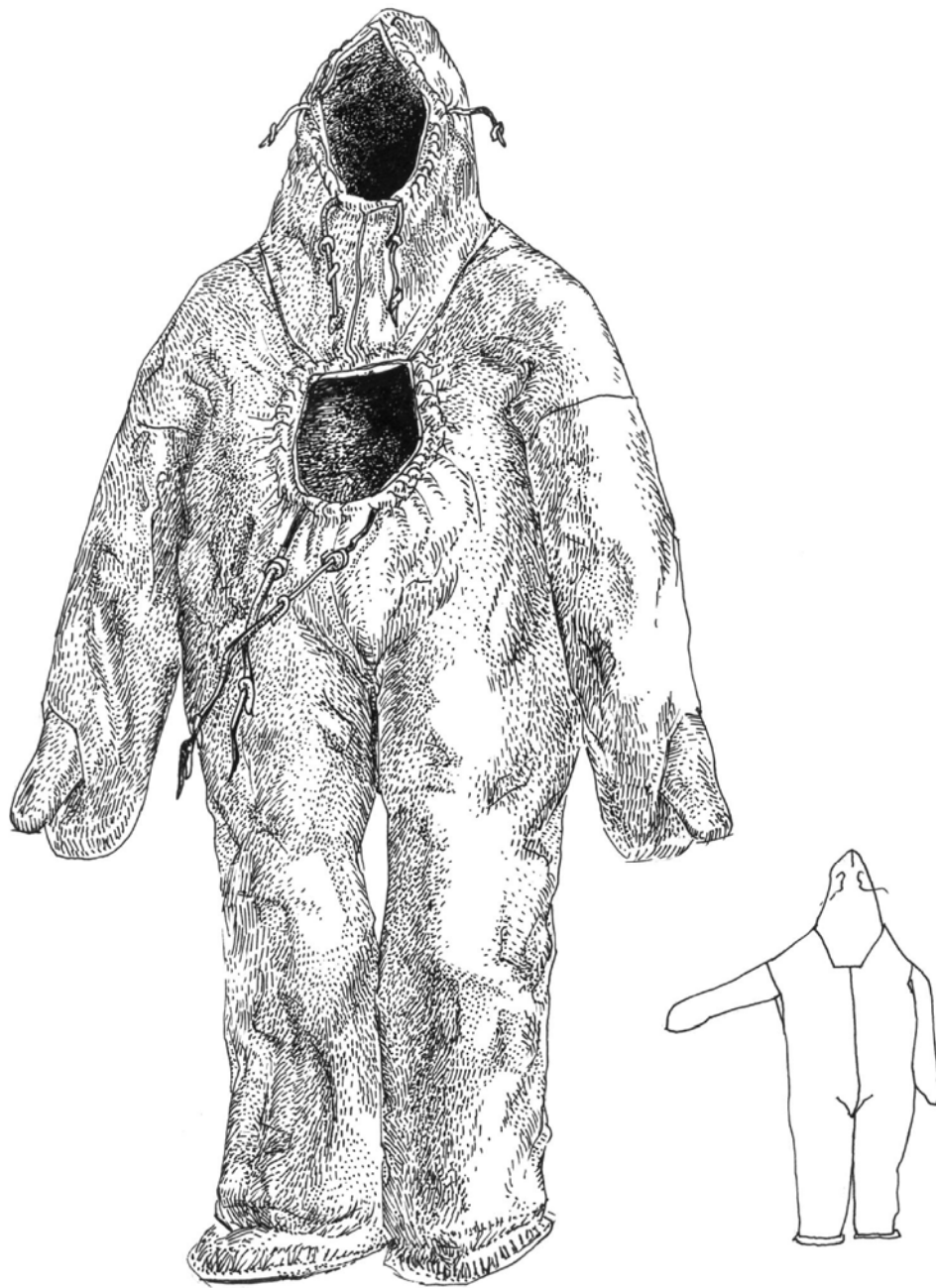


Figure 25. Whaling suit qarlippaassalik (Drawing: Frans Stelling).

“We have never seen a ‘spring coat’; but the natives say that there are a few people who still wear such a garment, out of superstition.” (Holm 1914:31.) This specialized garment probably disappeared when the whales themselves disappeared (see next chapter).

Mittens

There were at least three types of mittens in East Greenland. The kayak mittens are probably best known. A kayak anorak was usually combined with watertight kayak mittens, *maattaalit*.⁶¹ They were constructed out of seal leather and had two thumbs. They kept the wearer’s hands dry, despite the water dripping along the paddle blade. Kayak mittens were provided with an extra thumb, so that the wet mitten could be turned upside down. The wet side of the mittens became the upper side, and would dry in the open air. In winter the wet side would freeze, so that after a while, the thin ice layer could be pulled off (Thalbitzer 1914:527,573).

Warm fur mittens, *aaqqalit*, were made of seal fur or polar-bear fur. They were provided with only one thumb. Sometimes the men used an extremely warm but less flexible polar-bear fur mitten on their left hand, while for the right hand they used a less warm and less thick, but more flexible seal-fur mitten (Gustav Holm Samlingen 1985:182, 225).

Men’s trousers

“(…) when out kaiaking or hunting, or when away from their home, they [the men] wear above them [the inner trousers] another pair of breeches, made of seal skin or bear skin, the fur side outward. They are very low in front, barely covering the pubes, but run up higher behind, and are held in place by a cord above the hips, outside the anorak. They are fastened below the knees over the boots by a string.” (Holm 1914:29)

The men’s outer trousers were made either from various types of seal fur, or from polar-bear fur. Depilated over-breeches also existed, made of scraped sealskin. These trousers were rendered waterproof by rubbing them with seal oil. “The men’s outer breeches reach down to the knees or still further.” (Thalbitzer 1914:570.)

Men wore seal-fur outer trousers *qarterpaat*, in winter as well as summer. They reached down to the knees, or just over them. Some of these trousers are apparently longer (see Fig. 27 a & b). These seal-fur trousers have no opening in front. The trousers were wide enough to step into and pull up, and were held in place by lacing in the upper edge of the garment. The trousers could be pulled tight at the knees by means of laces through the edges of the trouser legs. The back of the dark seal fur is seen in the middle of the wearer’s legs, whereas the white fur of the seal’s belly accentuates the loin parts. The back of the trousers was also made of white fur. Often the back of the leg’s edging was decorated with a dark, triangular piece of seal fur. Usually the trousers were made of two pieces of fur sewn together down the centre, and along the inner leg.

Long trousers, as well as short ones, were made in this same way. These trousers formed part of the hunters’ winter wardrobe, combined with seal-fur coats and seal-leather boots. In winter, hunters needed much warmer clothing, which was provided by polar-bear fur coats, trousers, and boots or over-shoes.

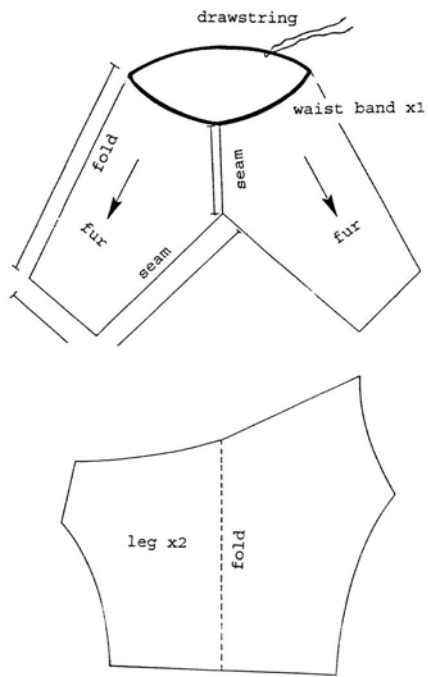


Figure 26. Pattern of a man's relatively short pair of seal-fur trousers. (Buijs and Vogelsang-Eastwood 1993:48.)

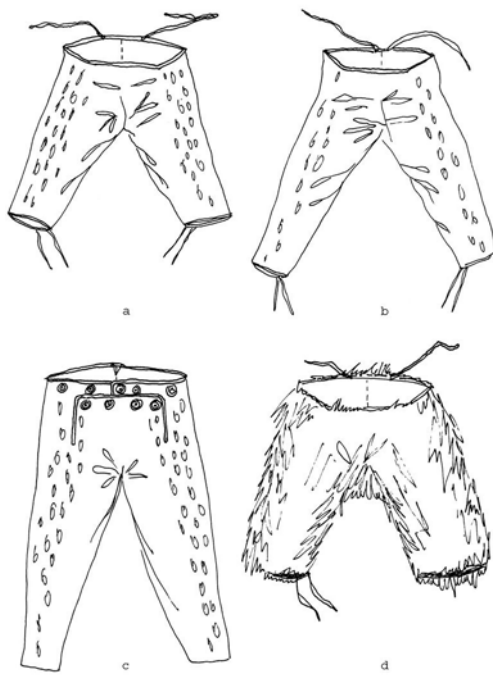


Figure 27. Various types of men's trousers in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century; a. pair of short seal-fur trousers, qarterpaat; b. long seal-fur trousers, qarterpaat; c. long seal-fur trousers with flaps, qartiilaq; d. polar-bear fur trousers.

