

*JAPONSCHE ROCKEN AS AN  
EXPRESSION OF FASHION DEPICTED  
IN PAINTING IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF  
THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY*

**I**t is with care that he leans across the table and turns the globe. The long and wide sleeves of the glossy, slightly padded gown seem to slow the movements in an unrestrained way. And here, in the study of the most celebrated astronomer in art, is where Vermeer pictures his model in a comfortable “Japanese gown”, a gown that he will also place on another model, a geographer, in a pendant portrait. Being the most popular dress among the Dutch elite in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in both its most refined original version and its copies, it compelled admiration, passion and desire and, as no other, established itself as a permanent oriental monument in European culture.

With regard to the existing literature on the subject, it is not the aim of the author to present a monograph treating this fashion phenomenon, and neither is it to investigate in detail the Japanese dress nor to submit an anthology of representations in Dutch painting of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The classic articles of A.M. Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder, which give an invaluable analysis of sources, continue to be of paramount significance for the area of discussion (1947, 1949). A major and thorough enquiry into this problem basing on the work of Vermeer has been undertaken recently by Martha Hollander (2011). Studies on the subject have also been made by Margaretha Breukink-Peeze (Peeze 1986, Breukink-Peeze 1989). The present paper comes into the category of a dress code study: it presents this phe-

nomenon basing on a wide selection of works and proposes a typology of representations.

The form of exoticism created in Europe, considered as an esthetic otherness<sup>1)</sup> which basically is a fascination for works of art, culture and the mind of Far East civilization, yielded a homogeneous decorative vogue whose unwavering presence in art over three centuries is impressive. Modern orientalism drew its artistic expression from such phenomena as chinoiserie, japonaiserie and turquerie which every so often spoke with one voice. Exoticism developed under the strong influence of the essentially encyclopedic nature of collecting which in time reached beyond "curiosity cabinets" and demanded pieces of outstanding value. An in-depth discussion of oriental inspirations inherent in certain aspects of seventeenth century collecting should consider fashion in terms of a cultural marker. One of the most fascinating manifestations of the new trend in the modern era was the original adaptation of the classical Japanese dress popularly known to this day as kimono, a phenomenon on the borderline of esthetics, philosophy, sociology of art and culture. As such, it was particularly significant and characteristic of the visual culture of the Golden Age of the Republic of the United Provinces. The silk and often padded Japanese kimono adapted by the upper European social classes in the seventeenth century served not only as an attire reflecting the exotic taste of the owner, but also as a comfortable garment worn for all occasions by both sexes. And, we must not forget that the intriguing robe also functioned as an ambiguous social "déguisement" in the Baroque realm of fantasy<sup>2)</sup>.

The cultural importance of clothing is manifested in the custom followed in the portraiture of Dutch statesmen, scholars, men of letters, wealthy merchants and artists in the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The figures posing in brightly coloured Japanese gowns are reservedly well-attired, in keeping with their station and conventional paradigms of comportment. And not only widely acclaimed masters like Nicolas Maes, Michiel van Musscher, Caspar Netscher, Cornelis de Man or Frans van Mieris catered for this elite but many more to whom we may owe the impact of the oriental vogue. Notwithstanding, in their direct encounter with the great culture and refined esthetic principles of exotic Japan, the pragmatic and unimaginative Dutch did not produce any

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<sup>1)</sup> Understood as the "basic right to have impressions, passions or feelings, hence life"; Segalen (1986: 14).

<sup>2)</sup> For the subject of masquerades chinoises at the court of Louis XIV and „familiarizing with the foreign" through the mimetic games of the aristocracy and exotic disguise in the context of chinoiserie, see Zaslawska (2008:212).

decorative equivalent of European chinoiserie. Whereas for centuries many Europeans had dreams and images of fantasy of distant Cathay and Zipang and of their original, sophisticated and colourful art, Dutch traders left behind merely ordinary records of merchandise, sales lists, orders and subject descriptions, in other words, nothing in essence that could stimulate the advance of a Japanese mode. Henceforth, the phenomenon of Japonisme refers exclusively to a nineteenth-century esthetic movement inspired by increasing contacts after the opening of Japan. But, paradoxically, the history of Dutch Japanese gowns comes into the wide category of European chinoiserie.

