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

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Citation

Buijs, C. C. M. (2004, May 26). *Furs and fabrics : transformations, clothing and identity in East Greenland*. Mededelingen van het Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde. CNWS Publications, Leiden. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/56410>

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

Date: 2004-05-26

The West Greenlandic and European impact, East Greenlandic clothing in the first half of the twentieth century

Western influences spread to the East Coast after a trading post and mission were established in Ammassalik in 1894. As trade between Danes and Greenlanders increased, new clothing materials and garments made from European textiles were imported into East Greenland, and were rapidly incorporated into the Greenlanders' clothing habits.

At the time of the Danish discovery of East Greenland in 1884, the population numbered about four hundred people. The newly established trading post and mission at Ammassalik attracted the East Greenland population, and the migration out of the area to the existing merchant post and mission station in South Greenland came to an end.¹ After the establishment of the trading post, migrants even returned to the Ammassalik area. The Danish provision of winter-food supplies, distributed to the indigenous population in periods of hunger and starvation, stimulated population growth. Between 1894 and 1924 the population of East Greenland doubled, increasing to about seven hundred. The Inuit continued their traditional life, based on hunting and gathering. Hunting yields decreased because of a shortage of game, and the area was thought to be overpopulated. In 1925 the vice-president inspektør for East Greenland, Ejnar Mikkelsen, established a new settlement, Scoresbysund (now Ittoqqortoormiit) farther north, to which seventy Tunumiit migrated from the Ammassalik district² (Lindow 1929: 47; Jenness 1964: 85-86). In 1938 some 150 people migrated south to Skjoldungen.

Medical care and education

The first Danish midwife came to Ammassalik in 1906. Ten years later, in 1916, the first Danish nurse to provide medical care in East Greenland, Sigrid Bugge, stayed for a year. There was no permanent medical post in Ammassalik between 1917 and 1933, when Signe Vest started a small medical station. She worked together with Sofie Jørgensen (see figure 42) who assisted her not only in her medical work, but also in learning the East Greenlandic language. Signe Vest had her own kayak and umiak and two dog sleds (with twelve dogs) for travelling to the small outposts in pursuit of her medical work, and in order to provide Greenlandic food to the hospital patients. Medicines such as penicillin and antibiotics were not yet available. She realized that nutritious indigenous food was of great importance to the patients at the nursing station. She created a comfortable and hospitable medical residence suited to the needs of the East Greenlanders. Newly acquired hygienic habits and medical aid contributed to lower rates of infant mortality. Death rates also dropped (Robert-Lamblin 1986:27).

In 1934 Sara Tønnesen (later Helms) arrived in Ammassalik as a private teacher for the children of Pastor Otto Rosing. In the winter of 1935 a severe influenza epidemic coming from Greenland's West Coast, swamped the area. By the spring of 1936 about ten per cent of the adult population had died, and the number of orphans rose to a hundred and thirty. Ejnar Mikkelsen began raising funds to provide for them on a private basis in Ammassalik. Sara Helms was offered a job in child care. She travelled along the East Coast, visiting the settlements and issuing a cash allowance to families that adopted orphans (Helms 1984:237; Thomsen 1992:280-283).³

In 1946 Peter (Per) Helms, Sara Helms' husband, was appointed as a doctor. A 'real' hospital was only achieved in 1957. Back injuries, sustained during a sledge tour two years earlier, had forced Signe Vest to give up her medical work in East Greenland. A modern well-equipped doctor's boat, named the 'Signe Vest' after her, provided the outposts with specialized medical care (Donner 1984:120; Helms 1984:236-241; Thomsen 1992:280-283).

Medical childcare had some influence on the clothing available for children. The Red Cross distributed European clothing for children, first in the Red Cross Hospital in Nuuk, and later also in the hospital and children's homes of the district capitals (Kampen 1957:41). Due to the influence of Christianization and medical education, traditional taboos and customs gradually disappeared between 1930 and 1960. European clothing for babies and children became also available in the local shops (see figure 92 next chapter). Trousers, underwear, socks, tights, and shirts made of linen, wool, or cotton, were rapidly introduced, and partly replaced the East Greenland child's traditional sealskin wardrobe. When the local trading posts provided new materials such as woollen knitting yarn and cloth, women began to learn knitting, and the sewing of textiles. In 1937 Jette Bang portrayed children wearing knitted vests and bonnets. For a long time children's winter clothing combined textile clothing with seal-fur garments, and as late as the 1970s this combination could still be seen.

There was at first only a limited correspondence between new ideas about hygiene and indigenous customs in matters of health and hygiene. According to tradition, fur garments should not be washed, but they could be scraped. Inuit sometimes washed parts of their body in water and urine, but not regularly. When textile garments for children and adults were introduced, the East Greenlanders were not familiar with the European manner of using and washing these cloth garments. Blankenstein, who travelled for the Dutch NRC (*Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*), wrote in his travel letters (15 October, 1933, NR VIII):

"In the past the Eskimo did not know our woven fabrics. The wearing of pelts directly on the body is in itself not a clothing fashion that aids personal cleanliness. But it had the advantage that they undressed down to the naked body indoors. There must therefore have been a certain automatic limit to pollution. Today however, the clothing is no longer removed from the body. It can happen that when someone buys a new jacket, he puts it on over the old one. I remember a lecture by William Thalbitzer after his stay in Angmagssalik in the first decade of this century. Angmagssalik was then still in the phase of Christianization and the beginning of "civilization". Regretting the consequences for hygiene, he told how you could estimate the time that an Eskimo had been civilized by the number of cotton jackets that he wore one on top of another, as in the case of the rings of a sawn-through tree trunk. Every year a new one appeared, but on top of the other. Even nowadays this can be seen on the west coast, not however to the extent that one can extract a reliable chronology from it." (Blankenstein 1933, translation from Dutch by C. Buijs.)

He stated that the white cloth undergarments often turned yellow or brownish due to the lack of washing (Blankenstein 1933).

The mission

After the Holm expedition had visited East Greenland, plans were elaborated in Denmark to establish a mission station in Ammassalik. In 1894, the Danish missionary Frederik Rüttel was appointed as the first clergyman in the area (Eistrup 1989:97). Rüttel and his wife's first indigenous neighbours were Mitsuarniannga and his extended family. Mitsuarniannga was one of the most famous *angakkit* in East Greenland. He built his winter house close to that of the Rüttels, in order to barter with the Europeans. Rüttel began to educate a few women and children, while he and his wife, Helga Westerberg, provided medical care for their Greenlandic neighbours and visitors. The first female 'students' educated at the church were members of Mitsuarniannga's family, for example his wife Piseerajik, and a girl named Punngijok, who had frostbite on both feet and needed medical care. Five years after his arrival in East Greenland, Rüttel baptized the first East Greenlanders, Piseerajik and her son Kaarali (Káråle) Andreassen⁴ and five other women and girls (Rüttel 1916).

Women were most affected by the taboos connected with menstruation, childbirth, and death. Conversion meant that they no longer had to observe these taboos. They benefited from medical care, and from the provisions given by the mission station in times of starvation (Eistrup 1989:115-116; Lidegaard 1993). Parents were eager to have their children baptized, so that they would be saved and have access to heaven (Osterman 1929a:278). Baptized women taught their husbands and relatives their interpretations of Christian rules, and persuaded them to be baptized as well.

In 1904, health problems compelled Rüttel⁵ to withdraw after ten years of service. The West Greenlandic catechist Christian Rosing succeeded him. Christianization in East Greenland received a strong impulse from Christian Rosing's appointment. In 1912, the powerful *angakkeq* Maratsi was baptized. This was a turning point for the mission. In the years that followed, many East Greenlanders were baptized. At the end of the 1920s, the last heathen East Greenlanders were baptized by Christian Rosing. His sons Peter and Otto Rosing continued their father's religious work until World War II (Lidegaard 1993: 156-163, 166ff).

In 1925, the administration turned over responsibility for education to the church. Since then, there has continued to be a strong link between church and education in Greenland (see Jenness 1967: 94; Thuesen 1988).

The mission and trading post attracted many of the families settling in Ammassalik. This resulted in a slow centralization of the East Greenlandic population.⁶

The influence of the mission on the East Greenlanders' clothing

The transition to Christianity was one of the major agents for change in East Greenland during the first decades of the twentieth century. Missionary activities, baptism, and the establishment of a Lutheran church in Ammassalik, changed the rituals and the garments used in ritual contexts. New moral ideas and Christian values were introduced. Danish ministers stimulated the wearing of cloth garments indoors, so that the Inuit would aban-



Figure 40. The celebration of Shrove Tuesday ('Pancake Day'), 12 February 1934. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF.94.) Children gather around a cask with food, which was smashed to pieces to allow the children to scramble for the sweets it contained.

don the custom of undressing inside the warm houses, a habit that was offensive in their eyes. The long women's boots combined with the short female outer trousers were a thorn in the sides of the Danish missionaries, since these left parts of the thighs bare. The missionaries stimulated the use of the longer women's boots and trousers that were part of the West Greenlandic dress, and under missionary influence the East Greenlanders rapidly adopted West Greenlandic dress (Buijs 1999:163). The new religion introduced Christian rituals on Sundays and Christian holidays.

Traditional rituals and taboos connected with birth and death, game, *Mitaarneq* and the solstice, were incorporated into a Christian context. Traditionally, ritual contexts were often expressed by the abnormal use of clothing, such as wearing a fur boot on the left foot and a leather boot on the right, or putting on garments back to front. In the past, new clothing could also mark special occasions, for example a solstice. During the colonization period, festive clothing was developed for special occasions, in order to stress the importance of such events.

Childbirth and baptism

'Life' events and rites of passage, such as childbirth, were often marked by the use of new clothing, or by new types of clothing, such as a small dress-like anorak at birth, or at death a kayak anorak for a man and winter garments for a woman.

Unfortunately, there is not much information available on the clothing of newborn children in the period from 1920 to 1950. Museum collections contain no infant clothing, and there are no descriptions of birth rituals in the 1930s comparable to the data registered by Gustav Holm approximately forty years earlier. The traditional custom of not dressing a child immediately after its birth may have been retained for some time. Christian baptism meant a new rite of passage. The newly baptized adults chose new Christian names, because they had heard this was the custom in West Greenland. They believed that a Christian name contained a special power to protect them. Frederik Rüttel, and later on Christian Rosing, chose Christian names that were easy to pronounce in the Greenlandic language (Lidegaard 1993:164). New-born children received Christian names as well. They continued to be named after deceased relatives, and an East Greenland child thus received several names besides its Christian name. Traditional naming habits, spiritual concepts, and social customs connected with the names, continued to play an important role.⁷

Christian Rosing noted that a child received its first amulets shortly after birth. These amulets were often sewn onto its clothes. A peculiar way of dressing, or garments such as children's caps, might function as amulets. Sealskin caps or abnormal dressing would protect children from evil spirits. Other types of amulets were also used. Boys received an amulet breast strap and upper armbands, on which amulets were fastened to protect the child or its father from *ilisiinneq* (black magic). The armbands provided a much stronger protection if they were not completely identical. The left armband should be made out of fur with the hair left on. The right one was to be made out of the inner part of a short-haired ringed seal's left paw, and decorated with beads. The child would wear a seal-fur boot on the left foot, whereas his right foot would be covered with a water-tight leather boot. The right leather boot and the right leather armband stimulated him



Figure 41. Julietta, sister of Lars (a boy who died), wearing a cap, to protect a child whose brothers and sisters had died, Kungmiut, Spring 1933. (Photo: Tinbergen, Museon, The Hague, no. 33.) This kind of cap was no longer in use, and this example was made specially for the Museon in The Hague (no. 48185).

Figure 42. Sofia Jørgensen with her son, on Sunday 15th July 1934. The infant was baptized, and wears a christening dress. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 196.)





Figure 43. Two small children, wearing non-gender specific clothing. Ammassalik, August, 1937. (Photo: Jette Bang, Arctic Institute Copenhagen, no. 3186.)

to become a good hunter and to catch abundant prey. When the boy's right arm, with which he will cast his harpoon, becomes weak and painful, illness and discomfort will slip out through the holes in the beads on his armband. The child's hair on the right side of its head could be cut, to get rid of illness (Chr. Rosing 1946:65-66, 73-74; E. Rosing 1994).

Special clothing or abnormal dress to protect from death children whose brothers and sisters had died (piaaqusiat), gradually disappeared as a result of Christianization. Christian names and the Christian God would provide adequate protection. Christian Rosing wrote: "God's word will provide them protection against all evil." (Chr. Rosing 1946:74.) New religious ideas provided the conditions for the abandonment of the old birth tradi-



Figure 44. Two small girls, Batsheba and Magdalene in Ammassalik, March 1933. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 112.) The small girls, three to five years of age, wear skirts peeping out from under their anoraks.

tions.⁸ Amulets were no longer supposed to be necessary. The introduction of Christianity brought a new type of infant's dress, the white christening dress at baptism (fig.42), marking a child's rite of passage.

Children's clothing according to gender

The mission did not influence the ordinary clothing for small children. The smallest children were not yet dressed according to sex. Often children of both sexes wore the same type of dress until they were approximately five years of age.

This 'non-gender specific clothing' was based more on the men's sealskin clothing, than on women's clothing. Most boys, as well as small girls, wore cotton and linen anoraks with hoods, seal-fur anoraks in winter, seal-fur trousers, and seal-leather boots.⁹ In winter, garments made of fur prevailed, while cloth garments were more effective in summer (see figure 87).



Figure 45. A daughter of Konrad, wearing an adult's tattulaq, probably borrowed from her mother, to take care of a younger brother or sister, Kuummiit, spring 1933. (Photo: Tinbergen, Museon, The Hague, no. 79.)

Girls dressed in check-patterned cloth dresses, or long dress-like anoraks made of cloth. At the beginning of the twentieth century, these garments indicated female gender. Femininity was also expressed in the festive clothing of girls at a very young age (see figure page 89).

During the first decades of the twentieth century the West Greenlandic type of dress began to be prevalent. Small children gradually began to be dressed in their very best clothing for the Sunday church service, and European dresses could also be seen on Christian holidays. When festive dress began to develop, the festive garments were still worn during daily life as well. Long skirts, worn on festive days and in daily life, were combined with short white and red sealskin boots edged with a broad black fur band at the top. Tights were often worn under the long dresses. This combination of garments was prevalent among older girls and young women. Dresses and skirts were the common women's fashion during the 1930s in Europe and America. Obviously, East Greenland female dress was influenced by world fashion (Laver 1996:232 ff).

Girls might wear a sealskin inner or outer *amaat* (*amaarngut* and *tattulaq*), but this was not used as frequently as in the previous century. An *amaat* was still a garment for adult women with children as it was in the century before, but in the 1930s the first cloth *amaatit* for small girls appeared.¹⁰ Cloth *amaatit* for adult women were invented in the same period.