Another type of seal-fur trousers consisted of outer trousers made of seal fur with flaps and buttons, *qartiilaq*. The front of these trousers was provided with two flaps, which were closed over each other with two bone or ivory buttons (and button-holes on the opposite side), covering the wearer's abdomen. A third flap could be pulled up over these flaps, and was closed by two or four ivory buttons. Extra buttons on the trousers' upper edge in front, and at the back, served to fasten suspenders to the garment. The shape of these trousers was influenced, or even introduced, by Europeans. They may date back to the time when Dutch, English and Basque whalers, and Danish traders and missionaries, reached the west coast of Greenland in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.⁶²

In winter, hunters nearly always wore outer trousers made out of polar-bear fur.⁶³ These trousers were manufactured in the same way as the 'traditional' seal-fur trousers, and were made out of two pieces of polar-bear fur with a mid-seam in front and at the back.⁶⁴ During ice hunting, the hunters, completely dressed in polar-bear fur, were not only protected against severe cold; they were also camouflaged by the white colour of the clothing. Special men's outer trousers, made of water-resistant leather, were worn in East Greenland during the nineteenth century and up to the middle of the twentieth century. According to East Greenlanders, these trousers were used as an extra waterproof layer over the hunter's fur trousers, to protect fur clothing against rain or wet snow. Wearing these trousers as an outer layer over fur garments resulted in an extremely warm outfit. These leather trousers were made of the depilated skins of ringed seals (*Phoca hispida*) and young hooded seals (*Cystophora cristata*). The pattern of the trousers resembled the traditional short seal-fur trousers. The garment was prepared with seal oil to make it more waterproof, and was sewn with waterproof stitching.

"Next to the skin are worn quite diminutive drawers, only a few inches high, which fit closely to the loins and just manage to cover the sexual parts (...). They are made of sealskin with the hair outward, and are as a rule nicely embroidered." (Holm 1914:29.)

East Greenlanders used to undress almost completely inside their houses. Men as well as women usually only wore *naatsiit* indoors.⁶⁵ Men's inner trousers were somewhat larger than those worn by women. They were low in front but much higher at the back. These breeches were often worn hanging loose at the back, as can be seen in photographs taken by Knudsen (Holm 1914: fig. 18 and fig. 62).

Naatsit were beautifully decorated. The most common decorations are parallel lines made out of alternating dark and light-coloured fur strips, at the edges of the trouser legs. Sometimes vertical stripes constructed in the same way were placed on the front of the trousers. Semicircular decorations occurred less frequently. Sometimes the men's inner trousers were decorated at both sides with one or two small leather fringes, to which beads were often fastened. The fur parts were used in the same way as in almost all other trousers. White or yellow-white fur was used for the sexual parts in front, and for the back part, whereas the thighs were accentuated by dark-coloured fur. The *naatsit* were held in place by means of a leather cord through the upper edge. The inner trousers were used exclusively indoors. It was considered indecent to wear *naatsit* outdoors. Thalbitzer assumed



Figure 28. Man's inner breeches, naatsit, made of seal fur; East Greenland, end of the nineteenth century. (Nationalmuseet, Etnografisk Samling, Copenhagen, NMCL. 1536.1.)

that it was forbidden for religious reasons (Thalbitzer 1914:565), but provides no further explanation. Taking off the fur clothes in order to prevent transpiration, and to dry the fur garments used outside, was a normal and highly valued habit in almost all Inuit societies. However, at the same time, oppositions such as inside / outside (the houses) were prevalent, in addition to practical reasons.

Men's boots

Good footwear was of great importance on the ice and on the frozen land. Men's footwear consisted of inner boots or stockings with the hair side turned inwards. Outer boots were worn over these, sometimes made of seal fur with the hair side turned outwards. The inner boots were longer than the outer boots, and could be seen above them. But there was also a longer type of men's outer boot. A layer of dried grass was inserted between the outer and inner boots, to provide extra insulation, and to absorb humidity inside the boots. This dried grass could easily be renewed.

The materials used for boots varied from the fur of the ring seal (*Phoca hispida*), the harp seal (*Phoca groenlandica*), or the hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*), to polar-bear fur (*Ursus maritimus*). Depilated sealskins provided the leather for waterproof boots. They were often used during summer, but also in winter combined, for example, with boots made of polar-bear fur. Bearded sealskin was used for making boot soles, which were made larg-



Figure 29. Man's boots made of seal fur, *kamiit meqqilit*, East Greenland, end of the nineteenth century. (Nationalmuseet, Etnografisk Samling, Copenhagen, NMCL.5024.)

er than the boot shaft itself, and were bent over the foot shaft with the aid of a boot creaser. The sewing of boots demanded great skill from the seamstresses. The boots were often beautifully decorated.⁶⁶

“Qiwingataaq told me that in her childhood the men often used boots with the hairy side outwards (made of harbour sealskin) (...)”. (Thalbitzer 1914:584.)

From Thalbitzer and Holm we know that as early as at the end of the nineteenth century “in winter time hairy boots with the hair out are often worn.” (Holm 1914:30.) These winter boots reached up to the knees, or somewhat over the knee, due to the somewhat higher front part of the boots. The *kamiit meqqilit* were decorated in front with vertical, alternating light and dark leather stripes, a decoration also found between boot soles and shaft. The peculiar bulge, typical of East Greenland, was also found at the foot of these boots. These hairy winter boots were provided with seal-fur inner boots, hair side turned inwards.

Boots and overshoes made of the leg furs of polar bear *tuliit*⁶⁷ were used during ice hunting. Polar-bear fur is one of the warmest materials available in East Greenland. Not only



Figure 30. Decorated man's boots made of seal leather, East Greenland, end of the nineteenth century. (Nationalmuseet, Etnografisk Samling, Copenhagen, NMCL.4401.)

were overshoes used as an insulating layer to keep the feet warm on the ice; their insulating qualities also prevented the seals from hearing the shuffling sounds made by the hunters while the latter were waiting at the breathing holes.

Two types of leather boots *kamiit maattamiilit* existed in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. They were used in winter as well as in summer. First, there were long leather boots reaching up to the knee or somewhat over it.⁶⁸ The second type of leather boots for men was much shorter, reaching above the ankle or halfway up the shin bone. The much longer inner boots could be seen above the outer boots, since they reached up to the knee: "In summer, however, they sometimes wear half boots, of which only the 'inners' reach up to the knees, while the boots themselves reach half-way up the legs and are richly embroidered." (Holm 1914:30.)

All types of men's boots in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century have the peculiar bulge between foot and sole, typical of East Greenland. (See also page 35 this volume.)⁶⁹

All types of boots in East Greenland show a mid-seam in front.⁷⁰ Sometimes the mid-seam was divided at the foot into two extra side seams running down on each side of the boot, comprising two triangular pieces of leather, especially in long leather boots.⁷¹ This mid-seam was usually beautifully decorated with vertical stripes of contrasting colours, sometimes consisting of a geometrical check pattern. On both sides of the mid-seam of short boots, decorations were sometimes made from several semicircles. They were made of tiny leather strips of contrasting colours, usually a white decoration on the brown material of the leather boots. There were also plain leather boots for men. The more beautiful and

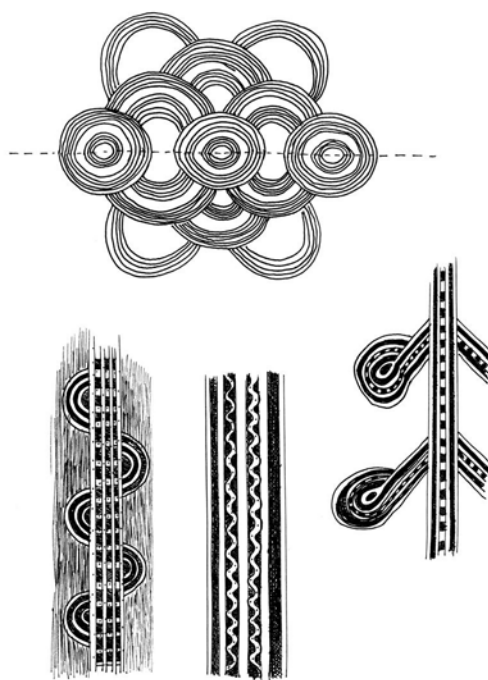


Figure 31. Decorative patterns made out of skin mosaic on waterproof men's boots of East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century.

decorated boots were probably worn on special occasions, such as *aasiviit* or gatherings for song duels etc., but they may also have been used in daily life.

Since these decorations were exclusive to East Greenland, they obviously indicated the region where a person lived.

The inner boots, *alersit*, fitted into the outer boots, hair side turned inwards. They had a shaft with mid-seam and a loose sole, also with the hair side facing inwards. Sometimes the mid-seam was divided into two side seams at the foot, that could also be seen in some of the long leather outer boots. *Alersit* were made out of various types of seal fur (*Phoca hispida*), probably from the ringed seal and hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*). Inner boots could be combined with various types of outer boots, such as short leather boots usually worn during summer, or with long leather or fur boots made out of sealskins, or polar-bear fur.