*Japonsche rock* or *japonsche tabbaard*, namely Japanese dress, as designated by the Dutch, referred to the padded Japanese kimono imported by the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, established in 1602 and known as VOC. Tailored into a kind of house robe, it was readily worn in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries by men as an indoor casual dress over customary clothes.<sup>3)</sup> Undoubtedly, it was the captivating contrast of the interplay of magnificent colours of silk gowns with the invariable and austere black and white clothing worn in Holland that prompted the tremendous impact of this dress and the resonance it produced in culture over a period of two centuries. Early in the seventeenth century, the overwhelming impression created by the appearance of samurais in festive clothes “direct from Japan” in the streets of European cities must have left many people stunned and incited them to possess such exotic costumes. Hasekura Tsunenaga’s historical mission and his travels through Europe in the years 1615–1616 sparked widespread interest in far away Japan and, most notably, in the extraordinary textiles of this enchanting land. It is this very fascination with the Orient that vibrates in the portrait of the Japanese ambassador painted in 1615 in Rome where he now went by the name of Don Felipe Francisco Hasekura. In Archita Ricci’s painting the author does not focus on the samurai himself but brings into prominence his fantastic kimono and imposing accessories, for example the costly *daishō* (Fig. 1).<sup>4)</sup> However, before these garments made of silk, brocade or damask became increasingly popular and eagerly sought in chosen European circles, to the point that cheaper versions of Indian cotton began to be imported, they were a valuable collector’s item and a tangible symbol of station, wealth and sophisticated taste.

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<sup>3)</sup> Fukai (2002: 724).

<sup>4)</sup> For this painting see: *Di linea e di colore* (2012: 326–328). For an earlier Japanese mission to Europe, known as Tenshō embassy see: Cooper 2005, Massarella 2012.

Originally, it was the custom to present a large number of costly and exotic silk robes as traditional gifts to higher rank officials of the Dutch East India Company following annual audiences with the shogun in Edo where, among others, the renewal of a trade contract with the *nambanjin* – barbarians from the South – was celebrated.<sup>5)</sup> Already in 1611, the expeditions of the Company to the imperial court occasioned this ceremonious ritual exchange of presents which at first included military objects and later richly embroidered gowns.<sup>6)</sup> Even if it took the VOC agents many months to reach Edo from their base in Deshima, the journey was well worth the reward. In *Beschrijvinghe van het Machtigh Coninckryck Japan und Siam* of 1636, François Caron, the first author to give a description of Japan in the Dutch language, mentions hundreds of “Japan” and “Indian” gowns being bestowed on them by the young and old emperors.<sup>7)</sup> Their appearance at the time the first contacts were established with European visitors is illustrated accurately in Arnoldus Montanus’s monumental work describing Japan: *Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maetschappy in’t Vereenigde Nederland, aen de Kaisaren van Japan* (Amsterdam 1669), better known in the English version as *Atlas Japonensis* (1670) (Fig. 2).

Every Japanese gown displayed an abundance of motifs, decorative techniques and texture matched with simple design and function, all blended together in a sublime colour palette. These formed an integral composition varying in terms of space and colour. The robe was made of silk, silk brocade, silk crepe (*chirimen*), satin weaves or damask imported from China and India. For a finely made garment, *chirimen* was mostly used; then it could be embellished with embroidery of silk and metallic threads. The final effect of the accomplished kimono was a characteristic work of art, the style of which depended on