Figure 46. Small girl in the female costume that developed into a festive dress for girls and women. East Greenland, August 1937. (Photo: Jette Bang, Arctic Institute Copenhagen, no. 3144.)

The bead decoration of this girl's *amaatit* gradually developed into a gender-specific element of female dress. Decorating the hood of a white cloth anorak (in essence a male clothing item) with bead strings hanging loose on the child's forehead, could in some way even change a male garment into a female one (see also fig. 67 page 125). The small seal-fur trousers belonging to this dress (now part of the national costume) conformed to the West Greenland type, decorated with red painted sealskin and skin embroidery *avittarneq* (*avittat*) in the middle. The East Greenland type of trousers had not yet completely disappeared¹¹. The East Greenlandic long boots for girls were apparently no longer used. They were replaced by coloured and decorated long boots, especially in white and red, indicating female gender. Short red and white boots, and decorated long boots, were worn

by girls and women. Small girls began to wear these decorated boots at the age of four or five years. These boots developed into festive garments. Girls also wore undecorated short brown leather and seal-fur boots for daily use, but these were seen less frequently.

Early in the twentieth century, most girls wore their hair short. They were dressed in cloth anoraks with hoods (not the older cloth 'female' anorak without a hood). Long cloth skirts and dresses were prevalent. Dresses were sometimes combined with short sealskin trousers, woollen tights, or occasionally long cloth trousers. Girls' boots changed from the East Greenlandic type of sealskin boot to the West Greenlandic type. In the 1930s European footwear for girls was not yet to be seen.¹² Moreover, European underwear was introduced.

Gradually, the man's festive costume developed out of the male dress. During the first decades of the twentieth century, this clothing was still seen in daily life. (See figure 47) Cloth anoraks and trousers and woollen jerseys replaced seal-fur garments. Knitted woollen socks, caps, and mittens were also introduced. The typical East Greenlandic sealskin boots were replaced by West Greenlandic boots.

From the end of the nineteenth century, the hair of male children was cut short. This hair fashion was connected to baptism; Greenlandic men and boys preferred to cut their hair short at baptism, in imitation of West Greenlanders and Danes, when they received European Christian names (see above). The custom of cutting boys' (and men's) the hair at baptism marked an important first event as a rite of passage. (See page 64 this volume.)

Traditional hair ornaments, for keeping long hair in place, only disappeared after they had become elaborately decorated between 1906 and 1917.¹³ The traditional chest ornaments (or amulet straps) worn by East Greenlandic boys and men, together with the armbands and anklets, disappeared during the first decades of the twentieth century. At the end of the nineteenth century young boys and adult males who had been baptized cut off the tails of their fur anoraks. In the nineteenth century, the *alatsik* was a tailed garment, with a slight tail at both front and back, although there were also straight coats. In the twentieth century tailed *alatsit* gradually fell out of use, and the materials for these coats changed. Even previously tailed garments were now cut straight, damaging the decoration of the edge at the back, formed by a seal's hind flippers.¹⁴ Now, boys' and men's *alatsit* were decorated with strips of red cloth along the bottom edge, along the hood, and on both sides of the seam at the top of the hood. A white dog-fur edging could be added along the hood, sleeves and bottom edge. Since the tradition of cutting the coats straight was related to Christianization in East Greenland, the coat tails may have had a religious meaning. Thus Christianity considerably affected the dress of boys and adult males.

Changes in the clothing adopted at adolescence

Sara Helms states that children and adolescents had few prospects in East Greenland:

"At the time there were only two opportunities for children. Boys could



Figure 47. Sometimes boys were dressed according to their gender at a very early age, as can be seen on this photograph of Maala Boassen with her son Tolua (Torvald), on Sunday 29th April 1934. The child is wearing the typical male dress, consisting of a white cloth anorak, black trousers, and dark painted sealskin boots with skin embroidery avittarneq (avittat) characteristic of male boots. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 137.)

become hunters and girls could become hunter's wives. Some children were able to become catechists.... A few might become *kivfat* [help in the household], and a few employees in the shop". (Helms in Thomsen 1992:285, translation from Danish by C Buijs.)

Activities related to hunting and fishing shaped life for almost all children growing up in East Greenland. In the past, rites of passage stressed first events. Boys and girls began to wear small sealskin inner breeches (*naatsit*) at puberty. Girls adopted the adult female top-knots when they reached sexual maturity. The transition to sexual maturity was less marked for boys than for girls. For boys, social and economic maturity was more important. Catching a first seal was still the most important event in a boy's young life, in the first half of the twentieth century. This event was celebrated by dividing the seal meat in a special manner. The first catch was not marked by any change in boys' clothing. European-type underwear gradually replaced the *naatsit*, and the female hair ribbons were no longer in use when European hair fashions spread among the younger generation. In the first decades of the twentieth century underwear, as well as hair fashion, lost their connection with rites of passage. Confirmation, or confession of faith, between thirteen and eighteen years of age, replaced older traditions of rites of passage at puberty. The Danish programme for unsupported children integrated traditional East Greenlandic rites of passage and new rituals of transition, such as the Lutheran confirmation.¹⁵ Sara Helms observes:

"(...) [orphaned] boys as far as possible lived with a good hunter. In this manner they learned to be hunters themselves, they received an education as hunters, and as soon as possible, they received fishing lines, and some of them (each) received a rifle. They were still ten years old when they got this [rifle] to shoot birds with. And when they were confirmed, they (each) received a Remington rifle. In the same way, girls received a festive costume. This was our programme." (Helms in Thomsen 1992:285, translation from Danish by C. Buijs.)

Marriages and the Lutheran church

When Christianity was introduced, marriages were still conducted without rituals, but a minister of the Church often consecrated these marriages later on. The minister would visit the small settlements where a church had not yet been established, in order to baptize newborn children and consecrate marriages, and possibly also to ensure the burial of the dead. On these visits a minister might consecrate several marriages. For the consecration of a marriage in church, the couple and their family members would dress in their very best clothing. Brides would wear bead-collar blouses, sealskin trousers (of West Greenland type), and long festive boots. Grooms dressed in white cloth anoraks, black trousers, and black sealskin boots, as can be seen on wedding photographs taken by Jacob van Zuylen in Ammassalik in 1933 and 1934.

When a minister visited small settlements, marriage ceremonies may have been more informal, and 'proper' church clothing or festive costumes were not obligatory.



Figure 48. Biliam and Sigrid Jonathansen after they married in the church of Ammassalik, on Whit Monday, 21st May 1934. (Photo: Van Zuylen no.AF 168.)

Ejnar Mikkelsen describes an improvised marriage ceremony witnessed when he was travelling with Sara Tønnesen (later Helms) and the minister Otto Rosing by dog sledge to Sermiligaaq in January 1938. When they arrived at the house of an East Greenlander, the minister was asked to consecrate the relationship between this man and his partner. The couple wanted to be married officially, so they would not find the heavenly gates closed when their time on earth came to an end.

“And therefore there was suddenly a festive mood at old Knud’s, who had lots of meat to fill all the cooking pots and lots of blubber for all the blubber lamps. They placed a box before the platform, and covered it with a tent cover. When I gave a pair of candles, which were placed in two empty bottles, it became a beautiful small altar. The minister had some objections to dressing up in his vestments in the hut with its low ceiling, but he did it, and the two people kneeling before the altar were at last declared to be true husband and wife. After the prayers and the singing of psalms, the wedding dinner was served: cooked seal meat in large quantities. Sara offered tea and sugar from our provisions, and the feast ended with the happy wedding guests nibbling all the ship-biscuits they could – fortunately we had lots of them on the sledges for safety’s sake.

It was altogether truly cheerful and festive. Lucas and Esekias proposed a dance, naturally not a drum dance, which they preferred most of all. After all, the minister was also in the hut, and then a drum dance might give offence. So they agreed to a real dance, which they had learned from the Danes. They cleared the space, and made a small empty place on the uneven stone floor, and they danced with bent knees to avoid hitting their heads against the ceiling. It was a delight to see and for Sara to take part in.”

(Mikkelsen 1960: 111-112, translation from the Danish by C. Buijs.)

The presence of a minister, preferably in ecclesiastical robes, an altar, rituals, guests, a great deal of food, singing and dancing, were required at the marriage. The Inuit would have found a drum dance suitable for such a happy occasion, but it was considered improper in the minister’s presence. Unfortunately Mikkelsen did not describe the clothing worn by the married couple and their guests.

The photographs taken by the Dutch researcher Jacob van Zuylen¹⁶ show that the newly accepted wedding dress for brides was a bead-collar blouse, sealskin trousers (both of West Greenlandic type), and sealskin boots, whereas grooms dressed in white cloth anoraks, black trousers, and decorated sealskin boots. This ‘wedding attire’ developed during the first decades of the twentieth century. Thuesen (at press) states that in the eighteenth century in West Greenland, at least the colours used in this type of male dress imitated those used in the current male fashion in Europe during that period.¹⁷ The white colour of the men’s anoraks evoked the white shirt worn by European males, part of the European wedding dress. In the 1930s, there was as yet no imitation in East Greenland of the white wedding dress worn by European brides.¹⁸ Women in East Greenland dressed in West Greenlandic costumes for their weddings. The East Greenlandic costumes gradually disappeared.¹⁹



Figure 49. Picture of a young East Greenlandic woman wearing her hair tied up in a top-knot, with several bead ornaments, such as a (probably) red cloth hair ribbon. Depicted by Kaarali Andreassen in 1916. (Museon, The Hague.) These cloth bands with strings of beads hanging loose on the women's foreheads were still used at the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁴ They were not only worn by older women, but also by young women and women with children. (See Chr. Rosing 1946:27.)

The West Greenlandic influence on East Greenlandic clothing raises various questions. Did East Greenlandic women also adopt the implicit social categories and social-status indicators stemming from West Greenland? In West Greenland the colours of hair ribbons tied round the topknots expressed differences in status; unmarried young women wore red ribbons, blue ones by married women, widows wore black ones, and unmarried mothers wore green ribbons. The Moravian mission in West Greenland introduced these distinctions in the eighteenth century (Kaalund 1979:147).²⁰ "The topknot and their colors corresponded to the ribbons of the bonnets worn by Moravian women in Germany." (Thuesen at press:4-5.) The collection of the Musée de L'Homme shows that blue hairbands were also worn.²¹ In 1908 Johan Petersen stated in his diary that "women wear different types of coloured hairband, according to whether they are unmarried, married or widows, just as on the west coast".²² Although East Greenlanders adopted the materials to make their hair ribbons, there was no rigid imitation of these colour indications of social status. In contrast to Johan Petersen his contemporary, Pastor Christian Rosing, did not mention hair ribbon of different colours. He only referred to red hair ribbons for women, decorated with white beads. Probably hair ribbons of other colours also existed, but were not widespread among the women of East Greenland. Both young and old women used red, probably even widows. Younger women were eager to adopt 'modern' European fashion styles. The traditional East Greenland topknot disappeared as women started to wear their long hair in braids, or adopted the modern European fashion of short hair.²³

Funerals, clothing for the dead, and mourning clothes

The ritual context of death and funerals changed after the Lutheran church ceremonies gradually replaced indigenous rituals. Mikkelsen (1960:153) related that a child, Nathalia, suffered from severe tuberculosis. Her family was about to leave by umiak for Skjoldungen for a year. Before the arrival of Christianity, this family group would have taken the mortally ill child with them to Skjoldungen. Now, they decided that: "Nathalia must stay here [in Ammassalik], for if she dies during the journey or at Skjoldungen, she cannot be buried by the minister in consecrated ground, but will be condemned to suffer hellish torment for all eternity!" (Mikkelsen 1960:153.) Nathalia died in Ammassalik shortly after and she was buried at the cemetery.

There is no information available on the clothing of the dead and on clothing worn during Lutheran funerals. A church service preceded a burial at the cemetery by a minister, and the family members in church would probably dress in their very best clothes.

At the end of the nineteenth century, traditional mourning customs still prevailed among the East Greenlanders. Mourning customs for women lasted much longer than those for men, and prescribed special kinds of behaviour and interaction (*paqingarneq*) as well as prohibitions on eating specific portions of food (*atterneq*). Clothing habits were part of the behavioural prohibitions. When a child or other relative died, a woman was expected to keep the hood of her *amaat* on for three days. When the mourning period ended, the woman dressed in new clothes and went down to the beach, reciting a magical chant. Later on, she would fetch water. Until the next day, the woman was not allowed to dress

up with beads or to use a red hair ribbon, because the colour red was taboo in the mourning period (Chr. Rosing 1946:92-93; see previous chapter).

During the first decades of the twentieth century, mourning customs gradually decreased under the influence of the Christian faith. The first Lutheran ministers and clergymen in East Greenland went to great lengths to comfort the East Greenlanders, thought to be afraid of death. According to the Lutherans, the Greenlanders suffered from anxiety and from the stringent taboos connected with death and mourning. The ministers intended to improve the lives and lifestyle of the Tunumiit, and to reduce the sorrow and pain of death, sometimes attributed to black magic, bloodshed, and revenge:

“We Christians must therefore be happy that we can find comfort, even in death, with the contemplation of the eternal life, that God gave us at baptism, and that is stronger than death, an eternal and blessed life, that reaches further than death itself.” (Chr. Rosing 1946:96, translation from Danish by C. Buijs.)

Gradually the Christian death rituals in church, and Christian burials in the cemetery, replaced the traditional East Greenlandic habits, also changing the clothing traditions involved. The influence of the church increased particularly during the 1930s, when all East Greenlanders had been baptized. During the church services preceding a burial, part of the Tunumiit present in church dressed in their very best clothes.

Clothing that served exclusively to express widowhood probably did not exist in East Greenland in the first half of the twentieth century. The long black sealskin boots for elderly women signified widowhood, but they were not used exclusively for this purpose. These long boots became part of the festive dress in the 1930s and were used on special occasions in church.

Black and dark-blue hair ribbons around the topknot also indicated widowhood. However, they were not used generally; not all widows wore black ribbons, and some of them preferred red ribbons.

Festive clothing worn on Sundays and Christian holidays?