The “Ammassalimiut” informed Thalbitzer about sealskin shoes and slippers made at a time “when only white frost and not snow covered the country” (Thalbitzer 1914:585-596). These slippers and shoes were known from West Greenland, as part of the Inuit wardrobe from remote times, probably stemming from the eighteenth century, as they are mentioned by Crantz and Egede. Yet these sealskin shoes or slippers were probably no longer part of the East Greenlandic dress in the nineteenth century.

Men's boots were practically and symbolically related to mobility. Without boots, a hunter would be unable to go out hunting. There was thus a relationship between men's boots and production (Sonne [s.a.]:3-4,7), whereas "lack of kamiks connote the married female "sitting" (immobility) of both production and reproduction" (Sonne [s.a.]:10).

Headgear

Men's headgear was the most decorated part of their dress, and was especially suited to the expression of social differences. There was a great variety of caps and hoods in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. Some of these garments were made of white or brown leather; others were made from the white fur of newborn seals or fox fur, or from the skins and feathers of birds. At the end of the nineteenth century, when Holm and Thalbitzer became acquainted with the Ammassalimiit for the first time, these people had already begun to use some textiles for their headgear. Some of the leather caps were conical, and were probably made to be worn during periods of mourning (see also Gustav Holm Samlingen, 1985: 223). In summer the hunters usually wore caps in the kayaks, whereas in winter they wore the hoods of their coats rather than loose caps.

The caps worn by the Tunumiit had a rounded upper side, made out of leather or fur. A small band made of stiff material (sometimes filled with a wooden hoop) was sewn onto it. These caps were completed with a leather eye shade, sewn on. This was made of leather, and was decorated with small eye or sun motifs made out of skin mosaic. The

Figure 32. Cap with peak made out of eider-duck skin. (National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, RMV 1020-29.)



top of the cap was often decorated with a leather cross, contrasting with the leather of the cap. These types of cap “have probably come into existence in comparatively late times in imitation of the European caps, either by a few specimens reaching over to the east coast, or by the first women visiting the east coast [west coast] seeing them there” (Thalbitzer 1914:592).

The fox-fur caps as well as the fox tail hanging down at the back, may be of local origin. The shape of the upper side of the cap had much in common with the bird-skin cap, usually made from the skin of the eider duck’s back. Loose peaks were common in East Greenland. They were made of wood, and were decorated with ivory mountings. Peaks were also made from skin. The decorations of the skin-peaks were made of white skin on a dark brown skin background, shaped conform those of wood. (See Thalbitzer 1914: 595 Fig. 320; 597 Fig. 322 a.) A leather peak of this kind could easily be fastened onto a cap. This resulted in the different types of cap known from East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. The collection in the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, the Netherlands, includes a beautiful example of this cap with peak, made out of bird skin (see figure 32 in this volume).

Men’s headgear reflected social differences, as can be illustrated by a type of cap, with a Danish term referred to as *storfangerkasket* (big hunter’s cap). The *angakok* Maratse was wearing a cap of this kind when Holm arrived in Ammassalik.⁷²

Figure 33. Storfangerkasket. (Grønlands Landsmuseum og Arkiv, Nuuk, NKA 515.)

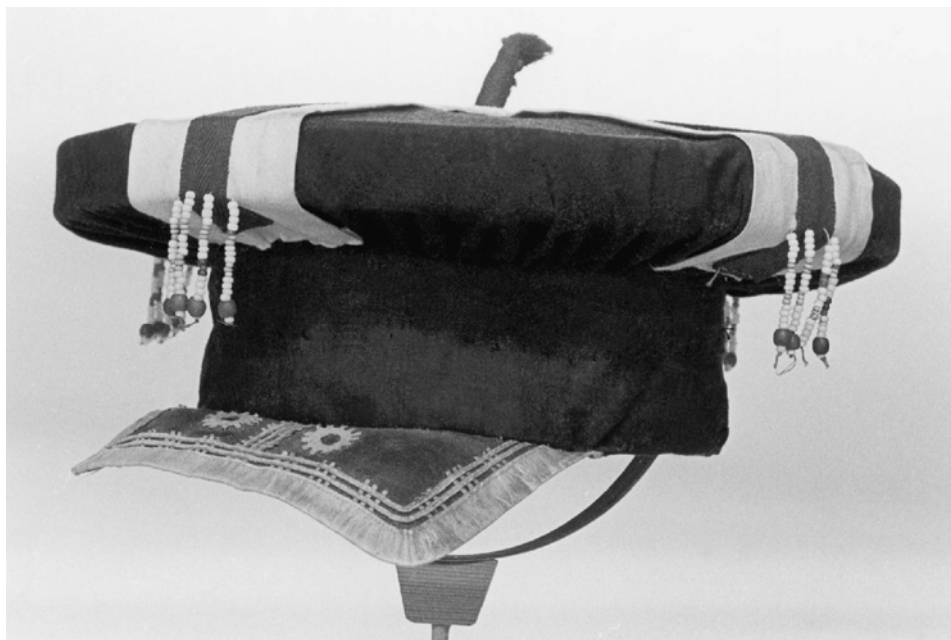
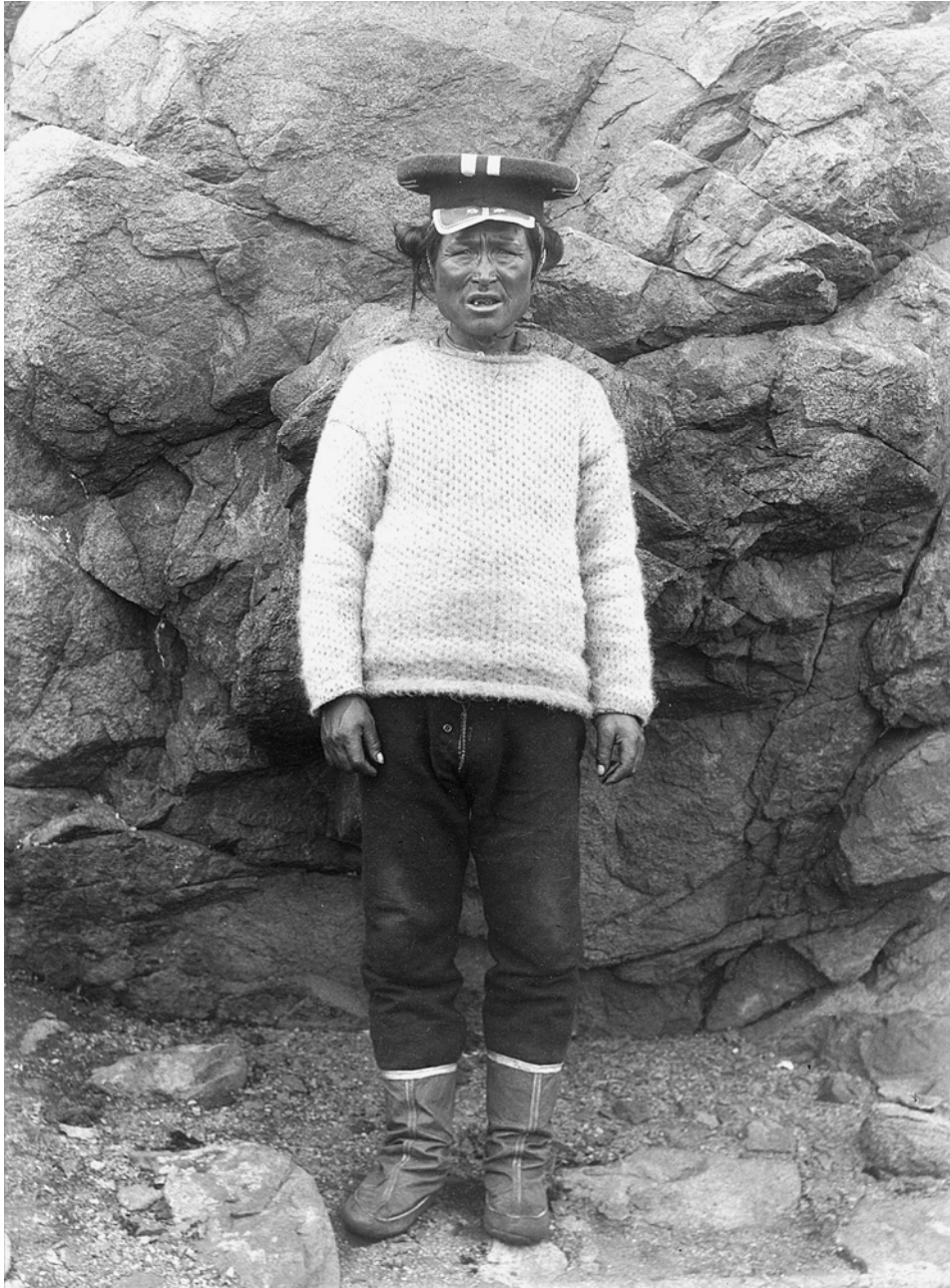


Figure 34. Angakkeq Maratsi wearing a storfangerkasket. (Photo: Krabbe, Ammassalik, 1904, Arctic Institute, Copenhagen, AI 50.692, No. 65.)