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<sup>5)</sup> In a discussion of the specifics of Japanese-European commercial relations in the early modern age, note should be made of the fact that, like the Chinese, relatively few merchants engaged in trade with the West; besides, the political and intellectual elite attached minor significance to such relations. The edict of the shogun Iemitsu Tokugawa in 1639 drastically limited all contacts with Europeans. For many years the only place where the white *nambanjin* (at the time trade was carried on only with Holland) were tolerated, and this in humiliating conditions, was the artificial isolated island of Deshima built on the coast near Nagasaki. A detailed description of the factory located on the sole European enclave in Japanese territory was passed down to us by the doctor Engelbert Kaempfer, a graduate of, among others, the Gdansk Academic Gymnasium and the Cracow Academy which he attended in the period 1691–1692. Kaempfer (1964); Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder (1947: 138–143).

<sup>6)</sup> Kaempfer (1964: 318); Hollander (2011: 181).

<sup>7)</sup> Hollander (2011: 180).

esthetic trends and the social position of the owner. Many a time the design of kimonos was entrusted to outstanding artists such as Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716), known for his preferences for simple forms and composition, Maruyama Ōkyo (1726–1792) and Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858) who decorated garments with their own designs. In the late Edo period (1830–1868) refined silk kimonos featured regular, *sagara* and couching embroidery set against a background which was hand painted with *bokoshi* dip dye. It is precisely the ingenious dyeing techniques that the Japanese excelled in; embroidery and designs were not in their tradition but were foreign borrowings. A material was dyed by painting it and not by dipping it into one or more colours. *Yūzen*, the well-known and laborious technique which became the fashion at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Japan, consisted in painting freehand and using a rice starch paste to outline pattern areas which would then be brush-dyed with various colours. The next step in the procedure would involve steaming and washing the fabric to set the dye and, eventually, decorating it with embroidery.<sup>8)</sup> Such exactitude and refinement typical of Japanese art materialized in the absolutely perfect creation of a dress designed with an amazing sensitivity to textile, composition and colour scheme. Each of these gowns embodied the “finesse” of judgement and taste typical of the Japanese.

Early on, Dutch merchants residing in the factory in Deshima took notice of these garments which they called *schenkagierrocken*, i.e. gift gowns. Initially, only a few of these extremely valuable cotton padded silk kimonos were offered at every audience but with time, according to several sources, the number ranged from twenty to thirty. Not all were of equal quality and value, as Kaempfer makes clear, and only the best were sent home. Only in 1692 did the Dutch receive 123 “imperial gowns” (*Keyserrocken*). In accordance with the custom, the head of the factory kept for himself the most beautiful piece; this was considered as a form of income from presents. After airing and neatly packing the Japanese kimonos in linen cloth and oiled paper, they were shipped to far away native Batavia where they could be sold at a substantial profit at special auctions organized by the Company. Indeed, these enormously expensive gowns filled with awe Europeans craving for a taste of the Orient. In Holland

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<sup>8)</sup> C.f. Fukatsu-Fukuoka (2004). According to Martha Hollander, “The Japanese are extremely skillful in this matter of dyeing their robes of silk and other cloth”, wrote a Portuguese interpreter; “they intermingle gold among the flowers painted in diverse ways, and they are especially clever in their use of crimson and even more, of violet”. The warm blue-purple colour of the robe of Vermeer’s geographer is an example of the red and violet shades which appear in the solid colour *japons* in Dutch paintings. Hollander (2011: 182).

and other European countries, the recipients of these prized gifts were VOC administrators and diplomats. In 1659 Amalia van Solm visited the House of the East India Company in Amsterdam where she was given a gift consisting of five precious Japanese lacquer cabinets, each one containing a "Japanese robe". And in England, eight Japanese chests filled with these garments were given to Charles II to celebrate his coronation.