From the very first years of the mission station's existence, the Danish and Greenlandic ministers and catechists held Sunday services in church. Some church attendants dressed in festive clothing, but others wore ordinary dress. Sometimes special clothing was used during Sunday church services and Christian holidays.²⁵ Ejnar Mikkelsen related:

“Frida, who cleaned the church [probably in 1937], lived in some sort of self-built place of worship with a small cross above the door. When Frida was appointed by the priesthood as a cleaning woman, she felt the need to represent the church and bring the Holy Word to the small neighbouring huts. She was not completely normal, this Frida, who thought that her job of serving the church and serving God obliged her to dress as nicely as possible when she came to the service. And one Sunday, Frida came in all her splendour: a nightgown, which Sara [Helms] had discarded, but Frida had begged to be given. Naturally, she received it, put it on over her ordinary clothes, which were not particularly elegant, and tied a strip of bunting



Figure 50. The West Greenlandic Catechist Salo Boassen and his East Greenlandic wife Maala, dressed beautifully on a Sunday, 14 May 1933. This type of male and female dress could also be seen on weekdays. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF. 44.)

around her body. Radiant with joy she went to church on the next Sunday; now she was so beautiful, envied by most of the Greenlandic women, and she was sure that everyone could see that she was one of the few chosen.” (Mikkelsen 1960:90-91, translation from Danish by C. Buijs.)

This quotation suggests that European types of dress were popular among East Greenlandic women, and were regarded as beautiful; even a nightgown was a coveted garment.

East Greenlanders began to attend church services, not only on Sundays, but also on Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas. Mikkelsen writes that at Easter the church in Ammassalik was chock-full with Greenlanders from the neighbourhood, as well as from remote areas (Mikkelsen 1960:138). These visitors did not come to Ammassalik only to celebrate Easter, but also to visit families and barter at the trading post.

Christmas was a very important holiday, and was celebrated in church and at home. The festivities began on Christmas Eve, or a few days earlier, with Christmas congratulations and compliments broadcast on the radio from family members living on Greenland’s West Coast.

“The entire night passed in listening and waiting. The coffee cups are silently filled again and many cigarettes are smoked while the stove roars and spreads its warmth” (Mikkelsen 1960:95, translation from Danish by C. Buijs.)

The mid-winter solstice was traditionally marked by rituals.²⁶ In the days prior to Christmas, East Greenlanders were busy with preparations for Christmas, and with Christmas shopping.

“We awaited anxiously for the arrival of the *Julemand* (Santa Claus) from his sledge journey of possibly hundreds of kilometers with presents for the whole family. (...) The Greenlanders know very well that ‘good people in Denmark’ send many nice things to the minister each year, who distributes them amongst the Greenlandic inhabitants – his own children also receive some of the abundant presents.” (Mikkelsen 1960:92,93, translation from Danish by C. Buijs)

Mikkelsen described a Christmas service in church, probably in 1937, in some detail:

“The East Greenlanders and Danes walk in the dark through the white snow to the church, bringing candles with them. The illuminated church is full of properly washed and beautifully adorned Greenlanders; all the men and boys in white anoraks, and almost all the women and girls in radiant, coloured attire, which can now be seen only on important holidays, but which was weekday clothing in the past. After the Christmas service, the church celebrates the feast of Christmas, with a [small] Christmas tree for the smallest children, another for the bigger ones, and a third Christmas tree for the grown-ups, but every time it is the same tree! They dance slowly around the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree will be remembered for a long time as a revelation of beauty.” (Mikkelsen 1960:96-97, translation from Danish by C. Buijs.)



Figure 51. The celebration of Christmas, 25 December 1933.
(Photo: Van Zuylen, NR. AF. 77.)

After this celebration, the Christmas presents sent to the ministers by the *Grønlandske Missionsselskab* (the Greenlandic Mission Society) from Denmark were distributed among the Greenlandic guests. Mikkelsen described how a present from Denmark was handed over by the minister to a fifteen-year-old East Greenlandic hunter-to-be. The present turned out to be “(...) a pair of ladies pyjamas, substantially worn, and not too well washed!” (Mikkelsen 1960:97.)²⁷

After the service, Christmas was celebrated in the Greenlandic homes. In the hospital and the old people’s home there was also a Christmas feast. Presents sent to Greenland by “some old ladies in Copenhagen”, were given to the sick and to the orphans. There was also a Christmas dinner for the patients, with traditional Danish food (rice and roasted pork [*fleskesteg*], and apple pie as a dessert) (Mikkelsen 1960:97).

The next morning, on Christmas day, some Greenlanders called to visit members of their family. They stopped at every house and sang Christmas carols. According to Mikkelsen this tradition was brought to Greenland from Denmark. The visitors were invited into the houses and received sweets, coffee and tobacco at the house of Mikkelsen and his wife. After the grown-ups, it was the children’s turn. The next day the Greenlanders (and Danes) paid more visits. This pattern was repeated on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day (Mikkelsen 1960:98-99).



Figure 52. New Christian winter feasts at the end of the year were introduced in the 1930s. A group of young East Greenlanders in festive costumes in the school at Ammassalik, 30 December 1933. The young chorists are having a small feast on the occasion of the dissolution of the choir at the end of the year.²⁸ (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF.78.)

The 'festive dress' for women, men, and children worn during church services and Christian Holy days in East Greenland in the first half of the twentieth century, consisted of the following garments. Women wore long white, red or blue-black boots, fitting in to beautifully decorated seal-fur trousers and cloth anoraks, some of these had bead collars. Older women, more often than younger women, tended to wear long red, black or violet boots. These were worn in daily life as well as at weddings and baptisms.

European dresses were combined with short white or red seal-leather boots. The European type of festive dress was probably more popular among younger women.

Men wore cotton or linen anoraks, made of patterned or bright plain cloth, combined with cloth trousers (white and light coloured at the turn of the century, and dark coloured during the 1930s and later) or seal-fur trousers. There were two types of decorated festive boots for men, made of black-painted sealskin. (See also fig. 48, 50 and 54 this chapter.)

Richly decorated indigenous garments and European types of dresses were also worn during baptism, wedding and funeral ceremonies in the church of Ammassalik, in the period 1930 to 1950. The use of this 'festive clothing' was not prescribed.

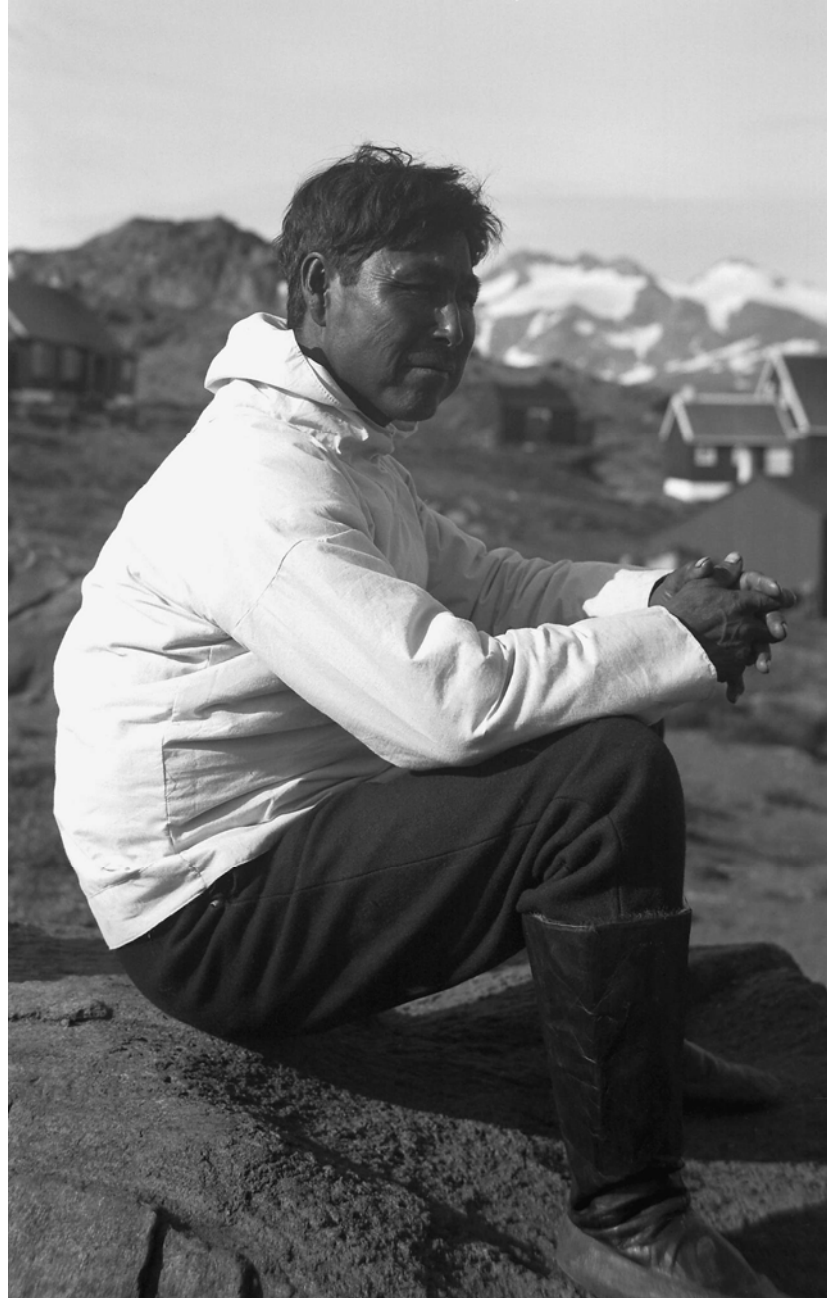


Figure 53. Nala (Nathan) Maratse in Ammassalik in 1934, wearing a white anorak, black trousers and black sealskin boots. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF.203.)

New religious clothing

The European mission introduced official religious dress for clergymen (ministers and catechists during the church service). The rules and rituals for clerical dress during services and on other religious occasions, as well as for the dress to be worn in 'secular' life, were prescribed in official church regulations and in the constitution (*Grundloven* of 1849 and 1953). Consecrated ministers (*palasi*) ought to dress in long, black episcopal robes (*palasip annoraarsuaq*) with white, accordion-pleated collars or clergyman's ruffs (*pupiussaaq*) during church services and official religious occasions. This dress was the personal property of the minister. During Offertory and Communion he could wear a chasuble (*palasip uliguua*) in different ceremonial colours on top of his long black robe. The chasuble was the property of the church. Some churches owned several chasubles, while others had none (Dalgaard 1982:13-23; H. Wilhelm and M. Petersen personal communication 2000).²⁹ The church in Ammassalik probably did not own a chasuble in the 1930s, owing to lack of funds.

In the nineteenth century, West Greenlanders educated as catechists at the seminary in Nuuk, spread out over Greenland to begin their religious work. In 1904 Christian Rosing became the first West Greenlandic minister to work among the East Greenlanders. West Greenlandic catechists dressed in black anoraks (*annoraaq qernertoq* or *ajerip annoraava*) with white split bands (*ajerip qilernerusaa*) around the neck.

Black anoraks were already being worn in West Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century. They were made of silk, and were worn by elderly men from the upper social stratum in West Greenland. According to Robert Petersen, they wore these black anoraks on special occasions such as Sunday, Christmas, birthdays and so on (personal communication 1999). Catechists were part of this social stratum, and also wore these black anoraks. The special use of white and black anoraks was initiated at the seminary and Teacher's Training College in Nuuk. The young catechists at the seminary could not afford the expensive black silk anoraks, and began wearing white anoraks instead in the 1920s (R. Petersen, personal communication 1995 and 1999). The white cotton anorak was rapidly adopted as part of the male festive costume. In the 1920s black anoraks were still generally in use among elderly men in West Greenland, while in the 1930s only a few elderly men still dressed in black anoraks on special occasions. Black anoraks disappeared almost completely in the 1940s, to be replaced by white anoraks. According to Mariane Petersen a religious movement, called "Sapaatisiorluarniaqatigiit" or "Movement to keep the Sunday holy", began in the 1930s among the head catechists. The director of the seminary, Nicolai Edinger Balle, was a supporter of this movement. Participants in the movement were expected to observe the celebration of Sunday; they should not hunt on Sundays, and they should dress in black anoraks" (M. Petersen, personal communication 2000).

Since that period, only black anoraks have been worn by catechists during church services in West Greenland (R. Petersen, personal communication 1995).

The East Greenlanders adopted black anoraks for catechists, as well as white anoraks for men as festive dress, probably in the 1920s and 1930s. The tradition of black anoraks for elderly men was not adopted in East Greenland. All East-Greenlandic catechists wore



Figure 54. Hendrik Lund and his family in Sydprøven in 1911. Lund was catechist in Ammassalik for nine years before he was appointed to Sydprøven, where he remained until 1918. He is wearing a black anorak, typical of Greenlandic catechists. The white split bands were only added during church services. (Photo: F.C.P Rüttel, Arctic Institute Copenhagen, AIC 31.)

black anoraks during church services, as they still do. The transition to Christianity gave the colour black an extra religious connotation in East Greenland, absent in the previous century. The black colour of the anoraks recalls the long black gown of the *palasi*, a Lutheran tradition stemming from Denmark. The black anorak combined the Lutheran religion with the native anorak, a hunting garment par excellence. Henceforth the colour black was related to religion in Greenland.

Dressing up for Uajaerneq or Mitaarneq

Christian Rosing described the celebration of *Uajaerneq* (*Mitaarneq* in the West Greenlandic language). He not only described different types of drum dancing and song duels in detail, but also the drum itself, and the spectators' laughter and delight. *Uajaerneq* or *Mitaarneq* was often performed with drumming and singing, but drum dancing and *Uajaerneq* are not synonymous. Christianization strongly influenced both drum dancing and *Uajaerneq*. Lutheran ministers opposed these heathen performances. Rosing compared the song texts used in the song duels with the texts and melodies used in Christian psalms:

“We must be grateful that we have melodious psalms that can make us glad,
and allow us to sing to our Father in Heaven about our feelings, our trou-

bles, or our loss, building on our faith, hope and love to Him. We think with joy of the good He has (...) accomplished for our guilt, He, who is the firm and steady foundation of our hope and our love, the foundation on which sincerity will grow. But although the heathens certainly feel that they must have help, they do not have a firm foundation on which to build. Although they sing something that reminds us of psalms, they do so [they sing] in a haphazard manner. Therefore, we have compassion with them.” (Chr. Rosing 1946:87-88, translated from Danish by C. Buijs.)

During the first decades of the twentieth century, *Uaajeerneq* went underground with the introduction of the Christian faith. During the 1930s there was no mention of *Uaajeerneq*, *Mitaarneq* or the donning of disguises, but it still existed in the second half of the twentieth century (J. Rosing 1957:241-244; Gessain 1984:87; I. Kleivan 1960:18-24; Nooter 1970). In the first half of the twentieth century there was an enormous increase in the production of masks, previously part of the *Uaajeerneq* disguise. Masks were collected by Thalbitzer and Kruise (between 1884 and 1912). During the 1930s, a relatively large number of European researchers from France and The Netherlands visited East Greenland. Many of them collected objects, in a professional or private capacity. Four researchers from the Musée de l’Homme collected 208 wooden and leather masks in the Ammassalik district. Tinbergen and Lohuizen (in 1932-1933) collected about thirty masks for the Museon in The Hague.³⁰

East Greenlanders at the trading post denied the importance of these masks. “The Ammassalimiut told Thalbitzer what the minister wanted to hear, at least in regard to masks: ‘there are no more masks and if any, they are toys to frighten the children with’.” (Gessain 1984:83.) Some masks, especially those without a leather thong, were said to represent certain persons and deceased relatives (*ibid* 84).³¹ Traditionally, dance masks were not preserved after use; they were simply thrown away. After a trading post was established in Ammassalik and, later on, after small stores were opened at various outposts, hunters found it expedient to barter them for commercial products. The interest of so many foreign researchers in the 1930s stimulated the male carvers to make wooden masks, and female carvers to make leather and skin masks for commercial purposes.