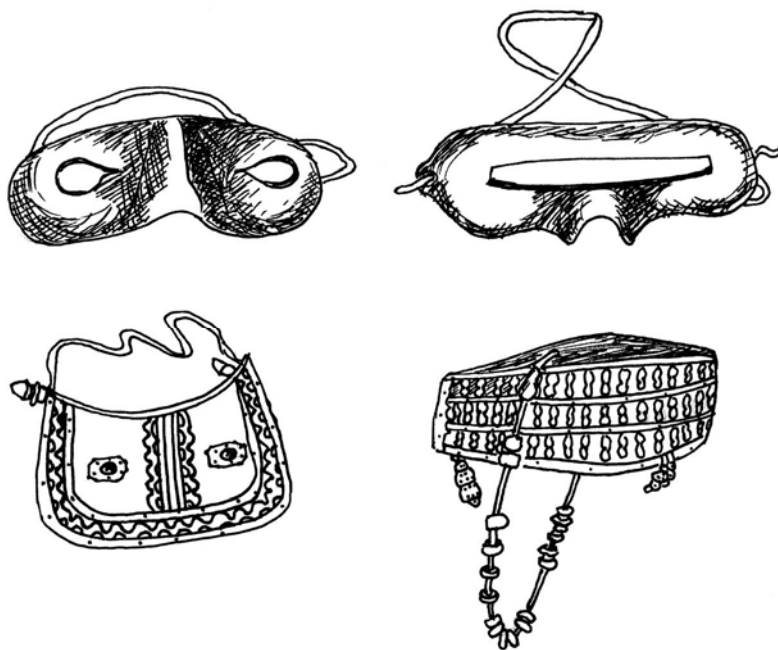


This cap clearly shows European influence since blue, white and red cloth as well as white and blue beads, were used in this cap (Holm 1914:31; Thalbitzer 1914:591-592; Kaalund 1979:137). In Holm's time, these European goods were extremely expensive, so this cap must have been a valuable and prestigious garment. The name *storfangerkasket* indicates that only successful, and therefore rich, hunters could afford this cap.

Eye shades were used in the kayak in summer, whereas snow goggles were used while hunting or travelling on the ice or on snow-covered land in winter. Snow goggles were made out of wood, but sealskin was occasionally used as well (Norn 1996:14). They were concave-convex shaped, fitting the nose and covering the eyes completely, leaving only a small crack or two small circles uncovered over the eyes.⁷³ Snow goggles and eye shades were used to protect the eyes against the sun, in order to prevent snow blindness. According to the technological study of snow goggles carried out by Norn (1996), snow goggles reduced the amount of light (ultraviolet and visible light) to between two and eight per cent. The hunter saw through a small slit, reducing his vision.⁷⁴ Snow goggles also protected part of the face from cold and draughts.

Two types of eye shade were found in East Greenland. First, there were large wooden eye shades, which were carved out of a block of wood, and consisted of a rounded, three-dimensional 'box' fitting the forehead. This was fastened at the back of the neck by a cord decorated with ivory beads. The second type of eye shade was made out of a wooden plate, shaped into a flat peak. This was somewhat rounded, to fit the forehead. It was fastened

Figure 35. Different types of snow goggles, *ittaat* (above), and eye shades, *inniikkilat* (below).



at the back of the head with a leather strap, which was sometimes made of sealskin (Holm, 1914:31; Thalbitzer 1914: 594-596). Eye shades were often richly decorated, with recurring motifs such as suns or eyes, lines and dots, lines in a geometrical pattern, alternating female and male figures, and animal figures such as seals and whales. These motifs may have had some religious meaning. Kaalund suggests that the circle motifs may have been connected with sun symbolism. Sunrise may have been connected with funeral rites. The moon may also have been represented, and was probably connected with fertility or procreation (Kaalund 1979:137). The decorations on the eye shades may have been connected with the hunting of sea mammals, and beautiful decorations were probably believed to contribute to success in hunting.⁷⁵ Eye shades were painted red with blood; this may have increased the power of the object.⁷⁶

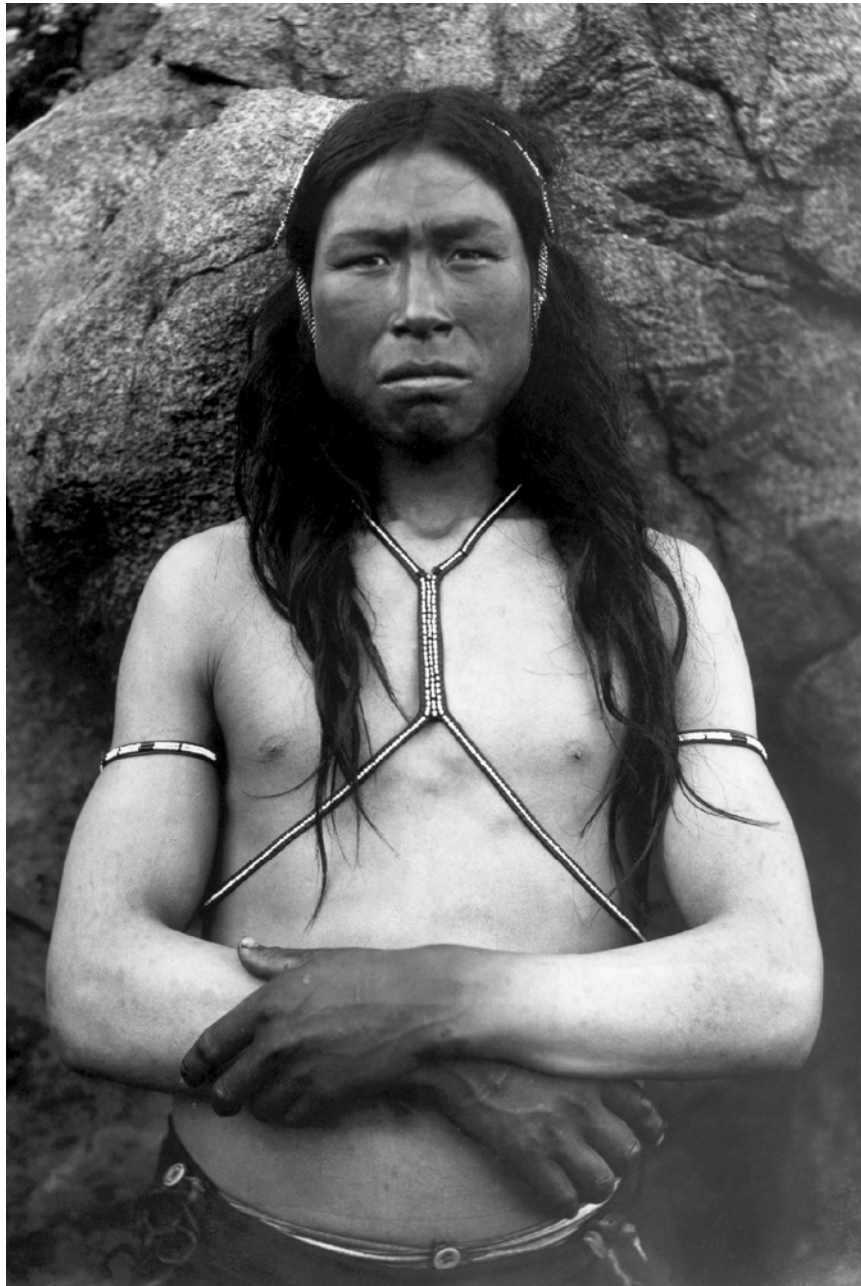
When Holm and Thalbitzer arrived at Ammassalik, men usually wore their hair long. In order to keep the hair tidy, they used a hair band made out of seal leather, decorated with beads. These beads consisted of small bones from seal or fox paws. The smallest beads consisted of the vertebrae of *ammassa* (caplins). Small bone parts out of cod's heads were also mentioned as beads. Later on, European glass beads in bright colours replaced these organic beads. They were very popular, but also very expensive.⁷⁷

Some of the men "have their hair cut short from their childhood, either on the forehead alone, or else round the whole head. This is done with knives made of shark's teeth, (...), superstition not allowing them to bring iron into contact with their hair" (Holm 1914:32). The men, who wore their hair short, had anoraks without flaps. Like their hair, their coats were cut straight. Moreover, the flippers of the seals these men caught, were cut off and thrown into the sea, "and the ears and tails of their dogs are cut off while they are puppies" (Holm 1914:32). A few strips of the flippers of the bearded seals these men caught, were cut out. "These were left hanging down on the skin." (Holm 1914:32.) (See also page 92.) According to Thalbitzer, cutting one's hair may have had 'religious' meaning. The mothers did this while the child was still young. Thalbitzer connects the hair fashion of some of the male children to the notion of *piaaqquasiat* (children from families in which many brothers and sisters have died, see page 17 this volume). Once their hair was cut, the men wore it in this manner for the rest of their lives (Thalbitzer 1914:600). Due to the influence of the Lutheran church, long hair rapidly disappeared among men: "Now that many of them have become baptized by the missionaries the men have cut their hair quite short in order to resemble the white men (a tragic sight) and all are undoubtedly now short-haired in Ammassalik." (Thalbitzer 1914:600-601.)