How highly valued were original Japanese kimonos not only in Holland or in Europe but also in the Far East is testified by the list of presents Siamese ambassadors brought to France for the king in 1686. Among the objects sent to Louis XIV by the king of Siam were "deux robes de chambre du Japon, d'une beauté extraordinaire, l'une couleur de pourpre, et l'autre couleur de feu" ("two Japanese dressing gowns of exceptional beauty, one purple, the other fiery-red"). In addition, the Dauphin's wife received "two Japanese dressing gowns of great beauty and also a simple one".<sup>9)</sup> Alongside original imported and precious Japanese kimonos, there soon appeared oriental garments of analogous cut and made from cheaper cotton or linen fabrics commonly called "indiennes", chintz or batik. In 1689 Hendrick Adriaan van Rheede, the Company's commissioner in office, sent to Holland six samples of imitations of "Japanese dresses" made of cotton chintz on the Coromandel Coast in India.<sup>10)</sup> Other materials which also passed for "indiennes" included painted or embroidered calico, batik and percale, often featuring appliqué design. Indian satin cotton and prized painted chintz superbly imitated Chinese and Japanese silk, which was a much more economical choice than costly Japanese kimonos.<sup>11)</sup> Within no time local production of copies of this oriental dress was under way basing on the rapidly expanding textile industry in European manufactures which specialized in the imitation of Eastern wares.

Long and loose unbelted oriental gowns having narrower sleeves and tied on the front were by no means a novelty in Europe. Their frequent French denotation, "Perse", "indienne" or "persienne", referred to people of Persian origin inhabiting the Coromandel Coast where they were acquired. Mention of the portrait of Arabella Stuart (d.1615) entitled "In a loose Persian robe" is made in the catalogue of the King's Pictures in Hampton Court. Chintz or batik persi-

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<sup>9)</sup> Chaumont (1687: 214–219, nos 46 and 126).

<sup>10)</sup> Breukink-Peeze (1989: 56).

<sup>11)</sup> Irwin, Schwartz (1966). Another article by Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder treats these long, loose and patterned chintz coats imported by the Dutch East India Company: Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder (1949).

ennes imported from India which were often sewn à double face looked utterly resplendent with their contrasting patterns and large floral motifs. Undeniably, they were a loud call of the exotic. And despite the fact that their cut differed from that of classical Japanese gowns which had wide loose sleeves patterned on the kimono model and were usually made of solid shiny silks, they were called *Japonsche rocken*. In Holland a distinction was made between a “Japanese gown from The Hague”, often locally crafted from imported exotic fabrics, and “a genuine Japanese gown” which, in its classical version, was a silk *kosode*, a short-sleeved kimono of the early Edo era, the standard all-season dress of choice for all levels of society. It existed in three different versions: the lightest one was named *katabira* and since it was worn in summer, it had no lining. For the spring and autumn *kosode*, known as *awase*, a layer of silk was added and for winter, coarse silk padding. It was wrapped around the body and had a belt or *obi* (a belt or narrow sash). The sleeves had narrow openings for the wrists and since their width could vary, pockets would be made from the material that remained. Fancier *kosode* had headbands or *eri* of a different colour, similar to the one the geographer wears in Vermeer’s painting. Known is the fact that the way these garments were worn in Japan was not without significance. The dress code was strictly determined and its principles were dutifully observed, even more than in Western countries. Ranging from the upper class to the lower, clothes for Tokugawa warriors and the mercantile class were highly symbolic objects in terms of social position.<sup>12)</sup>

The tradition of a loose and comfortable garment worn at home was relatively familiar in seventeenth century Europe. This kind of long, casual bedroom dress resembling an open coat was put on upon rising from bed, before washing and dressing. It was well known already from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards and by the fifth decade, it had become the obligatory morning attire. It was called *robe de chambre* or *indienne* from French; in Holland it was *tabbaard* or *rock* and also, to stress its oriental origin, *banyan*, made usually of chintz, from English (derived from the hindi *bannian*; the term applied to an Indian merchant or to a loose, casual tunic worn in India). It is interesting to note that in Holland the *tabbaard* which was held in high reverence almost achieved cult status. Being of Eastern provenance and informal nature, the *japonsche rock* which belonged to Dutch culture and the *banyan* all too apparent in the English lifestyle of the following century<sup>13)</sup> were the successors of *tabbaard* and

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<sup>12)</sup> Hollander (2011: 181, 184–185).