Figure 55. Wooden mask dating from the 1930s. The mask depicts a white man, possibly one of the Dutch expedition members. (Museon NR. 48234.)

There was a marked development in the shape and the design of the masks. Not only were tattoo lines incorporated into the masks; grotesque images and fantastic faces were also produced. Sometimes masks represent Greenlanders making faces. A mask may have a small wooden stick or seal's bone in its mouth, or its face may be smeared with soot, in which tattoo lines or wrinkles have been left white. There are no accounts on the use of wooden masks during *Uaajeerneq* or *Kunngit pingasit* feasts in the first decades of the twentieth century. In the 1960s only leather masks were used on this occasion. Wooden mask developed into *objets d'art*. In his youth, Jens Rosing (born in 1925) only once witnessed a *Uaajeerneq* séance in which wooden masks were worn. They were not used by the main character, whose face was bound with leather thongs to resemble a mask, but by two others sitting on the side bench with drums. One of them wore a blood-smeared mask, and the other one a mask smeared with oil and soot (Jens Rosing 1957:150, see also Kaalund 1979, and Geertzen 1987).

For the Tunumiit the production of these mask (and *tupilat*) meant the beginning of commercial art.

Economic developments and trade

At the beginning of the colonization period, the East Greenlandic economy was based on self-sufficient hunting, fishing and gathering activities. At first, the Danes prohibited navigation on the East Coast adjacent to the new colonial settlement, and "prohibited trade with the inhabitants, except in cases of emergency or with the prior permission of the Danish Government" (Jenness, 1967:61). The same restrictions that had applied to West Greenland about hundred years earlier were now applied to East Greenland. These regulations were intended to prevent East Greenlanders from becoming too dependent on Danish goods and services, from abandoning their hunting activities, and from becoming impoverished. This policy resulted in a monopoly by the *Kongelige Grønlandske Handel* (KGH)³² in Ammassalik, which the company also enjoyed in the rest of Greenland. The monopoly was advantageous to the Danes; payments to the Greenlanders for skins were spent in the KGH shops. Purchase and sales prices were regulated by the *generaltaksen* applicable to the whole of Greenland. At the local level, the trade manager (*handelsbestyrer*) had little freedom to deviate from the generally established prices.

The greatest concentration of population could be found in the villages in which Danish institutions had been established: at Tasiilaq-Itimiin near Ammassalik after the turn of the century, at Kulusuk after the 1920s, and at Kuummiit soon after that (Robert-Lamblin 1986:77-78). The winter settlement pattern changed from traditional large communal households to smaller households.³³

The winter dwellings were still constructed of turf and stone, with a tunnel entrance. (See figure 57, photograph of a winter house dating from the 1930s.) Traditionally, the house roofs were made of skins mounted on wooden frames, kept in place by large stones on top of the house. These skins were also used as umiak covers, and the roof of the house was therefore removed when migrations began. During the summer, the stone winter houses were roofless, and rain and wind cleansed the dwellings (Mikkelsen 1960:125; Robert-

Lamblin 1986:80). In the first decades of the twentieth century, the Greenlanders incorporated imported materials such as wood and glass in their house building. The wooden roof constructions were no longer removed in summer, and therefore wind, rain and fresh air no longer cleansed the houses. The stone houses were dark inside, their turf walls remained wet, the stone floor dirty, and the air inside became unhealthy. These circumstances were thought to stimulate the development of diseases, especially tuberculosis (Mikkelsen, 1960:125). Increasingly wood bought at the trading post was used to cover the walls of the winter houses. Now the private owned wooden house construction became impractical to move each winter to different winter places. These changes influenced the migration and settlement patterns in East Greenland. The private ownership of the wooden interiors stimulated the development of nuclear families (Petersen 2003:41). The first houses made entirely out of wood were built in the 1930s. They were difficult to heat with blubber lamps, and therefore stoves were used. Coal had to be bought at the KGH shop. As the Ammassalimiit became dependent on imported building materials and a cash economy, a semi-permanent settlement pattern developed (Robert-Lamblin 1986:80-81; Petersen 2003:41).

The pattern of summer migration persisted in the first half of the twentieth century.³⁴ The East Greenlanders used umiaks to travel with entire families to the fishing grounds.³⁵ They caught large quantities of *ammassaat* (capelin) and salmon as winter supplies (Mikkelsen 1960:147).

Various changes in hunting activities and techniques in the first half of the twentieth century affected the local economy. The different types of harpoon used for winter hunting on the ice, and for seal hunting in kayaks in summer, were gradually replaced by rifles, which became part of the regular hunting equipment.³⁶ Within ten years (between 1895 and 1905) the number of rifles increased from 15 to 115, and each hunter had at least one rifle. In 1915, the hunters registered numbered 110, and 142 rifles were counted (Mikkelsen 1934:72).

East Greenlandic hunters needed furs to obtain rifles, ammunition and other European goods at the trading post.³⁷ The introduction of rifles made it possible to shoot seals from a much greater distance, and the yields of the seal hunt increased.³⁸ Administrator Hedegaard introduced seal nets in the first decades of the twentieth century, but they only became widespread in the second half of the twentieth century.³⁹ Seal nets and rifles contributed to the increase of seal catches during the first decades of the twentieth century. In the early days of trade, Greenlanders received European goods in return for their seal-skins, fox skins and polar-bear skins. In the 1930s, hunters began to be paid in cash. This was the beginning of a cash economy in East Greenland. The Tunumiit sold skins to buy ammunition, rifles, tobacco, cloth, and other foreign goods (see also Robert-Lamblin 1986:101-103). The export of sealskins from East Greenland increased enormously.⁴⁰ Although the catches of seals increased, the number of seals caught per family and per individual hunter decreased in the first half of the twentieth century, as hunting for subsistence gave way to commercial hunting activities. The domestic use of sealskins decreased by sixty percent, as commercial hunting increased by six hundred percent.

Whereas at the beginning of the twentieth century about nineteen hundred large seals

(such as bearded seals and hooded seals) were caught, their number decreased to only c. nine hundred in the 1930s. Yet the number of large sealskins sold at the store increased from c. fifty to more than two hundred in that period (Eistrup 1989:107 based on Mikkelsen and Sveistrup 1944: table 25,86). Traditionally, tents and boats were covered with new sealskins every year; the skins of bearded seals or other large seals were often used. However, now the old skins of the kayaks, *umiaks* and tents were only repaired. Boots and tents were no longer provided with completely new sealskin covers, because the skins were simply too expensive for the East Greenlanders to use as kayak covers, *umiak* covers, and tents. The use of sealskins for clothing also declined. Sealskin tents were replaced by Danish cloth tents, or by homemade cloth tents (Mikkelsen 1960:123). There was a relative decline in *umiaks* ⁴¹ at the beginning of the twentieth century, leading to their complete disappearance in the second half of the twentieth century. The same trend can be seen in the use of tents covered with sealskins. Kayaks continued to be used, and almost every hunter had his own kayak up to the 1970s (Eistrup 1989:107-108).

The main reason for the decline in the number of large seals caught by East Greenlandic hunters can be found in the decreasing numbers of hooded seals and other large seals near the coast of East Greenland. This was the result of European, especially Norse, whaling along the East Coast. After three centuries of whaling in the Arctic, the whale population had been greatly reduced, and the crews of the whaling ships turned their attention to other species. Sealskins and fat became valuable by-products of Norse seal hunting on the international market.⁴² According to Eistrup (1989:109), the Norwegians hunted more than four million Greenland seals and hooded seals along the coasts of East Greenland between 1851-1926. European seal hunting therefore had a much greater impact than indigenous hunting on the seal population (see also Mikkelsen 1960:124). It left the Greenlanders without enough skins and seal meat for clothing and feeding themselves, resulting in poverty and health problems in the area (Mikkelsen 1934:94).⁴³

With the decrease in the amount of seal meat available for the hunters' families, the East Greenlanders needed supplementary food. From the first beginnings of trading stations in East Greenland, there were Danish food supplies available for the indigenous people in periods of starvation.⁴⁴ In the first years of colonization, East Greenlanders were not yet used to trading with the Europeans. It was permitted to barter tobacco, equipment, ammunition, wood, textiles and clothing at the trading post at Ammassalik (Eistrup 1989:103-104; Mikkelsen 1960). In 1898, the restriction written into the '*instruksen*' to the chief of the trading post (*handelsbestyrer*) was withdrawn. After that, the sale of small quantities of provisions to the East Greenlanders was permitted. After the drop in the number of large seals caught by the Tunumiit in the 1930s, meat supplies were no longer sufficient to feed all the families, and East Greenlanders began to buy more European food (Eistrup 1989:103,108-109).⁴⁵

In the early years of colonization, the barter in hunting surpluses was the most important, and almost the only additional source of income. Yet after ten years of colonization, wages from jobs at the trading post, the mission, or as servants to the Danes, also became important and constituted one third of the cash income earned by East Greenlanders (the selling of hunting products was still accounted for two-thirds of the cash income) (Eistrup 1989:109, table 3).

The major part of the East Greenlanders' income did not come from the barter in seal-skins, but from other hunting products, especially polar-bear skins. The prices of polar-bear skins were much higher than the sealskin prices.⁴⁶ However, the number of polar-bear skins delivered to the trading post was considerably fewer than the number of sealskins. Thus, seal hunting provided a stable and continuous source of income and food. After the colony Scoresbysund (Ittoqqortoormiit) was founded on the East Coast north of Ammassalik, the annual catch of polar bears in Ammassalik dropped considerably. Then the amount in cash earned by trading sealskins exceeded the income from polar-bear pelts. Traditionally, polar-bear pelts were used for making men's winter anoraks, trousers, boots and overshoes. They could also be used inside the houses to cover the platforms. The domestic use of polar-bear skins became increasingly limited because of the relatively high prices offered at the trading post. Polar-bear skins have always represented a considerable value, even up to the present day. When the yields from the skins of large seals dropped, the Danish authorities stimulated the trade in polar-bear furs as an alternative source of income. This had relatively little influence on the traditional East Greenlandic culture, because of the limited use of polar-bear skins for domestic consumption. Polar-bear hunting became an important supplementary money product for the local communities (Mikkelsen 1934:68; Eistrup 1989:111, 120-121).

Mikkelsen commented on the negative results of the colonization for the East Greenlanders in the 1930s:

"During my over-wintering in Angmagssalik it was clear to me, something that I could at first only imagine but still had no opportunity to observe, that the East Greenlanders had become very poor after the colonization, and that new resources and income opportunities must be found for the poor inhabitants, some better income than they have received out of the sales of sealskins and polar-bear skins at the colony's district shop until now." (Mikkelsen 1960:129, translation from Danish by C. Buijs.)

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Danish authorities tried to generate additional resources for the hunters and their families. First they set up cod-fishing projects. *Kolonibestyrer* Ejnar Mikkelsen initiated shark fishing among the East Greenlandic hunters' families. The shark livers could be sold at the trading post, but the hunters did not adopt shark fishing. It did not become successful among the East Greenlanders in Kungmiut (now Kuummiit) before a trading post was established. When goods became available in the local store, women began fishing for shark. Eventually old men joined them, and at last hunters also participated. Mikkelsen observed that the ready availability of goods, preferred by women, had the desired effect and was a much better stimulus than the previous regulations had been. The wish to obtain textiles, clothing, and European foodstuffs, was a strong stimulus effecting change in East Greenland (Mikkelsen 1960:129-134).⁴⁷

The impact of the new economy and trade on the East Greenlandic clothing
New trade products, such as colourful textiles and beads, had already been introduced by the end of the nineteenth century. Cloth was an early item of trade, and constituted part

of the cargo carried by the very first expeditions (e.g., *Holm's Konebåd Ekspedition* etc.) (Utne 1930:156,157; Erngaard 1973:140).⁴⁸ When the first trading station was established in Ammassalik in 1894, cloth began to be adopted into the East Greenlanders' wardrobe. Traditional garments previously made out of fur began to be made in cloth. This resulted in new cloth garments based on East Greenland's traditions, such as cotton *amaatit*. Simultaneously, traditional fur garments were made in a much more simple way than in the nineteenth century, and gradually disappeared from use. A mixture of cloth and fur garments could be seen everywhere.

The disappearance of East Greenlandic skin clothing

Sealskins and polar-bear furs were sold at the Danish trading station in order to obtain

Figure 56. Boy's anorak made out of seal fur, Ammassalik, dating from 1932-1933. The very short tail at the back is a remnant from the nineteenth-century tradition in which men's and boy's anoraks were substantially tailored. (Museon, The Hague, Tinbergen collection, no. 48183, photo: Christiaan Raab.)



Western goods. Sealskin was still used as an important material for men's, women's and children's clothing to keep its wearers warm in winter.

In the first half of the twentieth century, East Greenlandic boys wore cotton or linen anoraks in summer. In winter, they would wear woollen jerseys under their textile anoraks, as well as trousers made of cloth, and a West Greenlandic type of sealskin boot. Boys were dressed in seal-fur trousers and anoraks, but cloth anoraks were already used as an outside layer. Children's anoraks made of gut skin were still worn in the 1930s, as well as small trousers made of polar-bear fur or white dog fur.⁴⁹

Clothing and skins made from the skins of bearded seals and hooded seals came into use at the end of the winter. Because bearded seals were scarce, and the skins had already been used or sold, proper boot soles were no longer available in April and May, and the warmer weather made it unnecessary to make new fur garments.

"Therefore we saw in this period the most peculiar outfits: little lads with rudiments of kamiit on their bare legs and nothing else but a little anorak, or boys aged about ten years, who had to wear old long ornamental kamiit belonging originally to their mothers, with the toes sticking out."
(Tinbergen 1934:116, translation from Dutch by C. Buijs.)⁵⁰

Figure 57. People in front of a winter house, Tiniteqilaaq, 31 May 1934. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 158.) The left side of this house was inhabited by the Imakak family; while the Jonathansen family lived in the right part.