Men's ornaments and amulets

Indoors, the men usually wore only their under breeches, hair bands, breast ornaments or 'amulet straps': armlets and ankle bands to which amulets were attached. Outside the house, these garments and objects were covered by clothes.

In the 'Holm period' men used to wear amulet straps crosswise over the chest. They were made of seal leather, forming two hoops fitting the arms, and connected by a piece of



*Figure 36. An East Greenlander wearing an amulet strap, hair band and armbands.
(Photo: Krabbe, Ammassalik, 1906, Nationalmuseet, Etnografisk Samling,
Copenhagen, NMC. L. 120.)*

leather like a small pouch or pocket. These amulet straps were sometimes beautifully decorated with beads and small contrasting leather strips sewn on to them. Small amulets or magical ornaments were fastened on to the chest and back of these straps, in the amulet pockets. The amulets were often shaped like small dolls or miniature wooden human beings, sometimes representing a man and a woman.⁷⁸ "The female figure is worn on the chest, and the male on the back, while smaller pieces of wood are placed under the arms." (Holm 1914:85-86.) Small wooden fragments or animal materials (such as nails, claws or tooth), human materials such as nails, round stones, (parts of) objects used in daily life, or (parts of) clothing might serve as amulets. Clothing that a person had used as a child, especially, could be used as an amulet.⁷⁹ Amulets had power, or they received power, from magic spells. These protected both sides of the wearer's body against evil spirits penetrating the body, or against revenge wreaked by rivals or relatives of a person the amulet wearer had killed (Thalbitzer 1914:625-626,627). The amulet strap of the hunter and angakok Umeeriineq, for instance, contained two dolls made of twigs from a raven's nest, and the nail from the ring finger of a person murdered by Umeeriineq, and a shark louse. These protected the wearer against blood revenge. Neither a shaman nor the soul of Umeeriineq's victim could find him, just as you cannot see a raven's nest at a distance. If one of them nevertheless succeeded, the louse would scare him off while eating the amulet owner. The nail protected Umeeriineq's identity. A newborn child was named while its ring finger was held. Because the murderer had his victim's ring finger-nail, the soul of the deceased expected to have been returned to his own body. It crawled up into the nail, and the murderer escaped an attack of blood revenge (E. Rosing 1994:23-25).

According to Thalbitzer, armlets and ankle bands were intended as (holders of) amulets, in the same way as the amulet straps (Thalbitzer 1914:626-627).

Christian Rosing argues that armlets used by men on the upper arms had various meanings. They could prolong one's life or increase one's powers. A piece of polar-bear sinew was fastened to an upper arm strap to enable the wearer to become as strong and brave as a polar bear. This provided an excellent protection against enemies, but also gave the wearer the ability to cast a harpoon forcefully. Armlets worn on the upper arms procured good hunting. A piece of seal liver and a piece of seal lung were often fastened to these armlets. Seal liver gave good hunting, and seal lung gave protection against drowning in one's kayak, since a seal lung could not sink (Chr. Rosing 1946:69-70).

Other authors also stress the importance of protecting the body against dangerous external evil influences:

"Other lines were drawn on the body by means of bracelets, arm bands, and breast bands, which encircled the limbs and bodies of the Eskimo and Chukchi and to which beads and other ornaments were sometimes attached. These attachments were considered as amulets, at least among the Chukchi." (Chaussonnet 1988:223.)

Chaussonnet stresses that these decorations were situated at the joint marks (body joints) where the souls were located. (See page 39 this volume.)

Clothing for death, and mourning clothes

Touching a dead body was considered an extremely dangerous action, and was therefore performed in great haste. Those handling or tending a corpse were submitted to a long period of mourning. At the end of the nineteenth century East Greenlanders had to refrain from social interaction during the mourning period after the death of a relative. During this period many rules had to be observed. These rules lasted much longer for women than for men, and entailed more consequences. When parents lost a child, they would sit at the back of the house in deep grief. For three days women kept the hood of their *amaat* up. After three days they washed themselves. Women were not allowed to sew, twist sinew, or work with tools such as their women's knives for one month. After this period they cleaned their bodies, and could work on the platform again. However, for a long time they were still not allowed to communicate in an ordinary way, and they were kept in partial isolation. There were many rules pertaining to food habits (*atterneq*)⁸⁰. For women, many of the rules concerning social behaviour, communication, and food habits lasted a whole year, while for men they lasted only three days. After cleaning their bodies, men were allowed to hunt again, but they were not allowed to make their own preparations for the hunt, or to place their hunting equipment on the kayak. They could not kill the first seal they caught, or pull their kayaks out of the water after the hunt. For these activities they needed help of others. Only after their first catch did the prohibitions end completely (Chr. Rosing 1946:34,91-95).

Consequently, not many people were willing to take care of a corpse. According to Holm, in East Greenland corpses were still lying inside some houses where people had died of starvation.⁸¹

“When a death occurs, the corpse is arrayed in its best winter clothes. If it be a man, it is clothed in his kaiak frock; the hood is drawn over the head, and the frock is tied together between the legs. A rawhide thong is fastened round the legs, and the dead body is quite unceremoniously dragged out through the passage, or, in order to save trouble, through the window.” (Holm 1914:74.)⁸²

Throwing the body into the sea was considered a suitable interment for a suicide, but it was also appropriate if no relatives were available to provide a proper grave (Holm 1914:75). The dead would travel to land at the bottom of the sea, or in the sky. The land at the bottom of the sea, where they hunted sea mammals, was preferable, but the land of the dead in the sky, where land animals were hunted, was also a comfortable place (Hart Hansen et al 1985:69).

“If, as is doubtless always the case, one of the ancestors has perished in a kaiak, the dead man's body is cast into the sea or laid on the sea-shore at low water, in order that it may be swept away at high tide (...); if there is ice, it is lowered through a hole in the ice. (...) Occasionally, at least in former times, the bodies were also buried on the rocks and covered over with loose stones. In order to economise stones, the body was often doubled up, and several bodies were laid in the same grave. The dead man is always given his principal implements to take with him, not only when he is buried on the

rock, but also even when the body is thrown into the sea. The implements are deposited in a crevice of the rocks and are covered up with stones. If the body is thrown into the sea, only the *kaiak* is sunk there.” (Holm 1914:75.)

Winter clothing and a kayak dress are mentioned as proper clothing for a dead person, especially for men. Mummified corpses found in various graves in Greenland were frequently dressed completely as if for a journey (Hart Hansen et al 1985:69). It is not known whether the cause of death affected the way in which a dead person was dressed. Many hunters died in accidents while hunting or travelling. Furthermore, blood feuds were not uncommon in East Greenland. Women died in labour, and small children occasionally died while being nursed by their mothers, who fell asleep. (See also Robert Lamblin 1986; J. Rosing 1993; and Constandse-Westermann 1993 for the Canadian *Arviligjuarmiut*.) Obviously illness was also a significant cause of death.

How were the relatives of the deceased dressed during a mourning period, and during a funeral ceremony? There was a variety of mourning customs in East Greenland during the nineteenth century. Holm mentioned “howling, groaning and abstinence from a number of things; they say that they keep the mourning customs in order that the dead person may not be wrath” (Holm 1914:76). Immediately after a person had died, his or her relatives or housemates removed many objects from the house: private possessions, wall and platform skins, and clothes. These items were kept outside the house for three days.⁸³

The relatives of a person who was dying probably wore their old clothing, since Holm states that after death, “they cease wearing their old clothes, which they now cast off.” In any case, new garments were worn after the person had died. If they were not available, they had to be made “as speedily as possible” (Holm 1914:76). Washing oneself, and doing up one’s hair carefully, were also mentioned as a sign of mourning.

Holm witnessed the mourning of *Ukutiak*; he was staggering and groaning fearfully after his wife passed away: “He told me I must give him cloth for a bonnet, because when he had his anorak on, he must always have his head covered, and he might not look up at the sun before he caught a seal or another animal.” (Holm 1914:78.)

During the mourning period a bereaved person would keep his or her head covered by the anorak hood, or with a loose hood (Thalbitzer 1914:590).⁸⁴ Special mourning caps existed, made out of brown seal leather, and decorated with white leather appliqué picturing small human beings, animals, kayaks and umiaks (Kaalund 1979:139). This type of hood was conical in shape, and was relatively high to make room for the woman’s top-knot.⁸⁵ Covering one’s head was probably connected with the notion of *pujoq* (East Greenlandic Inuit).⁸⁶ Except for a woman’s mourning hood, and a man’s mourning cap, it is contrary to expectation that there would have been a specific type of coat to indicate widowhood. The special type of East Greenland women’s boots (with bracket-shaped incision) that gradually fell into disuse, may have been used more by elderly women, who were accustomed to wearing them from childhood on, and a social connotation ‘for elderly women’ or ‘widows’ may thus have developed.

Figure 37. Mourninghood of an East Greenlandic woman, dating from the end of the nineteenth century. (Grønlands Landsmuseum og Arkiv, Nuuk, NKA 1396.)