<sup>13)</sup> This garment, not studied in the present paper, was fitted to the body with inset tailored

were adopted by enthusiasts of exotic fashion who fancied receiving guests in this attire. The popularity of the gown reached its apogee in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it became a manifesto of independence and freedom of the mind, as illustrated by the current mode of portraying in an untidy dress intellectuals, artists or pretenders to this class. A print dated 1695 representing the French writer and otherwise scandalous dramatist, Eustache Lenoble (1641–1711), gives an impression of what the garment could look like (Fig. 3). It is evident that any study of the art of portraiture should highlight the function of clothing which is not solely a complementary element to the composition but often a projection of the model's intended message or image to be conveyed to the viewer. Martha Hollander sums up the variety of expressions used to denote similar gowns: "The various terms found in inventories and other literature suggest that by 1700 terminology such as *chamberlouc*, *japonsche rok*, *japon*, *nachtrok*, and *nachttabbaard* all referred to the same type of garment: wide, floor-length, usually with wide sleeves, worn open or with a sash. At the same time, the term 'japon' or 'gown' in English could mean any one of several Asian or Asian-style garments"<sup>14</sup>

Eventually, the vogue for such a very comfortable and soft oriental gown transcended borders and spread across seventeenth century Europe. Like the Dutch, other nations began to appreciate this widely requested, light, warm and wadded article of clothing. As the poet and diplomat, Constantin Huygens, puts it in his collection of poems, *Koren-bloemen* (1657, *Cornflowers*), it was a treasured possession:

I liken Kitty to Japanese wadding  
 Either in virtue or weight  
 For Kitty thou and wadding are  
 Very warm and very light<sup>15</sup>.

In another poem, *Hofwijck* (1653), he positions himself towards the Japanese kimono. In his description of the beauty of a perfectly symmetrical Baroque garden of a family residence, he evokes the colourfulness of a *Japonsche rock*, yet, on the other hand his eyes which are accustomed to mathematical princi-

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sleeves and double-breasted fronts. It was sometimes decorated with elaborate cord fastening.

<sup>14</sup> Hollander (2011: 187).

<sup>15</sup> These motifs in Huygens's poetry have been analysed by: Peeze (1986: 85), Breukink-Peeze (1989: 56).



ples and the harmony of gardens of his time are dazzled by the asymmetry of lines and shapes characteristic of the dress.

In the following century the robe lost its exclusiveness and became a garment which readily won the favour of young trendsetters, students and, owing to its relaxed allure, of a large part of society. Stylish young people in England would sit slovenly dressed in fashionable coffeehouses “for no other purpose but to publish their laziness”, and “to saunter away their time” as *The Spectator* reports in 1711.<sup>16)</sup> In Holland only, the *Japonsche tabbaard* was such a widespread fashion item worn by men, women and children that foreigners gazed at it in astonishment. In Amsterdam or in Haarlem, we could see a resident walking the city in long strides in a loose *japon*, puffing his inseparable long clay-pipe, we could meet local gentlemen in coffeehouses, members of the magistrate, teachers and professors, all dressed in *japonnen*.<sup>17)</sup>

Amusingly, pedestrians wearing dressing gowns looked as if they were recovering from an illness, as the Belgian traveller, baron de Poellnitz, remarked in Leiden and appropriately recorded in his *Mémoires* (Liège 1734): “Les Hollandois sont toujours chez-eux en robes de chambre, fourés de flanelle et affublés de trois ou quatre grosses camisoles. Les étudiants ne s’y piquent point, comme en Allemagne de magnificence en habits. Plusieurs ne quittent presque jamais leur robe de chambre en c’est l’habillement favori des bourgeois. Cela me fit croire, la première fois que je passai par Leyden, qu’il y regnoit quelque maladie épidémique. En effect, tous ces déshabillés dans les rues paroissent autant de convalescents”.<sup>18)</sup> With time, negative connotations were attached to the word “japon” and the term “wearing a japon” came to mean “being intoxicated”.