(From left to right: Justus Imakak [child], Liivi [Levi] Imakak and his sister Martha Imakak [probably], the boy is Kristian Jonathansen, above: Helga [Ililika] Jonathansen [second wife of Jonathan], behind her Ane Jonathansen. Ussias Umerineq, Boas Jonathansen, Ada Jonathansen and Jonathan Jonathansen.) Informants from Tiniteqilaaq explained that Ussias Umerineq was an orphan, and he is therefore badly clothed, without trousers and with discarded long woman's boots.





Figure 58. The East Greenlandic hunters Andreas, Kârle (Karl Andreassen) and Vitus, seal hunting at a breathing hole at Qinqorssuaq, in spring 1933. (Photo: Tinbergen, Museon, The Hague, no. 16.) In the nineteenth century, polar-bear fur trousers were used by the East Greenlandic hunters in winter, when hunting outside the villages.⁵¹

During the first half of the twentieth century, high prices were paid for polar-bear skins at the trading post. Polar-bear fur became too expensive to use as a material for a warm winter outfit, and garments made of polar-bear fur gradually disappeared out of the wardrobe worn by male adolescents.

Overshoes made of polar-bear fur (*tuliet*) were part of the hunting equipment used by the Tunumiit. These warm overshoes were used especially while hunting at the seal's breathing holes. The insulating fur prevented any noise from penetrating the ice to disturb the seals. Polar-bear fur overshoes remained in use until the mid-twentieth century.⁵²

Polar-bear fur coats were the first to disappear. Newly introduced European garments, especially woollen jerseys, and homemade cloth anoraks, were now combined with seal-fur coats, *alatsit*. Due to the moderate Arctic climate, it was possible to replace polar-bear fur clothing by less warm woollen jerseys and seal-fur garments.⁵³

During the 1930s the seal-fur outer coats, *alatsit*, were still used on hunting trips as an outer layer, hair side turned outwards. A combination of woollen jerseys and cloth anoraks as under-layers replaced the traditional seal-fur inner coats *arnarnгааq* (hair side facing inwards), and sometimes even the seal fur *alatsit* as the outside layer.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the East Greenland hunters began to wear cloth trousers made by their female relatives, in summer. These cloth *qartiit* slowly replaced the hunters' traditional seal fur outer trousers, *qarterpaat*.⁵⁴ *Qarterpaat* disappeared during the first decades of the twentieth century. The second type of warm seal-fur trousers, *qartiilat*, were worn less often during summer, but they remained in use during the wintertime up to the end of the twentieth century.



Figure 59. Andreas from Kuummiit travelling on skis to an ice-fishing area, March 1933. He is probably wearing a woollen anorak with the hood on, as top layer, seal-fur trousers, and seal-fur boots. (Photo: Tinbergen, *Museon*, The Hague, no. 36.)



Figure 60. East Greenlanders making a new sealskin cover for a kayak. The man is dressed in the style characteristic of the 1930s: a cloth anorak as top layer, long-legged seal-fur trousers, qartiilat, seal-leather boots, and woollen cap. In the vicinity of Ammassalik, May 1933. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 38.) These trousers were much longer than the older traditional trousers, qarterpaat. In winter they were combined with boots made of seal fur or seal leather.

In the past a hunter's watertight apparel included several garments to protect him from moisture. Examples of these were a watertight gut-skin coat (*ikkiaq*) and a watertight leather kayak anorak (*qajarsiit*) and the whaling suit *qarlippaasalik* (see figure 61 and 62). In the past, watertight gut-skin coats were used in kayaks or on land. Some of the older hunters of East Greenland still had gut-skin coats, which they could use when the weather changed. Researchers from the Netherlands and France collected some gut-skin anoraks in the 1930s in East Greenland.⁵⁵ Gut-skin frocks disappeared gradually during the first decades of the twentieth century. By that time, East Greenland men were also wearing cloth anoraks in their kayaks, garments that replaced traditional ones such as gut-skin frocks.

The white kayak anoraks, *qaaloqqut*, also known as 'half-jackets', disappeared from the material culture of the East Greenlanders at the beginning of the twentieth century. The white colour provided the hunter with a unique camouflage between the slowly drifting icebergs. During the 1930s, camouflage was provided by the bright, white, gray and, later



*Figure 61a and b.
Watertight gut-skin
coats (ikkiat). Some
coats were light yellow
in colour, while others
were very greasy
and dark from the
seal oil that kept the
garments watertight.
(Museon, The Hague,
photo: Christiaan
Raab, no. 48186 and
no. 57655.)*



Figure 62. Watertight kayak anorak (qajarsiit) made out of brown seal leather. (Museon, The Hague, Photo: Christiaan Raab, no. 48072.) The highly specialized brown watertight leather garments (qajarsiit) were still being worn in the 1930s. The techniques of impregnating garments with seal oil, combined with watertight stitching, were still common. Sealskin cords were used to pull the garment tight around the hunter's head, along the wrists, and along the kayak manhole, creating a complete unity between man and kayak. The decoration made of contrasting white sealskin lines along the seams, occasionally seen in the nineteenth century, disappeared. The undecorated qajarsiit remained in use until the second half of the twentieth century.

on light blue and light green cotton and linen of the cloth anoraks (*saqqisikkoorngut*) that replaced the typical East Greenland *qaaloqqut*. The kayak skirts (*agivilisat*), combined with half jackets, disappeared in their original form. They prevented water from entering the kayak and kept the hunter dry. These functions were taken over by a kayak mud flap, a seal-leather front, fastened along the kayak's manhole and standing up right round the hunter's waist. Loose kayak sleeves (*aarnngat*) also disappeared in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Watertight trousers (*maattamiilit*) made out of seal leather were still being worn during the 1930s.⁵⁶ The hunters used them in early winter and spring as an outer layer over their fur clothing, keeping them dry in wet snow and rain. The pattern of this type of trousers is based on the nineteenth-century seal-fur trousers, *qarterpaat*. A triangular piece at the upper side of the trousers at the back, formed by three seams sewn with watertight stitching, bears a striking resemblance to the seal-fur trousers.

The watertight sealskin whaling suit probably disappeared because the bigger type of whales diminished at the east coast at the end of the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, childless women wore outer coats with tight hoods, made of seal fur with the hair turned outwards. These garments were not used for carrying a child on the back. Women usually had children, and only a very small minority remained childless, since adoption was the preferred remedy to childlessness. Consequently, the garment with tight hood and back was used less frequently than the *amaatit* in the nineteenth century, and it disappeared rapidly in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁵⁷

In the nineteenth century, the normal dress for women with children was a seal-fur outer *tattulaq*, with the hair side turned outwards. This garment was still worn at the beginning of the twentieth century, albeit less frequently, but a few decades later it had disappeared altogether.⁵⁸ (See figure 63.)

Continuity in sealskin clothing

The woman's inner coat, *amaarnngut*, made out of seal fur with the hair side turned in, retained its child-carrying function in the first half of the twentieth century, although its use decreased.

Sealskin boots, *kamiit*, continued to be worn by men, women and children in East Greenland until the end of the twentieth century.⁵⁹ The use of *kamiit* was based on a strong Greenland clothing tradition of highly technical sewing. We find an extensive differentiation in women's boots in East Greenland in the 1930s, showing a development from traditional East Greenlandic boots, at the end of the nineteenth century, towards a greater diversity in boots, partly adopted from West Greenland. European footwear was still almost completely absent from the trading post in East Greenland during the first decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁰

East Greenlandic seamstresses were expert at sewing sealskin slippers, a good product to sell to Europeans visiting the East Coast. The Europeans used them indoors to keep their feet warm on the cold wooden floors of their East Greenlandic houses. Occasionally East Greenlanders used sealskin slippers as well. Greenlanders, both men and women, wore



Figure 63. Seal-fur women's outer coat (tattulaq). (Museon, The Hague, no. 48180.) The tattulat dating from the 1930s in the museum collections in Paris and The Hague, are less decorated than older ones. The white stripes at chest height are lacking, and the flaps on the lower part at the front and back have become much shorter. Sometimes the bulges at the shoulders, so typical of East Greenland, are also lacking. These garments were decorated with alternating white and brown edges around the hood, on the cuffs, and along the edge. This line decoration is much simpler in design than that of the tattulat from the nineteenth century. Only one white dog-fur line and one brown contrasting seal fur or seal-leather line have been added.



Figure 64. Kundine Ignatiussen (wife of Hans Ignatiussen) with an amarrngut. She is carrying her child on her back. Ammassalik, March 1934. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 104.)

slippers indoors, and these were not meant for use outside. (See figure 71.) It is likely that this type of garment was often made at the request of European researchers, or West Greenlandic officers working in East Greenland for a year or more. Only a few pairs can be found in museum collections in Paris and The Hague, in contrast to an abundance of sealskin boots of various types.⁶¹ New 'Greenlandic' garments were designed, for example sealskin slippers. Europeans working in Greenland often asked for them. These new Greenland garments were sometimes adopted by Inuit.

Figure 65. Woman breastfeeding her child, Ammassalik, August 1937. (Photo: Jette Bang, Arctic Institute Copenhagen, no. 2970.) Linen was especially used for children's clothes, but also cotton and wool. The infants wear little dresses reaching to their boots, occasionally worn under their anoraks.⁶²



Textile clothing

The Norwegian Captain Knudsen, visiting East Greenland as early as 1892, was already struck by the Greenlanders' eagerness to acquire European garments of all types. He wrote in his diary about the first East Greenlander to come on board his ship to barter with the sailors:

"One of them wore an Icelandic jumper. (...) Now they have obtained many clothes on board. (...) I bought a gut- skin anorak from him for a shirt. (...) They demand a shirt for any minor object." (Knudsen 1930:147, 148, translation from Norwegian by C. Buijs.)

His notes indicate which kinds of garments the East Greenlanders obtained (European woollen jerseys, shirts, and so on) from the European sailors, merchants and expedition members. To begin with, the first cloth garments were not necessarily used in the customary European way:

"Old clothes made the Eskimos very happy, since they complained that seal-skin chafed the skin and hurt. This was not inconceivable, but when they got a shirt, they pulled it on over the skin clothes." (Knudsen 1930:67-68, translation from Norwegian by C. Buijs.)

There is a remarkable discrepancy between the museum collections and the reality of dress and clothing habits in East Greenland in the first decades of the twentieth century. In the museum collections most clothes are made out of seal fur, seal leather, and gutskin. Costumes made with beads and cloth were also collected, but photographs from that period suggest an abundance of European cloth garments at the beginning of the twentieth century. Linen shirts, cloth trousers, homemade checked dresses, woollen tights and jumpers, and cloth anoraks, were part of the daily dress. In that period East Greenland society was changing rapidly, and traditionally made sealskin garments were being replaced by home-produced clothing made of fabrics. Western garments, such as woollen jerseys, were bought at the first trading post in Ammassalik, or obtained from European sailors and researchers, and were incorporated into the existing clothing habits. East Greenlanders were eager to barter old, traditional garments with foreigners collecting for the museums, rather than their newly obtained European cloth garments, which were worth more to them, and of no interest as museum items or souvenirs.

In their clothing the East Greenlanders imitated colonists from Denmark, as well as West Greenlanders cooperating with the Danes. East Greenland women began to sew their own versions of European fashions, such as homemade cloth dresses (see figures 57, 68 and 69). Indigenous values and semantics, such as the expression of gender differentiation, were incorporated into the new styles in clothing made from textiles. These styles had their own foreign social differentiation, such as dresses for the Danish ladies and working attire for KGH employees.

After a relatively short period, East Greenlanders adopted not only the cloth garments but also the related European clothing habits.

The Dutch biologist Niko Tinbergen was well aware of the inferiority of the new western materials in a harsh Arctic environment:

"But also because the importation of European clothing textiles did not



Figure 66. Woman breastfeeding her child, sitting next to a man working on a bladder float, Kangerdlugssuaq, August 1937. (Photo: Jette Bang, Arctic Institute Copenhagen, NR. 2915.)

make the Greenlanders any more fortunate or more prosperous. If we compare the original skin clothing with what people nowadays can obtain from the government, and are also eager to buy, then the comparison undoubtedly turns out in favour of the skins. Nevertheless, skins are being replaced everywhere by cotton, because everything that comes from Europe is interesting and desirable. In addition, skins yield money with which luxuries can be bought, and in that respect the influence of tobacco is disastrous. We know several hunters who are completely addicted to tobacco, and have sacrificed more to it than was good for them. In the winter that we spent there, one of the victims, a hunter from Kulusuk, froze to death, because he had no more than three thin cotton anoraqs on his bare body; a result of excessive tobacco consumption." (Tinbergen 1934:101, translation from Dutch by C. Buijs.)

Textiles in children's clothing

Jette Bang portrayed small children in East Greenland in 1937. Infants in their mothers' arms posed for the photographer. Outside the house we see them dressed in small cloth anoraks, frequently with their hoods on.

Woollen jumpers for infants were also used, but less frequently. Babies were barelegged inside the *amaat*, whereas their heads were covered by loose woollen knitted bonnets or by the hoods of cotton or seal-fur anoraks. Infants were sometimes partly naked inside the *amaat* until they were about one or two years old. Then they often had trousers made of seal fur, linen, and cotton or woollen cloth. Their boots were made of seal leather, with inner boots of soft fur to keep them warm and comfortable.

Small children continued to be dressed in small seal-fur trousers and sealskin boots *kamiit*. At an age of about five years old, children were dressed according to their gender. Small girls were photographed in cloth dresses combined with homemade check-patterned blouses and cloth anoraks.

Figure 67. White cloth anorak with bead strings on top of the hood, 1930-1940.
(Ammassalik Museum no. AM n4c 002-91.)

Linen and cotton anoraks and loose cloth caps were sometimes decorated with strings of coloured beads, with white as the basic colour, combined with blue and red beads, hanging loose on the child's forehead. For girls a whole cluster of fringes was sewn onto their hoods. This decoration indicated the child's female gender. Small boys might also have bead strings as a decoration on their hoods, but here, only a few hanging strings were added, (see also the cotton anoraks and head ornament worn by adult males at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth).⁶³



Textiles in women's clothing

The first (women's) skirts (*uiartit*) and dresses (*kjuuli*) were introduced by the first expeditions headed by Lieutenant Gustav Holm (1883-1885), Captain Knudsen (1892), Pastor Rüttel (1892) and Expedition leader Lieutenant Ryder (1892) and were imported to East Greenland at the turn of the century.

“A woman wandered around in a woollen dress, which was trademarked with the name “Wedel”. It stemmed from Ryder's expedition.” (Utne 1930:146, translation by C. Buijs.)