The relatives of a deceased person sometimes received presents. This was also a custom at birth, when the child received its first anorak (Holm 1914:63,79).

Directly after a person died, or after the mourning period was finished, the name of the deceased could no longer be mentioned. The deceased was referred to by kinship terms, but not by his or her name. When two individuals had the same name, the survivor would usually alter his name, or would be addressed by one of his other names. If the deceased was named after an animal or object, the name of the animal or object would no longer be used, and a new name was invented for it (Holm 1914:80; Robbe 1981,1994b). The name was revived and used again when a newborn child was named after a deceased person. Later on, this namesake would receive some of the possessions of the deceased, such as implements and garments that had not been destroyed or deposited with the corpse.

Festive costumes within a ritual context

In this section, the festivals or collective rituals that were celebrated in East Greenland will be examined, together with the extent to which they involved special clothing, varying from clothing worn during shaman's seances, to drum dances ending with *Uaaajeerneq* festivals.

Inuit in Canada and Greenland had very few collective rituals or festivals, and in East Greenland there were even fewer, as Kleivan and Sonne observe in their publication on the religions of the Inuit of Canada and Greenland.

"The occasion for the collective ritual was an epoch-making event in the life of the individual or the community, or recurrent events in the natural annual cycle. The former were the most frequent occasions, while calendar ceremonies were fewer. The Eskimos of Baffin Island had their Sedna cult in November and the North Labrador Eskimos a similar ceremony in the mid-winter. The Iglulik Eskimos and the East Greenlanders shared a tradition of collective mask rituals which could be held at various times of the year, but there are many indications to show they were obligatory during the shortest days of the year." (Kleivan and Sonne 1985:12.)

There were festivities at the winter solstice in East Greenland. A week later *innertaarneq*, the new fire, took place. The lamps were extinguished and re-lit. In the period of the solstice, drum dances might be held. During drum dances the people would wear their best winter clothing (K. Rasmussen 1924:339-341; J. Rosing 1963; R. Petersen, personal communication).

Clothing during drum dances

There was a second type of collective ritual in East Greenland: the 'drum dance' or 'song duels'. The song partners took turns in dancing and chanting songs of their own composition, to the rhythm of their drums. Many song duels were held at the *aasiviit* in summer, but they were also held in winter, to prevent a crisis between two rivals or two conflicting families (Kleivan and Sonne 1985:12).



Figure 38. Song duel with drums at Ammassalik. (Photo: Thalbitzer, 1906, Arctic Institute, Copenhagen, 7656.)

The players in the drum dance may have worn their best clothing, since it is new.⁸⁷ The male song partners were dressed in ordinary trousers, whereas the upper part of their bodies was naked. The spectators may have dressed in new clothing. For women the *amaatit*, heavily decorated with bead strings, must have been appropriate, and for men the *stor-fangerkasket* and headbands decorated with beads could be seen. At the turn of the century, the people began to dress up in newly acquired European clothes and materials.

Shaman's garments

Shamanic seances were the most frequent collective rituals held in East Greenland (Kleivan and Sonne 1985:12). Shamans, or *angakkit*, were intermediaries between the human world and the spiritual world. Their services were needed during crises in life such as illness, death, or a lack of game resulting in starvation. The shaman's seances were usually intense and impressive:

“The dramatic development of these seances had the same effect and catered for the same needs as television thrillers today. But they also increased “the knowledge of the world”, and corresponded to the familiar specimens of the narrative tradition, for the seances were the living and dramatic illustrations of this knowledge.” (Kleivan and Sonne 1985:12.)

In Greenland, shamans or *angakkit* did not wear special shaman's clothing as they did in Siberia.⁸⁸ During shamanic seances inside a house or tent in East Greenland, a shaman

wore only his inner breeches and amulet strap. His arms were bound tightly behind his back, and his legs were also often bound, while he sat on the ground or on the platform in a bent position. Sometimes an *angakkeq*⁸⁹ was covered by skins, or was seated behind the sealskin wall curtains. Sometimes the performing *angakkeq* sat on sealskins on the platform, but specific clothing is not mentioned (Holm 1914:90-91; see also J. Rosing 1993:37,52).

Dressing for Uaajeerneq

A special type of collective ritual was named *Uaajeerneq* in East Greenland. It was called *Mitaarneq* in West Greenland).⁹⁰ *Mitaartut* (plural) or *Mitaartoq* (singular) derived from the verb *mitaarpoq*, which in West Greenlandic means “to frolic, to jest, to be clownish in his ways, to pull faces, to grimace, to dress himself up (especially on Twelfth Night)”.⁹¹ Thalbitzer considered *Mitaarneq* as a form of ancestor worship, and suggested that *mitaarpoq* derived from *mitaat*, the term used on Kodiak Island for “human souls of the type which, after repeated transmigration on earth repeated five times, was admitted to the celestial lands (sun, moon, certain stars and the northern lights)” (I. Kleivan 1960:6). Kleivan considers this connection too weak to explain the meaning of *Mitaarneq* in West or East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. The term *Mitaarneq* was not used in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. In its place, the East Greenlanders celebrated a similar festival called *Uaajeerneq*. It probably derived from a more remote past.

“It was formerly the custom on the shortest day that a skin was taken into the house, prepared, and sewn into a dress for the eldest child, who was to wear it on that day. On this day a festival with entertainments, drum-dancing and other amusement was also held.” (Holm 1914:105.)

Jens Rosing reported a *Mitaarneq* game from East Greenland, in which the fall of a certain star was of special and crucial importance. It was thought to mean the end of the world, causing fear in people and inspiring them to dress in their best clothing. After some time, a boy reluctantly announced the rise of this star, after which the people became hilarious, shouting it was the best *Uaajeerneq* festival ever held (J. Rosing 1957:250).⁹²

Thalbitzer mentioned *Uaajeerneq* games, “in which the persons taking part are disguised with blackened faces” (Holm 1914:640). Masks were also mentioned within the context of these ‘games’.

Uaajeerneq was a festival or game, which was held during the wintertime. One to three people would dress up and act in a comic way. Often various sexual tributes were added to their dress. They would frighten the spectators, sometimes beating them or even wounding them. They would beat the drum, sing and dance, speak partly in a strange slang-like language, make sexually suggestive gestures, and make the audience laugh.

Excellent descriptions of the festivity have been provided by I. Kleivan (1960), Nelleman (1959), J. Rosing (1957), Nooter (1970), Gessain (1984) and recently by Kielsen (1996). In order to place the costumes in a cultural context, I will only provide a brief sketch of the sequences and backgrounds of *Uaajeerneq*.

The actors

Only a few accounts of the *Uaajeerneq* festival among the East Greenlanders at the end of the nineteenth century show vestiges of traditional religious festivals in this area. Holm and Thalbitzer present short descriptions, and Jens Rosing (1957) provided an excellent account of the celebrations at the beginning of the twentieth century. He described several actors in the 'game' in East Greenland, who were addressed by various names.

In his childhood, Jens Rosing witnessed a game in which a man was dressed up as an ugly woman *Nalikkatseq*, who every now and then made a barking sound while wearing a dog skin around the lower part of his body. Moreover, a dog's head dangled between the man's legs. He accompanied himself on a drum. "In this way, during my childhood I experienced 'Nalíkáttēq', the heavy-groined, one of the dances in the "Uaajeertut" category, which can be accurately rendered as a comical ballet, where legend and everyday life are presented." (J. Rosing 1957:242.) People related that *Nalikkatseq* was a woman, who people encountered during their way to the moon.⁹³ She could be very violent, and tried to stab people with her knife. She was called also "the one who eats lungs" (J. Rosing 1957:242).

Rosing mentioned another *uaajeerteq*, *Anaalakkaarneq* ("Slagskæmtet"), who stood in the middle of the house and sang. This figure did not necessarily have a mask. The actor would ask the audience their birth dates. When the date did not fit the time of year at which the *Anaalakkaarneq* was born, the drumstick hit the spectator. However, if the spectator had been born on the right time, he or she would receive an approving tap on the shoulder (J. Rosing 1957:244).

Miaartorniaq, 'one who is hoping for presents', also called *Amaakajeeq*, 'the laughable child carrier', was dressed like *Nalikkatseq*, but the dog's head was replaced by a small container hanging between the legs. At the back, a stuffed doll resembling a child was carried in the *amaat*. The laughable child carrier also had a larger container in which the gifts for 'the mother' were placed, whereas the presents for 'the child' were put into the little container (J. Rosing 1957: 244; I. Kleivan 1960:12-13).

The comical, dressed-up *Uniarpuua*, 'I drag my hunting game home', was a *uaajeerteq* caricaturing a hunter. The dancer dragged a bundle around on slippery ice, with a seal stuck in the breathing hole making the hunter fall down, and so on. This role required great acting skills from the performer, and was intended to make the audience laugh as much as possible (J. Rosing 1957:245).