Eventually, steps were taken to curb the bizarre custom, ridiculed by some as “foppishness and dandyish frippery”.<sup>19)</sup> Obviously, no one would be allowed to attend a formal occasion “in habitu asiatico” and such a mundane dress would definitely be inappropriate at the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Leiden University in 1725. And in Sluis in 1795, it was ruled that a “japone rock” was

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<sup>16)</sup> Steele (1711).

<sup>17)</sup> Johann Beckmann, a German traveller who visited the University of Groningen in 1762 was surprised to find that “Professor Schroeder, like Dutch theologians, lectured in his *Schlafrock*, and many of his students also appeared in the same dress”, Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder (1947: 150); Breukink-Peeze (1989: 59).

<sup>18)</sup> Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder (1947: 150).

<sup>19)</sup> Breukink-Peeze (1989:59).

utterly unacceptable at a church service, otherwise a fine of half a rixdollars would be imposed, which even magistrates were not exempt from.<sup>20)</sup>

With the passing of time fashion changed and so did the original aspect of the Japanese gown. The garment was no more loose but was made to fit tightly around the body, the sleeves were shortened and a standing collar was added. There is a note in the Deshima documents which hints at this kind of remodelling and reports that in 1752 a Japanese tailor was specially engaged to remake a *schenkagierocken* in compliance with the “Dutch mode”.<sup>21)</sup> Late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the *japon* still carried considerable prestige, even more than the current vogue, and eventually made its appearance in the family home. It was gladly worn by women as an exotic house dress and as such did not differ much from the popular *déshabillé*. The evolution of this fashion phenomenon at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts for the creation of today’s well-known housecoat – *schlafrock* – in which most of us do not perceive any longer the elegant and refined Japanese prototype. It was then also that the dresses women wore became “japon”, and the “japonsche rock” or early “japon” worn over a nightgown, a *négligé*, commonly known as dressing gown.

In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century painters widely and frequently portrayed themselves in the elaborate, colourful and exotic-looking *Japanese rock* made of cotton or silk, evidence of which is found in their inventories. Reference to clothing is made by Amsterdam painters, namely, Johannes Beerstraten (inventory 1667; “Een Japonse rock” – A ‘Japonse rock’), Edo Quiter (inventory 1694; “Twee oude Japonse rocken” – Two old “Japonse rocken”), Lambert Doomer (inventory 1700; “Een coleurde Japonse rock” – A coloured Japanese nightgown) and Michiel van Musscher whose pride was the unpatterned silk satin gown stored in his workshop in which he portrayed himself (inventory 1705; “Een paerse sautijne Japonse Rock” – a purple satin ‘Japonse rock’). Known also is his *Self-Portrait in a studio* (1679, Rotterdam, Museum Rotterdam het Schielandhuis). The painter had a liking for portraying himself time and again in this garment: he is the figure in the dark scarlet Japanese satin gown in *Self-Portrait in a studio* (1679, Rotterdam, Museum Rotterdam het Schielandhuis); also in a purple gown in *Self-portrait en grisaille with vanitas emblems* (1685, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), in *Self-portrait with miniature* (1683, Galleria degli Uffizzi, Florence), or in *Self-portrait with family in garden* (1694–1701, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen), to men-

<sup>20)</sup> Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder (1949: 32); Peeze (1986: 87); Hollander (2011: 188).