With the decrease in the use of the *amaatit* and skin clothing for women, and finally their disappearance, there was a marked increase in the wearing of textile skirts and especially dresses. At approximately the turn of the century, and in the early years of the twentieth century, long white linen and cotton dresses or skirts were adopted. Pastor Christian Rosing mentioned them in his book *Tunuamiut*:

“Nowadays, they [East Greenlandic women] almost all have underwear of linen, and many of them have their bare thighs covered with it, so that they remind us of the Danish women's skirts. They do not know how to put this

Figure 68. An East Greenlandic family builds a kayak, Ammassalik, May 1934. The women are sewing the kayak's cover, made out of seal leather. One woman is wearing a cloth amaas for carrying her child on her back. (Photo: Van Zuylen, nr. AF 167.) In one photograph made by Jette Bang in 1937, a woman can be seen carrying a child on her back in a long skirt-like amaas made of cotton or linen. This type of long amaas combined the functional aspects of an amaas with the practical advantages of cloth.



white linen into their trousers; it is awful to see, because the white linen becomes very dirty.” (Chr. Rosing 1946:27, translation from Danish by C. Buijs; see also figure 14, this volume.)⁶⁴

East Greenlandic women wore homemade dresses, often sewn out of check-patterned cloth, textile anoraks, woollen jerseys, seal-fur trousers, and sealskin boots. They began to sew cloth *amaatit* probably in the 1930s.

Adolescent girls and young women adopted a new type of dress at puberty or adulthood. They began to wear long skirts of a European type in daily life.

Figure 69. Two East Greenlandic women (left), the daughter (Eliza Maqe) and wife of the catechist Kârale or Karl Andreassen (middle), wearing the latest fashion in East Greenland in the 1930s. (Photo: Tinbergen, Museon, The Hague.) Since Kârale was the first East Greenlandic catechist to be educated at the seminary in West Greenland, his family had a high social and economic status within the small village of Kuummiit (they owned the only wooden house). There is a remarkable contrast in the clothing worn by the two East Greenlandic women and the Dutch woman, Lies Rutten, Tinbergen’s wife, who wears a very practical new fashion with long trousers, while her hair is cut short. (This Euro-American fashion developed out of sports clothing for women, but was not yet common in Europe.)



European types of dress became popular among women in the 1920s and after. A vast majority of the women portrayed on the photographs taken by Jette Bang and others, wore cotton or linen dresses.

Differences can be seen in the clothing of younger and older women. The latter wore anorak-like blouses (in a checked pattern), with a high collar and without a hood. Younger women can often be seen wearing checked blouses, but with flat, white collars of a European type, the blouse sometimes open in front and with buttons.

Figure 70. Short white outer boots (nakatalat or kamisat) for women. (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden, no. 5924-3.) These boots were combined with inner boots, which had dark edgings, extending the length of the short outer boots. Informants indicated that short white and red boots, made of depilated and bleached or red-painted sealskin, were worn exclusively by women. These boots were probably adopted from those worn by West Greenlanders at the beginning of the twentieth century. In this period European footwear for women was hardly available in East Greenland. Photographic collections show that the colour white was favoured by young women, and red (of a darker shade) was more frequently seen among elder women. The short boots did not necessarily belong to festive costumes, but could be combined with special garments such as 'best' anoraks and skirts and long dresses. Short boots were never combined with trousers, since they were not long enough to fit into the short sealskin trousers. Adult women in East Greenland hardly ever wore long trousers.⁶⁶



Women sewed part of these dresses themselves and some of them had the use of hand-driven sewing machines. Woollen, linen and cotton cloth was bought for sewing men's anoraks and trousers, and dresses and anorak-like blouses for women and children. Ready-made textile dresses were also bought at the trading post (Chr. Rosing 1946:26). Women often wore woollen jerseys (*tunuujut*) and blouses during the 1930s. Cloth aprons were also introduced, although they were less frequently worn at the beginning of the twentieth century, and cannot be considered as part of the wardrobe for the majority of women in East Greenland at that time.

On special occasions such as weddings or baptisms, women combined European-type skirts and dresses with short white (and red) seal-leather boots edged with a broad black fur band at the top. These boots and dresses could also be seen in daily life. European blouses were worn with a brightly white cotton or linen collar, often with a lace edging. Tights were often worn under the long dresses, and European underwear became popular.

The combination of dresses and skirts, European blouses, and white boots, was probably not merely the latest fashion at that time, in imitation of West Greenlanders and Europeans in the 1930s, but also indicated gender and adulthood.⁶⁵

In the 1930s, only a third of the women photographed, especially elderly women, still wore a topknot, owing to the spread of the new hair fashion, in which two braids were

Figure 71. East Greenlandic family eating while making a kayak. The young woman standing in front is Mala Boassen, the wife of a catechist. She is not only wearing beautiful modern European clothing, including woollen tights, but also East Greenlandic sealskin slippers. Ammassalik, May 1934. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 66.)



tied together in a broad bun at the back. During the first decades of the twentieth century, there was a change in women's hair styles in East Greenland. By then, at least half of the women wore their long hair in two braids tied in a loose broad bun on the neck. This hair style was adopted from European fashion. Traditional sealskin hair ribbons were still used for fastening the traditional topknot but they gradually disappeared in the middle of the twentieth century. The younger women often adopted the modern fashion earlier than older women. The traditional seal-leather hair ribbon, seal-leather head scarf and topknot lingered on among older women (see figure 80 this volume.)⁶⁷ Elderly women combined the typical East Greenlandic topknots⁶⁸ with Greenlandic cloth anoraks (without hoods), or with East Greenlandic amaaitit and long European-type skirts, or long dresses made of cotton or linen, with East Greenlandic and - more often - West Greenlandic sealskin boots. In this period amaaitit were also combined with long skirts or long dresses. Among young women a combination of long dresses or skirts and short white seal-leather boots with broad dark-coloured edgings were prevalent, but some older women also dressed in this combination.

A variety of women's garments was thus worn in the first half of the twentieth century: indigenous traditional garments mentioned in the previous chapter, garments adopted from West Greenland, ready-made European clothing bought in the local shop, or home-made textile garments made according to East Greenlandic, West Greenlandic or European examples. Different types of garment or combinations of garments were used by different age or status groups among women. A good deal was left to individual preference. Some of the adult women in East Greenland dressed in traditional indigenous garments, whereas others preferred 'modern' European textile clothing. Young women tended to wear more European types of clothing, such as dresses, blouses, cardigans, aprons and woollen jerseys.

As new forms of social differentiation developed within the East Greenland society, differences in clothing between older and younger women came more obvious. Greater choice and more combinations of different cultural clothing traditions became possible. The result was a mixture of garments, especially in women's clothing.

Textiles in men's clothing

Cloth anoraks were the garments most frequently seen on the photographs taken by Jette Bang, Niko Tinbergen, Jacob Van Zuylen and others during the 1930s. They were worn by almost all men and boys in East Greenland. The pattern of the cloth anoraks was based on the East Greenlandic sealskin anoraks, *alaatsit*.⁶⁹ These cloth anoraks became a common hunters' outfit, worn as an outer layer over woollen jerseys. Cloth anoraks acquired male connotations *par excellence*.

Several anoraks were worn on top of each other, providing more warmth than one would expect from such a thin garment. Blankenstein (1933:VIII) observed that Inuit added a new anorak on top of the others every year, without removing the old ones, thus creating a wind-tight layer. Christian Rosing observed the widespread use of cloth anoraks in the course of his religious work in East Greenland from 1904 to 1921.



Figure 72. Salo and Tobias with a dog sled out on the ice, hunting or ice fishing. They both wear cloth anoraks as an outer layer, probably on top of woolen jerseys. Near Ammassalik, April 1933. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 28.) East Greenlandic women made cloth anoraks by hand. In that period only a few women possessed a sewing machine. The patterns of cloth anoraks mostly resembled the seal-fur alatsit, with a loose hood sewn onto the main parts of the garment, but they also showed a certain degree of similarity to the watertight kayak-anorak (qajarsiit).



Figure 73. Two young hunters paddling in their kayaks, wearing white cloth kayak-anoraks as an outer layer. Cloth anoraks replaced gut-skin coats, although they were not watertight. Sermilik, August 1932. (Photo: Tinbergen, Museon, The Hague, no.6.)

“Nowadays, almost all of them wear Icelandic jerseys, over which they often wear anoraks, but in winter they still wear skin clothing.” (Chr. Rosing 1946:27, translation from Danish by C. Buijs.)

Christian Rosing referred to the use of woollen jerseys in (summer and) winter, often combined with cloth anoraks on top. East Greenlanders integrated woollen Icelandic jerseys into their own clothing traditions as part of their hunting apparel. An extra top layer, such as a seal-fur coat (*alatsit*), was added when weather conditions were very harsh. This combination of woollen jerseys and cloth anoraks over them became common from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, and lingered on until at least the 1960s. Hunters could often be seen setting off on a hunting trip wearing a light, gray or pale-blue anorak as a top layer. Anoraks made of patterned linen and cotton cloth can often be seen on photographs dating from the 1930s. Cloth trousers, combined with cloth anoraks, were also often seen on the photographs and were the daily attire worn by people in the villages of East Greenland at that time.

Changes in the headgear worn by East Greenlandic hunters were already taking place at the end of the nineteenth century, when the first European materials were incorporated into East Greenlandic clothing traditions. Sailors' caps were imitated in traditional materials. During the first decades of the twentieth century, traditional caps disappeared from daily life. In the 1930s, the East Greenlandic type of cap made of fox fur with a long tail and a leather peak, and caps made of the feathered skins of eider ducks, also with a leather peak, were still worn,⁷⁰ but European cloth caps with peaks gradually replaced them.⁷¹ Holm mentioned that a Greenlander asked him for cloth with which to make a bonnet for the mourning period after a relative died. He would have to cover his head, and he argued that a cloth bonnet was very practical (Holm 1914:78).

European caps can frequently be seen on photographs by Jette Bang and others dating from the 1930s. These peaked caps were often worn while kayaking. They were combined with white or light-coloured cloth anoraks, or brown seal-leather kayak anoraks.

The wearing of European caps may have replaced older means of social differentiation. Since Scotch bonnets, sailor caps, and other European garments were expensive and valuable clothing items, successful hunters - and especially Greenlanders working for the Danes - had easier access than other people to European clothing. Thuesen, writing about West Greenland clothing of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, refers to the costs of European clothing:

“As a merchant, Dalager, knows his customers and their finances well, and points out that the new foreign clothes were not within the reach of poor people, who had to dress in dog skin or bird skin clothes, whereas only the more fortunate favored foreign clothes or cloth, jersey and linen.” (Dalager in Thuesen at press: page 3.)

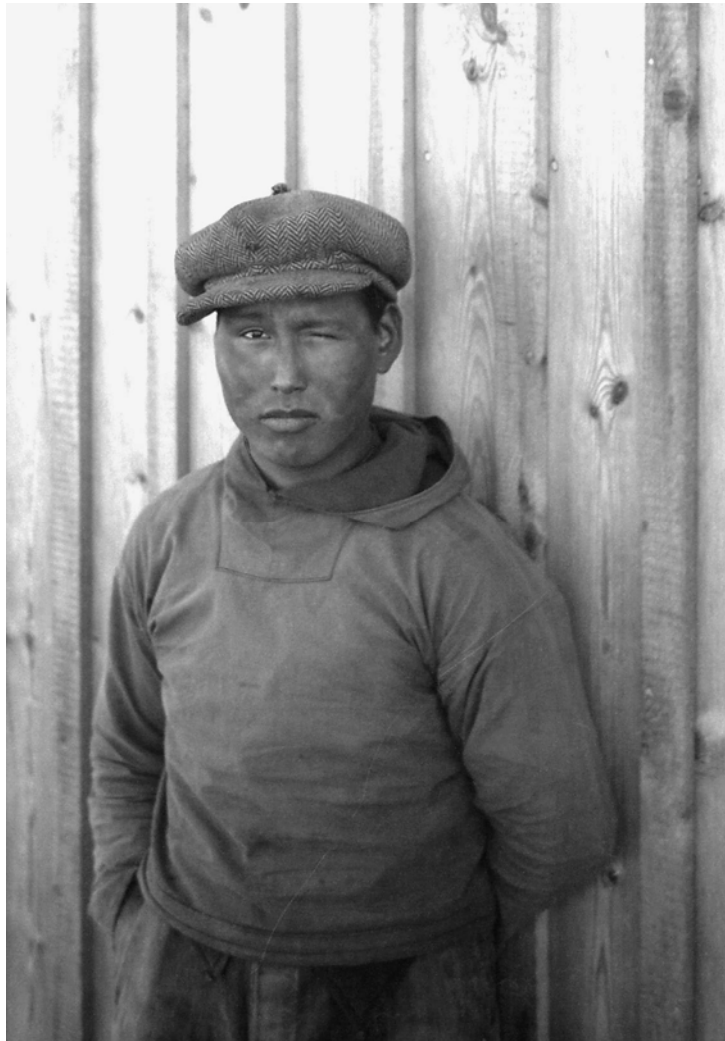


Figure 74. Thomas Jørgensen (K.G.H. formand) wearing a cloth Scotch bonnet, a cloth anorak as an outer layer, and a pair of European type of cloth trousers. Ammassalik, 19 May 1933. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 49.)

Men's footwear remained unchanged from the Greenlandic style, since European boots and shoes were not yet available in local shops. East Greenlanders continued to wear watertight sealskin boots, *kamiit maattamiilit*, and seal-fur boots, *kamiit meqqilit*, in winter. European researchers, traders and ministers working in East Greenland often bought *kamiit* for their own use.