According to Thalbitzer *Nakarateq*, 'the woman with the little hood', was also a dressed-up actor, performing during the games:

"A man with a blackened face and disguised as a woman goes outside and covers his hair with snow, whereafter he comes in and collects gifts from those present. He then begins performing a drum dance. A man pulls the drum out of his hand, he runs after him, beating him and the other spectators hard with his drumstick." (I. Kleivan 1960:12.)⁹⁴

Clothing and disguise during Uajaernej

Several actors playing different roles performed during *Uajaernej*, and their dress and disguise varied in accordance with their *Uajaernej* role. Men as well as women might take part.

“Each had his or her own favourite role, usually a humoristic caricature of everyday types. They performed either dressed up or naked, though the women wore short trousers. Some wore masks, others were blackened with soot, and sometimes the faces were distorted by being bound up with thongs and by small pegs inserted in the mouth.” (I. Kleivan 1960:12.)

According to Kaalund (1979:56), Møbjerg et al (s.a.:33-34) masks were used for several purposes. There were hand masks, used during magical ceremonies performed by shamans; dance masks used while the lamps were being extinguished; theatre or face masks for entertainment; *mitaarnej* masks with fertility aspects connected to their use; false noses made of wood or skin; ribbon with which the nose is bound up; and house masks, representing ancestors or house spirits. These types of ‘masks’ do not necessarily belong to different categories; the function and design of masks overlap, and there is not enough information on the detailed use and meaning of masks to place them in a proper context.

Wooden and leather masks are the best-documented parts of the disguise. Skin masks were sewn by women, whereas the wooden masks were carved by men. Masks were collected by the first foreigners to arrive in East Greenland, and are now part of several prominent museum collections. There were wooden masks with several holes along the sides. Such a mask was sewn into the hood of an *amaat*. Skin masks were also used to cover people’s faces inside the hoods of their anoraks. Amulets were sometimes placed behind the leather strips which shaped the nose, mouth and eyes (Geertzen 1987:37,89). According to Gessain the use of masks was connected with winter festivals and with *Uajaernej* games. Masks were not part of the shaman’s equipment, “although during *uåjertut*, they were apt to represent mythical beings or tutelaries of the *angakkoq* or shaman.” (Gessain 1984:84.)

“In the East Greenlandic language the word for mask is translated as *kiappa*, (*kiak*: face; *pa*: upon), but there is a similar word, *kiappâk* (*kiak*: face; *pâk*: big). This “big face” sometimes appeared at the window of the winter house, and frightened both children and adults through the translucent seal intestines. In my opinion the big face is that of a mythical being, a cephalopod also known among the Canadian Inuit for instance. This linguistic confusion was maintained by the Ammassalimiut to protect themselves from the intransigence of the first missionary, Rüttel.” (Gessain 1984:83.)

The *uajaertut* all expressed special characters or roles. Similarly, their dress would have to match the specific character involved. *Nalikkatseq*, *Anaalakkaarnej*, *Miaartorniaq* or *Amaakajeeq*, *Uniarpuua* and *Nakarateq* were the *uajaertut*, stemming from East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century or in the early twentieth century, who were mentioned in the literature. The man performing *Nalikkatseq* was disguised as a



Figure 39. Wooden mask with leather thong stemming from Ammassalik. Probably dating from the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century. (British Museum London, BML 1944 AM2.1.)

female. His face was deformed by a leather thong and by a peg in his mouth, and his face was blackened with soot and oil. The actor wore his hair in a topknot, and he wore a woman's coat with a low neckline. The belly was stuffed, maybe to imitate an advanced stage of pregnancy, or to indicate a voluminous stomach. A dog skin and the dog's head, with reddish-brown 'mask' and white spots above the eyes, hung on his belt. His legs were bare, and he was dressed in woman's outer boots, while the inner boots were lacking. *Nalikkatseq* played the drum, the dog's head would bark at the spectators, and the actor would hit the audience with the drumstick (J. Rosing 1957:241-244; Gessain 1984:87).

We do not know what *Anaalakkaarneq*'s outfit looked like. Jens Rosing did not describe this *uaajeerteq* in detail, and only mentioned the use of a mask. However, wearing a mask was not necessary (J. Rosing 1957:244).

Miaartorniaq (one who is hoping for presents) or *Amaakajeeq* (the laughable child carrier) was a man disguised as a woman, in a dress like that worn by *Nalikkatseq*. However, the dog's head was lacking, and in its place a little tube was fastened to his belt, for the gifts presented to the 'infant' in the actor's *amaat*. The *uaajeerteq* himself had a bigger tube in which to put his own presents (J. Rosing 1957:244-245). Holm mentioned a man disguised as a woman, with stuffed belly and a 'child' at the back resembling 'the laughable child carrier'. However, Holm did not mention the name of the *uaajeerteq*.

"When *Adlagdlak* played this game, he dressed up as a woman. He was padded to look like a pregnant woman, and the hood was stuffed to look as if it contained a baby. His hair was tied up in a topknot; his eye brows and cheeks were blackened with soot, and a thin seal thong was stretched under his nose and over both ears. Thus disguised he ran round and terrified the company". (Holm 1914:129.)

Uniarpua (I drag my hunting prey home)⁹⁵, a hunter's caricature, was dressed in comical hunting outfit, unfortunately not described in detail. He dragged a bundle after him, symbolizing a seal. He beat the drum, and was able to throw the drum away immediately, and change into a prey animal himself (J. Rosing 1957:245).

Nakarateq was an *uaajeerteq* - a character mentioned by Holm - and was probably dressed in a coat with a small hood, since his name was translated as 'the woman with the little hood' (Holm 1914:128; Thalbitzer 1914:309,663ff.). The description of this actor suggests that a man disguised as a woman, with blackened face, would go outside and cover his hair with snow. Then he would come into the house and collect gifts from those present. He would perform a drum dance, and beat the spectators with the drumstick (I. Kleivan 1960:12). The snow on his head would probably melt and make ugly stripes on his blackened face. This actor may have been the one Gessain mentioned as:

"The poor and widowed woman begging for food and love. A man wore a woman's mask, noticeable for its hair knot (...). She called for food, and was given food. Then she said she needed a man, and went round the assembly, laying her hand on the men's sexual organs. But if there was too little food, or the organ was too flaccid, she chased her victim and beat him with her drumstick." (Gessain 1984:87.)

All *uaajeertut* could include sexual aspects within their disguise or in their act. Masks could also be used. Other general aspects of the actors' dress and disguise were: binding the face with leather thongs; blackening the face with soot; men wearing female clothing; women wearing male garments; dress used in a reversed or improper way (for example, boots without socks); and combinations of dress elements that did not fit together. Various objects were used, such as a drum and drumstick, a knife, a container for presents, and probably bird wings as well.

Not much information is available on the dress worn by the audience. Thalbitzer mentioned the sewing of new clothes for some grand occasions. Then women decorated themselves with bead necklaces, and bead decoration in their hair (1914:566; see also page 106 this volume). Thus the spectators of an *Uaajeerneq* game may have been dressed in their best clothing. Yet Thalbitzer's descriptions of the *Uaajeerneq* games did not mention festive dress worn by the spectators.

Comparison with similar festivities among the Canadian Inuit

According to Inge Kleivan (1960), there were striking similarities between the East Greenlandic *Uaajeerneq* festivities, *Mitaarneq* in West Greenland, the Sedna festival or the sea-woman cult among Canadian Inuit groups, costume games in Labrador, and Asking Festivals in Alaska. Unfortunately, at the end of the nineteenth century, the religious dimension of *Uaajeerneq* in East Greenland was no longer acknowledged, and Holm was unable to gather information on this from the East Greenlanders.

In the Sedna festival described by Boas in "The Central Eskimo" and "Eskimo of Baffin Land and Hudson Bay", we find some intriguing disguised figures, notably the Qailertetang, who came to visit the tribe after Sedna was harpooned by the *angakkok*:

"She is represented by a man dressed in a woman's costume and wearing a mask made of seal-skin (...). She is believed to be a large woman of very heavy limbs, who comes to make good weather and to make the souls of the men calm like the sea". She carries harpoon-line, harpoon, and drag, because she is a seal-hunter, but she also carries a skin-scraper. She is dumb, but she sees everything the people do. She likes to see them enjoy themselves, and at her advent a festival is celebrated." (Boas 1904:140.)

Boas also describes a competition between people born in summer and those born in winter. If the latter won, there would be plenty of food, whereas a victory of the former would result in a bad winter. Later on, all the men and women were paired off for mating in the man's house. (Boas, 1904:141). Among the Nugumiut in Frobisher Bay, an autumn festival was held:

"Three masked persons, representing supernatural beings, make their appearance. Two of these are called *Ekko* and *Ekkotow* (...). They first walk around the huts, and then they are let into the dancing-house. In moving about, they jump violently. The *Ekko* carries a kayak-scraper in his hand, and pretends to strike the people with it. (...) The third of these beings is called "*Noonagekshown*" (...). He carries a spear in his hand and

a drag on his back, and is bound all over with ground-seal lashings. A great many objects are hanging down from his dress. His face is covered with dog-skin. He appears in the spring and in the autumn, and, like *Ekko*, brings health to the sick, and fair weather, and consequently plenty of food to the people. He also distributes the women among the men.” (Boas 1904:141-142.)

Gessain observed similar features with respect to an East Greenland *Uaajeerneq* game:

“Yet another scene was one in which a dancer, masked or made up with soot, sang and asked everyone in turn when they were born, in summer or in winter (*attiwa*, up, the sun is up; *qattiwa*, down, the sun is low). Thus, the population was divided into two groups, or moieties. Those who did not belong to the same group as the dancer were beaten with his stick. The games were usually followed by a meal of putrid seal (*qitsiaq*, which is considered to be a brain stimulant), and then a “game of lamps extinction” was played. In this sexual promiscuity (forbidden between first cousins) or ritual collective union, the fecundity of nature was insured for one year. (This promiscuity, unlike spouse exchange which can take place at any time of the year, occurred only in the winter.)” (Gessain 1984:88.)

At Akuliaq, on the north shore of the Hudson Strait, the *Ekko* did not speak, and indicated by means of gestures who had violated a taboo. The aim was to make the person confess.

“One of these Ekkos was male, the other female. The man wearing his clothing inside out. He wears his hood over his head. It is tied up by thongs wrapped around it to form a horn. (...) Straps pass from the shoulders down his sides and between his legs, and his long penis is tied up.” (Boas 1907:491.)

Among the Iglulingmiut two disguised figures, called *Tivajût*, also supervised the distribution of women. One wore female clothing that was too small, while the other dressed up in man’s clothes, equipped with a large penis and a dog whip. Both wore skin masks (I. Kleivan 1960:17).

Kleivan points out that, in the past, the actors were supposed to be supernatural beings, and she argues that the festivals were vestiges of different forms of Sedna or Sea Woman cults (I. Kleivan 1960:18,19,23,24). These Sedna festivals, like wife exchange or lamp extinguishing, were supposed to please Sedna, who would express her gratitude by releasing the animals for the hunt.

In East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century, Rüttel forbade all pagan elements (every drum, dance and mask) and they had to be thrown into the fire or the sea. “Every offender was forbidden to buy guns, ammunition, iron, and tobacco at the store. This explains why the hunters who continued carving masks presented them either as portraits or as harmless things ‘to frighten the children’.” (Gessain 1984:83.)

Conclusion

Today, the clothing of the East Greenlanders at the end of the nineteenth century is preserved in museums in Greenland and elsewhere in the world. It exerts a strong fascination on the public. Garments of that period were almost exclusively made out of animal furs and leather. The technical and aesthetic quality of sewing, design and composition, in form as well as colour, are striking. The East Greenlandic clothing of the late nineteenth century was embedded in the complex relationships between the natural environment, and the social and religious aspects of Inuit culture. These relationships will be examined in the conclusions.

At first glance, men's clothing seems to be much better adapted than women's clothing to the natural environment. This has a great deal to do with the fact that men spent much more time than women outside the community. Clothing for both males and females was adapted to the socioeconomic roles of men and women. Since women's activities, such as child care, cooking, scraping hides or sewing, were performed in or around the houses within the encampment, their clothing was adapted to this work, and to life at the campsite or indoors. Specific garments, such as the woman's coats, *tattulaq* and *amaarngut*, were suited to carrying children. The sleeves were tight and slightly bent forward, with the mid-seam in front. This was done in order to match the extra weight of the child on the woman's back, while preventing the seams from being damaged. The position of the sleeves was practical for women's work, such as scraping hides, gathering berries or mussels, and fishing. Male clothing was connected with the hunter's activities, and was therefore much more oriented towards specific Arctic environments and seasons. This resulted in a great variation in men's garments suited to summer or winter activities, or adapted to land or sea hunting. The lack of seams at the shoulders prevented their garments from being damaged while the hunter was throwing a harpoon. Adequate male clothing provided outdoor mobility, and was essential during hunting trips in kayaks or travelling on the ice. In winter, clothing such as polar-bear fur was preferred because of its warmth and insulating qualities. Gutskin and seal leather were the materials preferred for making summer boots and kayak anoraks, clothing that needed to be watertight during the spring, summer or autumn.

The garments worn by men and women expressed the sewing skills of the women who made the clothing, as well as the hunters' skills. A successful hunter would provide his family with plenty of food, and with a large number of animal furs and skins. His relatives were able to use the most beautiful skins for clothing, and could afford new clothing frequently. If the women were expert seamstresses they would be clothed in beautiful garments. Clear differences between the successful and the poor hunters' families could probably be seen in their clothing, but there were strong levelling mechanisms within East Greenlandic culture with respect to the distribution of meat and skins.

Clothing played an important role in socializing an individual into society, enabling people to become socialized members of their community, people with whom an exchange relationship could be created. A baby's reception of its first anorak was an important event in life, a rite of passage. The mother received presents on this occasion. First events

ensured the continuity of relationships and of the sequence of life. A boy's first catch, and a young woman's first menstruation, were also emphasised as important moments in life. Sometimes these first events were expressed in clothing, e.g., the reception of one's first *naatsit* after a first menstruation. First events could also be celebrated by an exchange of gifts, e.g., meat sharing when a boy came home with his first seal. First events in life were not only important because of the relational aspects involved, but also in terms of religious implications, taboos, and other prescriptions. Magical chants were sung on these occasions, and possibly some kind of conjuration took place.

New clothes might also be made to ensure continuity and repetition, as in the making of new clothes for the eldest child on the shortest day.

Clothing could be used as protection against harmful influences. A child had to be protected when many brothers or sisters, born previously, had died. These children would receive a special protective seal-fur cap from the parents. Amulets would be sewn onto the clothing as protection, or a special garment e.g., one's first dress during infancy, could serve as an amulet. A menstruating woman, or a woman who had suffered a miscarriage, would keep her head covered by the hood of her coat in order to protect herself and others, so that she would not become a threat to the community.

Clothing and skins had to be washed or removed from the house after a person died. Removing clothing and skins may be seen as a separation ritual, in a situation where the separation of the deceased from the community was at stake.

A close connection between clothing and the animal or spiritual world was of great importance at the end of the nineteenth century. There was an homology between skins and fur clothing. Thus the fur from the upper part of the polar-bear's body was used for coats, while the fur from the loins was used for trousers, and the leg furs were used for making boots. The animal's fur was used as a second skin for a human being. This homology between the animal skin and the fur clothing created a relationship between a person and the animal world. The animal skin, transformed into clothes, enables a person to survive in the Arctic climate. There was still a relationship between a human being, completely dressed in sealskin clothing, and the seal who gave its skin. The animal gave its life so that the human being could survive by its meat and fur. There was a relationship of kinship (or identity), as well as exchange, between man and animal, and it was a prerequisite for killing the animal.

Within Inuit society exchange relationships between individuals and family groups were, and still are, of great significance. Examples are the meat-sharing relationships, the naming of newborn children after their deceased relatives, and the exchange of presents at different social or religious events in life. There was also an exchange relationship between the hunter who provided his family with food and skins, and his wife, who prepared the food, skins and clothing. In the case of the relationship between the hunter and his prey, it was the latter that willingly surrendered itself to a hunter, who should be well dressed for the occasion. By being dressed properly and using high-quality hunting equipment, and by observing the relevant taboos, the hunter and his wife showed respect towards the game and towards the animals living outside the campsite. Processes of life and death,

including menstruation and childbearing, as well as cultural activities such as sewing, could directly affect the results of the hunt.

Exchange relationships existed not only between hunters and prey, but also between women and animals. Female and male clothing were complementary, stressing first events in life, whereby men's clothing was specialized more towards different environments, and women's clothing tended to express different phases in life. For men as well as women, clothing was important in expressing their relationship towards the spirits, the animal world and the continuity of life.

Several contrasts and features in the use of clothing deserve our attention: winter and summer clothing; dressing and undressing; getting dressed properly or using garments upside down; boys being dressed as girls or girls being dressed as boys; a wrong combination of garments; clothing as disguise, women dressing up as men and vice versa. These aspects were strongly represented in *Uaajeerneq* or *Mitaarneq* in West Greenland. In addition to wearing newly made clothing, this atypical use of clothing is the only clear example of festive dress or festival costumes at the end of the nineteenth century. Actors dressed in a comical way performed drum dancing and singing, beat the audience, made sexual gestures, wore masks, or blackened their faces with soot. *Uaajeerneq* was probably rooted in an ancient religious ceremony, but the religious connotations of the festival had already been lost by the end of the nineteenth century.

Clothing was used to modify and express the relationship between human beings and the spiritual world. Examples are the removal of clothing from the house after a birth or death; dressing children in an atypical way, where many of their brothers or sisters had died, in order to protect them against dangers, or dressing in an anorak turned back to front when making a *tupilaq*. Turning garments inside out or upside down, dressing in clothing proper to the opposite gender, blackening the face with soot, or using feathers or wings in one's dress, concealed the wearer's identity, and simultaneously established and expressed the relationships with the spirits.

Religious, relational, social, and regional aspects, as well as aspects of adaptation, were expressed in East Greenlandic clothing at the end of the nineteenth century. Clothing features were connected with various aspects of life. They provide insight into the ideas and values of East Greenlandic culture and society in the late nineteenth century.