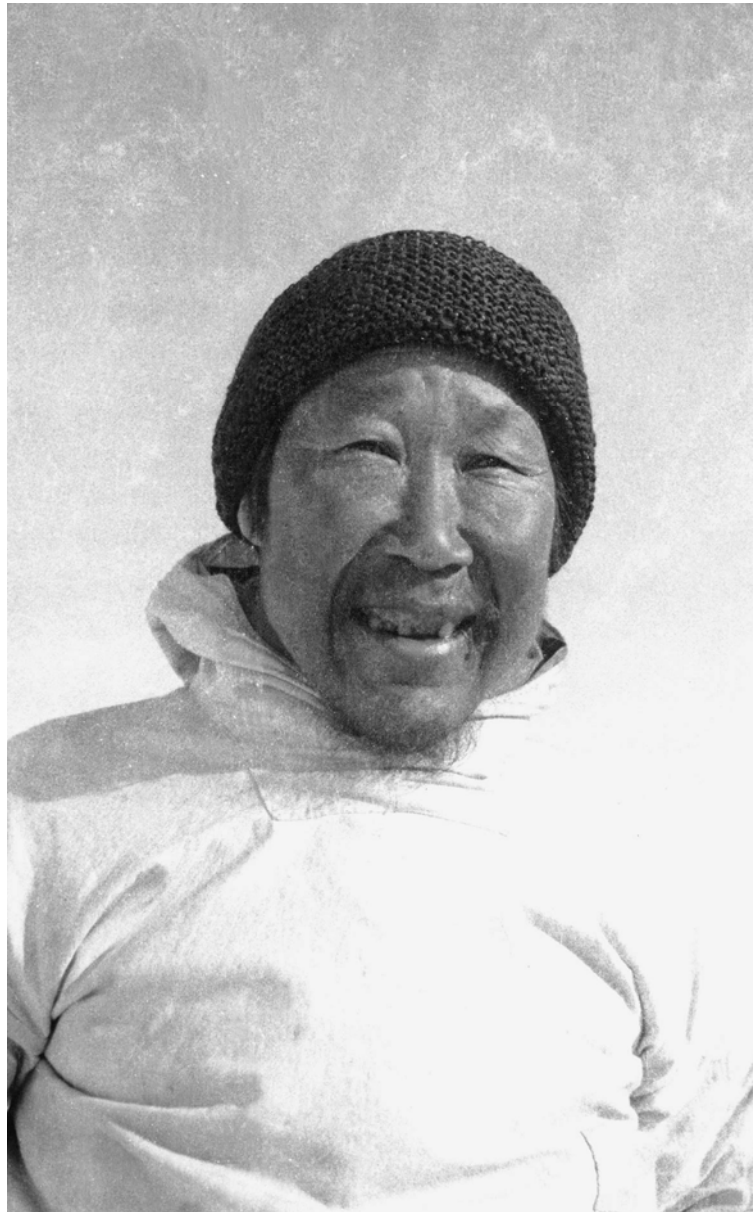


Figure 75. Kora, an East Greenland hunter in a settlement between Kuummiit (Kungmiut) and Kulusuk, wearing a knitted cap in the spring of 1933. (Photo: Tinbergen, Museon, The Hague. no. 34.) Knitted woollen caps came into use during the first decades of the twentieth century, and were frequently seen during the 1930s. These knitted caps were used in winter.



Figure 76. Pair of overboots dating from the 1930s. The upper part is made of seal fur, whereas dog fur was used for the lower part. (National Museum of Ethnology Leiden, no. 5924-4.) These overboots without soles were probably made for the Dutch biologist Tinbergen in 1932-1933. They are atypical in form and use. For East Greenlandic hunters, insulation of the soles is very important in order to prevent their feet from becoming frostbitten. Probably the boots were used as overboots in combination with Navy boots with crepe soles and canvas boot-legs.⁷²

Beads from Europe

Broad hooded women's coats made of seal fur, *amaarngut*, continued to be worn in the first half of the twentieth century. Although traditional decorations were still used, decorations made of European beads predominated. Bead strings were attached to the chest and shoulders. Bead decorations were applied to the edges of the coats by sewing beads on to a small strip of seal leather, or onto a small red cloth edging, as can be seen in an *amaarngut* in the Musée de L'Homme. More extensive bead decorations at the lower edges were composed of bead strings measuring about ten centimetres long, in alternating colours sewn on to the coat's edges.⁷³ Such an *amaarngut* must have been a very expensive and valuable garment. These practical and expensive garments could be worn in daily life to express wealth and status, and on special occasions, notably rites of passage.⁷⁴

Bone ornaments still being worn by women at the end of the nineteenth century, gradually disappeared in the first half of the twentieth century. Ear pendants (still called *tusaamit*) were now made of triangular pieces of metal (a "*trekantet Blikstykke*") (Chr. Rosing 1946:28). Women also used small European buttons from cloth shirts as pendants

for earrings. These buttons were hung on small strings of beads, as had been the custom with bone pendants in the previous century. At the beginning of the twentieth century women's necklaces were made of beads, especially in white, red and blue. This type of necklace fitted closely around the neck. Long strings of beads were added to the middle, hanging down between the women's breasts. When the first traders arrived at the end of the nineteenth century, the necklaces were designed with new materials such as cloth and beads. They were still being made in the 1930s, and later on they were used as part of the festive costume.⁷⁵ Beads were especially used for making the beadcollars of the women's costumes.

Change in political and social organization

Continuity in East Greenlandic social and political organization

At the end of the nineteenth century, traditional East Greenlandic society was organized in households, as the basic economic and social unit. Extended families lived together in large winter houses. The settlements broke up in spring, when the families spread out over the area and lived in tents near the fjords and fishing grounds. During the first half of the twentieth century, (patrilineal) households were still composed of three generations. The eldest male of the household was usually the head of the family group, but:

“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, being, for example, the one to whom others turn.” (Petersen 1984a:637.)⁷⁶

Leadership was mostly connected with hunting and traveling activities. Nooter argues that the term *piniatorsuaq*, ‘great hunter’, comes close to the term ‘leader’. In difficult hunting situations, or during journeys on dangerous ice, the hunter who was most capable of dealing with that particular situation took the lead, and was followed by his companions (Nooter 1976:8-9). He did not distinguish himself from his companions by status symbols or by wearing different clothing. He may have had more access to newly made fur clothing, since a great hunter would obtain many beautiful skins. The quality of his clothing also depended very much on his wife's skill as a seamstress.

Some authors suggest that the lack of permanent leadership in East Greenland in the nineteenth century, and second half of the twentieth, was connected to individualistic techniques of seal hunting (Nooter 1976; Robbe 1994:362-363). However, there was an advanced system of meat sharing, based on mutual reciprocity and kinship, which formed the basis for organizing relationships within the settlements (P. Robbe 1975, 1994b: 349-356; Buijs 1993).

Danish colonization and political development

The Danish colonization of East Greenland introduced new types of political organization and leadership. In the first half of the twentieth century, East Greenlandic types of leadership and social organization still functioned side by side with the new political structures. East Greenland was managed by an *inspektør* (director or vice-president), who was directly responsible to the Danish Crown, while a *kolonibestyrer*, the local representative

of the Danish Government, was directly responsible to the minister, and managed the local affairs.

In the Memorandum of the Greenland Administration of 1886, guidelines were formulated for the administration of East Greenland. The “Angmagssalikers” should be Christianized. Trading relations should be established for the sake of the East Greenland population, regardless of whether it benefited the Danes. Blubber should not be traded, in order not to deprive the population of essential hunting products. Trading should be restricted to firearms, ironware, tobacco, and a few articles of clothing. Food should not be traded, as this was thought to be detrimental to the future of the East Greenlandic population. Sealskins were only to be bought by Danes (or other foreigners) if the East Greenlandic population had sufficient skins for its own use. (Mikkelsen 1944: 41-42 in Robert-Lamblin 1986:13.)

In the Administration and Trade Acts of 1908 and 1912, Greenland was organized in districts and municipalities.

The Administration Act of 1925, providing for local councils in West Greenland, only became effective in East Greenland in 1946.⁷⁷ Two “hunting councils” of leading hunters were established, one in Scoresbysund and one in Ammassalik. Their task was to convey the wishes of the people to the Danish *inspektør*, and to prosecute violations of the local ordinances (Petersen 1984a:638). As Jenness commented:

“It placed local self-government in their hands more firmly than ever before and, under the guise of Provincial Councils, set up two representative bodies which, without possessing any legal powers, considerably influenced the Danish government, gained useful training in the colony’s affairs, and could easily be united, if Denmark so wished, into a parliament for the entire island, clothed with whatever authority she chose to confer on it. The act also struck a blow at racial superiority and inferiority complexes by giving preference to Greenlanders in government employment provided their qualifications matched those of Danes; for this regulation, honestly carried out (as apparently it was), placed a premium on education and opened up many desirable careers to youths who were willing to train for them.” (Jenness 1967:94.)

The 1925 Act also provided for the schooling and education of Greenlanders. It left education in the hands of the Church. Denmark increased the church budget to cover the costs of the school system. In West Greenland there were only a few Danish teachers. At the seminary in Nuuk, Greenlandic catechists were trained for educational as well as ecclesiastical duties. The catechist Sejer Abelsen was appointed to Kuummiit in 1908. The head of the church also supervised the schools within the district. In the first half of the twentieth century there was only one combined school/church in Ammassalik. In the middle of the twentieth century, small schools/churches were built in the other villages, which meant that the district then had nine schools (Jenness 1967:95; Lidegaard 1991:167; Petersen 1984a:637).

In the 1920s and 1930s there was an ongoing language debate in West Greenland, about whether Danish should be the first language in Greenland, and about the language that should be used in the schools. Among the protagonists of the Danish language were Knud

Rasmussen and Augu Lynge, who emphasized the advantages of bilingualism for the Greenlanders. Among the antagonists were some Danish and Greenlandic ministers (such as Hendrik Lund and Schultz-Lorenzen, who worked for many years on a West Greenlandic dictionary and grammar.) In their opinion the Greenlandic language ought to be the language used in school by the people of Greenland. When Danish became the official language, only a few people in East Greenland were able to use it for communication. In the first decades of the twentieth century, more Greenlanders were educated in Denmark, and in 1928 the *Grønlanderhjemmet* was (re)opened. Some young Greenlanders (mostly from West Greenland) obtained leading positions in the modern schooling system, and also in the political arena in West Greenland after their teacher's examination. Nevertheless, there was still a wide gap between the Danes and the West Greenlanders. The words of a West Greenlandic hunter written in 1905, still applied:

"Today the Greenlanders may attain subordinate positions as managers of outposts under the chief traders. There may be native managers of outposts who have better brains and are more efficient than many a Danish "Kolonibestyrelser", but they can never attain that position, and that is because all higher posts are closed to them, only because they are Greenlanders. (...) Here I must not forget to mention that the mission gives us access to the highest positions as chief catechists and clergymen; these are tasks, which we are supposed to be able to fulfil, when only we are given sufficient training.... When we can be trained as clergymen, why then should it not be possible to admit us to other influential positions?" (In Osterman 1929b:198.)

As education was gradually taken over by Greenlandic catechists, for whom Danish was the second language, the Danish language education in school failed to reach a satisfactory level in East Greenland, and East Greenlandic remained the dominant language (Lidegaard 1991:175).

New politics and new transformations in clothing

East Greenlanders adopted or imitated the clothing of European colonists and West Greenlanders who occupied leading positions in East Greenland. This section deals with the changes in clothing resulting from European and West Greenland influence.

European and West Greenlandic influences on clothing

A small West Greenlandic elite gradually gained influence in East Greenland. Some West Greenlanders settled in Ammassalik, and owing to their relatively high education level they obtained the newly introduced job positions in East Greenland that were open to Greenlanders. Therkel Mathiassen referred to the dominance of West Greenlanders, and the willingness of the Tunumiit to accept West Greenland influence on their lives and in their material culture:

"Still more radical is the West Greenlandic influence. From West Greenland come minister, curate, store assistants; the managers, mid-wives and artisans get their training in West Greenland. The houses, dress, sledges and imple-

ments of this ‘upper-class’ are imitated by the Angmagssaliks, who see in them something “superior” and better. West Greenland is regarded the center of fashion, which leads the way and which one must copy if possible. In many respects this imitating has gone very deep (...).” (Mathiassen 1933:132-134.)

European garments were expensive, and expressed a new type of wealth and status. European garments of good quality, such as new garments obtained from the shop, were prevalent among members of the upper stratum, Danes and West Greenlanders. East Greenlanders worked in lower positions as employees at the trading post, in the harbour, at the medical station, and in the small colonial office. Women were appointed as *kippat* – servants - in Danish (Dutch and French) households. Especially the East Greenlanders working for Europeans adopted European garments, imitating the foreigners and their fashions.⁷⁸

Figure 77. Thomas Jørgensen (KGH formand), his wife Derisia, Apika Amatagnek (student jordmor) and Katarine Kalia (kippaq at the household of kolonibestyrrer Rassow). A small group of people connected to the new Danish-oriented upper stratum, sit in their best European clothes in the sun on the rocks at Sømandsfjeld, June 1934. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 181.) Thomas Jørgensen is wearing a European tie over a white anorak, and a European cap and trousers. This is one of the rare photographs showing two women (to the left) wearing high-heeled shoes of a European style, and one woman wearing a European coat.⁷⁹ Woollen scarves, caps (nasat) and European shawls were introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century, but women wearing these garments are only occasionally seen in the photographs dating from the 1930s.⁸⁰ Men wore woollen knitted caps more often in winter, when they were out on the ice.





Figure 78. Two East Greenlanders standing near the waterside, almost completely dressed in textiles except for their sealskin boots, wearing shirts of a European style, and a European cardigan. Kangerlussuaq, August 1937. (Photo: Jette Bang, Arctic Institute Copenhagen, no. 3044.) Pullovers and waistcoats were hardly seen in the photographic collections dating from the 1930s, and were probably not worn very much by East Greenland men in that period.⁸¹ Jackets and neckties were also hardly to be seen during the 1930s in East Greenland, but (white) shirts formed part of the wardrobe, and were combined with black or dark cloth trousers, probably in imitation of the current European male fashion. There is no evidence of European braces in the 1930s: homemade sealskin braces were worn, instead.

In the 1930s, waistcoats and pullovers occasionally appeared in male clothing in East Greenland. They were often combined with white cotton or linen shirts. A shirt could also been worn without a waistcoat. Some Danes and Greenlanders photographed by Jette Bang during hunters' council-meetings wore European suits, shirts and neckties, but this outfit was not common in East Greenland during this period.

The West Greenlandic women participating in Holm's *konebåd ekspedition* wore cloth women anoraks without hoods. The dresses worn by the first women and children to be baptized in East Greenland already showed West Greenlandic influence. As early as April 1899, they were wearing cloth 'anoraks' without hoods, decorated with a cloth edging, resembling those worn by their West Greenlandic 'kin'. These anoraks were relatively short, and the edge reached over the women's abdomens..⁸² Women began using silk for this decorative edging. A black seal-fur collar was added to the anorak, together with a silk stomach band. Later on, the collar was decorated with small lines of beads, out of which the bead collar developed. These changes all followed West Greenlandic examples. In East Greenland, this type of anorak (with bead decoration) probably came into use during the 1920s and 1930s, whereas cloth anoraks without beads dominated in the first decades of the twentieth century (see figure 80).



Figure 79. Kaarali Andreassen (left), catechist in Kuummiit (Kungmiut), wearing a European overcoat and jersey, and Salo Boassen (right), overkateket in Nanortalik, with a checked cloth anorak. Ammassalik, 15 December 1933. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 74.) European cloth overcoats (kavaajat) (and woollen knitted scarves) were not common in East Greenland in the 1930s, but they had already been introduced. These garments are seldom seen in photographs from that period. They were probably first adopted by Greenlanders with a West Greenlandic education. In the decades that followed, cloth overcoats, scarves and caps gradually came into general use.

The longer West Greenland type of decorated outer trousers, *seeqqiniit*, had already begun to replace the smaller East Greenlandic breeches by the end of the nineteenth century. At that time, West as well as East Greenlandic breeches were being worn. East Greenlandic short outer breeches were replaced not only by trousers deriving from the West Coast, but also by European underwear and woollen tights combined with textile dresses.⁸⁴ Christian Rosing observed:

“Previously, women had very short trousers, so short at the thighs that they could hardly even be called panties. Yet now they wear trousers that run half way down the thighs, and the poor souls must hurry when they are out in the winter cold.” (Chr. Rosing 1946:27, translation by C. Buijs.)

A few pairs of traditional East Greenland inner breeches, *naatsit*, were collected for European museums during the 1930s. They disappeared in the first half of the twentieth century.



Figure 80. Three old women in Kuummiit, East Greenland 1933. (Photo: Tinbergen, Museon, The Hague.) In the first decades of the twentieth century, the topknots changed as cotton, woollen, silk and linen cloth in different colours came into use. Hair ribbons, especially red ones, were frequently seen.⁸³ Old women also adopted West Greenlandic clothing styles after the turn of the century, appearing old fashioned in comparison with the European-oriented clothing of the young women (see figures 69 and 71).



Figure 81. Traditional East Greenlandic outer trousers (qarterpaat) and (inner trousers (naatsit) were replaced by coloured East Greenlandic trousers (seeqqiniit), influenced by West Greenland, dating from the 1930s. (Museon, The Hague, nos. 48182, 48181, and 48188 respectively.) Some naatsit did not change at all, while others show the use of new decorative materials such as glass beads and small strips of red seal leather, or small cloth strips,

applied in accordance with an ancient decorating tradition. Undertrousers preserved in the collection of the Museon and the Musée de L'Homme are traditional in shape, design and decoration.⁸⁵ Bead decoration connected to small leather strings on both sides of the naatsit was still being used at the beginning of the 1920s. Naatsit were replaced by European underwear. Woollen tights (alersit takikattaat) and woollen socks (alersit) also came into use, and can be seen in some of the photographs taken by Tinbergen, Van Zuylén and Jette Bang, dating from 1932 to 1937 respectively.



Figure 82. Traditional East Greenlandic women's boots, dating from the 1930s. (Museon, The Hague, nr. 48201.)

Owing to West Greenland influence, the traditional East Greenland women's boots (*kamili-vartit* or *kamiit takkikaajut*), reaching up to the knee and with an accolade-shaped incision and a white dog-fur edging, disappeared in the first decades of the twentieth century.



Figure 83. Two women sewing the seal-leather cover for a kayak. The woman on the right is wearing long boots with knee pieces (*kamiit ajipertingarartiilit*) of West Greenland type. Ammassalik May 1934. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF 164.)

An East Greenlandic variant of this type of boots with knee pieces, had embroidery in the East Greenlandic tradition with alternating white and brown folds between the feet and the boot legs. They gradually disappeared. The long red (and blue and black) festive boots developed in East Greenland out of the boots with knee piece (*kamiit ajipertingarartiilit*), following West Greenland's lead.

Researchers from the Museon in The Hague and the Musée de L'Homme in Paris collected a few pairs of traditional East Greenlandic women's boots. The photographic collections suggest that these boots were no longer part of the normal dress at that time. Probably, a small minority of the elderly women still wore long East Greenlandic boots, which were replaced by a variety of new types of long and short seal-leather boots. The disappearance of the long, traditional East Greenlandic women's boots may have been connected with the introduction of long cloth dresses, as well as with West Greenland influence. Dresses were not suitable for wearing with the long boots, because the thick dog-fur edging of the boots was impractical under the long dresses. The other type of long sealskin boots, with knee pieces, (prevalent in West Greenland) did not have this disadvantage. Thus in the 1930s the sealskin boots with knee pieces (*kamiit ajipertingarartiilit*), inspired by West Greenlandic examples, remained in use, whereas the East Greenlandic type of boot gradually disappeared.

Long white women's boots consisted of shorter outer boots (below the knees) and much longer inner boots consisting of long seal-fur boots, hair side turned inwards, with an edging of dark seal fur.

In the 1930s, this dark edging was mostly sewn from the dark side of the skin of a hooded seal, as dark-painted seal fur remained scarce. Later on, women in West Greenland used black cowhide (with the hair left on) for this fur edging. The use of cowhide was not adopted in East Greenland, where seal fur remained in use, and black dog fur may also have been applied. The legs of the inner boots were partly covered with cloth. For the upper parts red or white cloth was generally used, covered with homemade lace of cotton thread. For the lower part of the edges of the inner boots, white cloth was used, decorated with cotton-thread embroidery in simple patterns. The lower parts of the inner boots were not covered with cloth, since the outer boots fitted over the inner boots. The shorter outer boots consisted of soles made out of the skin of the bearded seal, a white sealskin rim, and several strips of sealskin painted in contrasting colours. The women's boots were decorated with sealskin embroidery, *avittarneq*. A horizontal rim of *avittarneq* was added to the fronts of both long and short boots, usually made in a different pattern, particularly along the vertical mid-seam, but also above this *avittarneq*-decorated mid-seam. It could be a condensed, diminished, or extended variation of the vertical *avittarneq* pattern. A small zigzag sealskin line decoration can be found on female short and long boots. This zigzag line may have developed out of skin mosaic in a symmetrical cross pattern, or from the much older typical East Greenlandic sealskin embroidery in brown and white leather. In the nineteenth century, this embroidery pattern could also still be seen on male boots,⁸⁶ but it is missing in every type of male boot dating from the 1930s and later.

The long red boots dating from the 1930s were named *kamiit ajipertangatit* or (*kamiit*) *ajipertingarartilit*. They were adopted from West Greenland at the beginning of the twentieth century. These coloured boots replaced their brown predecessors.

The boots consisted of long sealskin inner boots with dark, almost black seal-fur edging, and outer boots made of red, black or blue-painted depilated sealskin. The soles were made from the skin of the seal. The seamstresses sew a white folded rim between the boot legs and the soles. In West Greenland the first dye was obtained from plants, or by dipping depilated and prepared sealskin into a decoction made of boiled silk bands. Later on, an oil-based dye came into use. This can easily be recognized by its much brighter and more lively, almost aggressive red or black colours (Kaalund 1979:148). Crowberries gave a black colour, and the dark blue may have been obtained from blueberries (M. Petersen, pers. comm, 1997). The decoration of the boots was created with a strip of multicoloured *avittarneq* along the mid-seam, flanked by a double white strip of sealskin. The knee pieces, edged with the same decorative design, were sewn onto the boots. There was a white sealskin edge at the top of the outer boots, decorated with small *avittarneq* patterns following the seams.⁸⁷ The *avittarneq* decorations were, and still are, almost without exception geometrical in shape, zigzags of alternating brown and white sealskin strips, and later on, multicoloured patterns, crosses, stars, squares and checks. Circles and dots disappeared gradually at the beginning of the twentieth century. Flower and leaf motives were introduced a few decades later, becoming general in time.



Figure 84. Long, red-painted women's boots, dating from the early 1930s. The technique of painting sealskin followed the lead given by West Greenland. (Museon, The Hague, NR. 48188.)

In West Greenland, women of different age or marriage-status groups wore boots in different colours. The long white boots were used by young unmarried women, red boots by married women, and black or dark blue boots by older women and old widows. Photographic collections from the 1930s show a tendency towards white long boots for young women, whereas elderly women more often wore the darker-coloured boots. East Greenlandic informants mentioned the same differentiation, but emphasized that this was not a fixed rule. Old women might wear white boots, just as young girls might wear boots of a darker colour. In the 1930s, the long female boots still implied social differentiation. Age and status continued to be important aspects of East Greenlandic society, and were sometimes expressed in women's clothing. Short white and red women's boots, *nakatalat*, *kamisat* or *kamisat kapitsimalit*, were introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century. These boots resembled West Greenlandic short women's boots, and were copied from them.

Short women's boots developed with the introduction by West Greenlanders and Europeans of new types of clothing. Short women's festive boots developed out of these short women's boots in the 1930s. They were combined with 'modern' European festive dresses up to the present day.

In addition to short red and white sealskin boots, women also wore short brown and black-painted boots. These boots were used in daily life. The adoption and imitation of West Greenlandic dress, and the West Greenlandic technique of painting sealskins and sewing coloured boots, were major changes in East Greenland clothing at the beginning of the twentieth century. The techniques of sewing West Greenlandic boots resemble those of East Greenland, and suited the East Greenlandic traditions of producing clothing, perfectly.

Conclusion

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Western clothing became available at the trading posts within the area. It was integrated rapidly into indigenous clothing.

In the same period, clothing from West Greenland was adopted. Religious, economic and political changes contributed to the transformations of East Greenlandic clothing in the first half of the last century.

Economic development and its influence on clothing

When the Danes arrived in East Greenland, the Greenlanders' economy was self-sufficient, and was based on hunting, fishing and gathering activities. European and especially Norse whaling activities had already reduced the whale population and had devastated the large seal population along the coast of East Greenland. It is hard to say whether the nineteenth century periods of starvation were caused by these large-scale hunting activities, but these activities certainly affected the East Greenlanders.

Several East Greenlandic families settled near the trading post, gradually abandoning their semi-nomadic lifestyle. The first relatively large settlements were established in East Greenland in the first decades of the twentieth century. Barter with Europeans developed, and European goods were highly valued and expensive. Since these goods were



Figure 85. Short red women's boots from East Greenland, dating from the 1930s. (Museon, The Hague, no. 48202.) They were made of sealskin, scraped white or painted red, and had inner boots made of seal fur with an edging of dark (almost black) seal fur extending over the outer boots.⁸⁸ These short red or white boots⁸⁹ were not combined with short trousers, but worn under skirts and dresses.

popular, the prices the East Greenlanders were willing to pay were relatively high. As Greenlanders became increasingly accustomed to bartering with Europeans, they were able to negotiate better prices. The Danish protective, and somewhat paternalistic policy toward the East Greenland colony, contributed to better yields of hides and pelts. Because of a shortage of large sealskins in the 1920s and 1930s, East Greenlanders lacked the skins necessary for covering tents, kayaks and umiaks, for sewing the soles of their boots, and for making other items of clothing. Cloth became a welcome supplementary material.

A new religion and new clothing

The permanent settlement of Greenlandic families close to the newly built church facilitated conversion to Christianity. *Angakkiit* were baptized, and shamanism and indigenous healing practices went underground. Danish ministers prohibited drum dances, song duels, and striking-the-lamp games.

The first East Greenlanders to be baptized were women and children. Those baptized had to surrender their amulets to the minister, and they each received a new Christian name. Men voluntarily cut their hair short, and cut off the tailored edges of their coats. Women were encouraged to cover their bare thighs, which could be seen between their short pants and long boots. The abandonment of 'heathen' clothing habits, and the adoption of cloth garments indoors, fitted the new ideas of modesty.

Rites of passage and first events were incorporated into the new Lutheran rituals. These transitions were expressed partly by means of clothing, such as Christening dresses for infants at their baptism in church. Life events such as confirmations, which stressed the attainment of puberty and the adoption of social adult roles, were celebrated in church services, and the appropriate clothing for these rites became festive or Sunday dress. Gradually, Sunday clothing developed out of West Greenlandic garments, combined with European textiles. Women wore cloth anoraks (without hoods) which later on were decorated with bead collars. These garments were combined with seal-fur trousers in the West Greenlandic shape, decorated with strips of painted sealskin and dog fur. The long festive boots were sometimes made out of sealskin painted red, violet, or black. The men dressed in cloth anoraks, ordinary trousers of seal fur, or cloth trousers, and decorated seal-leather boots in the West Greenlandic shape. In the 1930s, white cloth anoraks for festive occasions were adopted from West Greenland.

The clergymen introduced previously unknown clerical garments: the long black gown with a white pleated collar worn by the *palasi* (minister), and black anoraks, combined with white bands during services, for the *ajerit* (Greenlandic catechists). The garments for the native catechists had been developed at the seminary in Nuuk a few decades earlier.

Social and political implications, change and continuity in clothing

East Greenlanders rapidly adopted West Greenlandic types of dress. West Greenlanders had their own social categories, represented visually in their clothing: for instance, the wearing of different coloured hair ribbons around the women's topknot, indicating marital status. Traditional East Greenlandic nineteenth-century clothing also indicated social categories, and those expressed by East Greenlandic clothing of the late nineteenth century were comparable in character to those of West Greenland; indicating puberty, the finding of a partner, marrying, having children. These social categories were articulated in a far more marked way in female clothing than they were in the men's wardrobe. East Greenlanders adopted the social characteristics of the West Greenlandic type of clothing, but these were not applied with great strictness. Flexibility and personal choice predominated, and exceptions to the rule could frequently be observed.

Differentiation in age and gender was also expressed by the European clothing adopted. Young women often wore cloth dresses and skirts, and woollen tights. They arranged their

hair in a modern European fashion, and abandoned the traditional topknot as a social mark of married status. The European type of dress incorporated social characteristics, such as the wearing of a wedding ring, and younger European women began to wear long (female) trousers in the 1930s. The East Greenlanders gradually adopted these social differentiations as expressed in European clothing, and these became common in the second half of the twentieth century. Skirts and dresses were worn exclusively by women and girls, and replaced the older traditional East Greenland female clothing. There were changes in the form, shape, and type of garments. However, the notion of gender-specific clothing survived; femininity and age were still expressed through the garments worn. Indications of fertility and sexual maturity, present in the nineteenth-century female garments, disappeared from the clothing.

There was no differentiation in different types of clothing for individuals or groups with differing social status in East Greenland at the end of the nineteenth century, but the quality of the pelts from which the clothing was made, and the quality of sewing, were indirect indications of social status and wealth.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, both West Greenlanders and Danes settled in East Greenland. They occupied 'modern' key positions in the society, as merchants, ministers, catechists, political managers and medical personnel, for example. There were also other outsiders such as sailors and researchers.

Figure 86. Mrs. Rassow, the wife of the kolonibestyrrer, and their children in Ammassalik, 23 June 1933. They belonged to the upper social stratum in East Greenland, as can be seen from their beautiful clothing. The lady's anorak is probably made of silk. (Photo: Van Zuylen, no. AF.179.)



Many of the Danes and West Greenlanders employed in East Greenland brought their families with them to East Greenland. They hired East Greenlanders as temporary workers. This meant the beginning of specialization and (a new) social stratification. West Greenlanders and Danes played dominant roles within a colonial setting, as expressed by European types of clothing such as suits and jackets, hoods and caps. Sometimes professional clothing, for instance the white dresses of the medical personnel, could also be seen among Europeans.

Access to money became of increasing importance in the East Greenlanders' daily life. Those who obtained jobs were in the good position for earning money, but if they were mediocre hunters they were still accorded less respect than the traditionally-oriented successful hunters. Traditional values still lingered on, and hunting remained the main source of income in East Greenland. Yet hunting was no longer the only source for providing clothing materials.