<sup>21)</sup> Peeze (1986: 85).

tion only a few. The inventory of Cornelis Dusart from Haarlem, drawn up in 1704, reveals in turn the presence in his workshop of even two chintz *Japone rocken* (“Een oostinjese sitse Japone Rock; een ditto” – One East Indian chintz ‘Japanese’ gown; a ditto). A more detailed description of prized clothing is found in the inventory of Jan van de Capelle, drawn up in 1680. According to the impressive list full of sophisticated items, this wealthy textile dyer and painter from Amsterdam had beautiful oriental clothes in his *kunstkammer*: “Een Japone rock van basten van boomen” – A Japanese nightgown made of tree bark – and “Een Oostindische sije gesontheyt” – An East Indian silk waistband (inventory 1680).<sup>22)</sup>

Among many painters of the time who found it flattering to possess such an exquisite gown and to portray themselves in it, let us also mention Matthijs Naiveu (*Self-portrait*, 1675, unknown location), Caspar Netscher (Rijksmuseum) and Nicolas Maes (*Self-portrait*, ca. 1685, Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum). In his excellent self-portrait from late 1660, Ferdinand Bol presents himself in a golden oriental-like *tabbaard*. The painting, one of his last, is housed in the Rijksmuseum. Here the painter’s elegant and colourful style renders the splendour of the loose, belted and patterned fancy damask gown modelled on and worn as a *kosode*. A striking contrast is achieved by the red velvet coat thrown over his right arm. This pupil of Rembrandt did not hesitate to pose à la mode although his master, who took pleasure in putting on costumes, never portrayed himself in this fashion; instead, he preferred the classical *tabbaard*.<sup>23)</sup>

Despite the rarity of imported “Japanese dresses” supplied to the Dutch market, they were the highly-favoured attire in which the Dutch elite of the “Golden Age” of the Dutch East India Company was eager to be portrayed. For affluent merchants, high rank state officials, men of letters and artists, the sumptuous and incredibly expensive robe embodied their social and economic status in the Dutch Republic. Notwithstanding, it was not easy to get hold of them without connections with the VOC. In 1708, a century after it was set up, the VOC brought over from Japan 15.000 chests of copper bars, 64.662 boxes of camphor, 9.428 items of porcelain and only 50 silk gowns. Indeed, the necessity for copper at the time considerably exceeded the demand for luxury goods. Conforming to Japanese regulations which imposed a copper quota,

<sup>22)</sup> Winkel (2006: 158, 346, 348–351), Hollander (2011: 190). See also: Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder (1947: 151).

<sup>23)</sup> Nonetheless, suits of Japanese armour were found among many objects of Asian origin in the artist’s vast collections, which is substantiated by the sales list of Rembrandt’s collections. Slive (1995: 84).

a designated sum had to be spent on the purchase of local products such as chinaware, lacquer objects and foodstuffs. What remained was used to acquire quilted silk kimonos. It is known that the sale of about 50 gowns of Japanese origin at VOC auctions in Holland generated an annual profit ranging from 50 to 80 guilders for each piece. There was also a supply of unpadded copies of chintz gowns for casual wear which arrived from India for the lower classes.<sup>24)</sup>

The second half of the seventeenth century saw the rise of many nouveau rich Dutchmen up the social ladder. In their attempt to become rightful members of the nobility, they were extremely careful about observing the pre-established rules of decorum and civilité.<sup>25)</sup> Since “noblesse oblige”, they had to learn the language of this class and follow its time-honoured manners in order to avoid an unfortunate faux pas which would be most improper. An important element of this language in its figurative meaning was the dress code which allowed the wearer to appear in a highly desirable, fashionable and expensive attire and, what’s more, extremely comfortable and suited to self-presentation in the home and public environment.

In keeping with the taste of the period, preserved inventories repeatedly refer to the colours of fairy tale Japanese gowns as, for example, jonquille yellow, parrot green, feuilemorte olive brown, cramoisie, celadon and so on. Different colour schemes such as orange with parrot green, crimson with light blue or dark yellow with purple were the preferred shades as revealed by the sales list of the East India Houses.<sup>26)</sup> In some cases their description is given with extreme precision: “A Japanese gown with aurora flowers on a feuilemorte background, padded on the inside with wadding and completely lined with light blue taffeta.”<sup>27)</sup> Multicoloured kimonos featuring patterns were the most attractive and costly gowns. Being portrayed in them was far beyond the traditional bourgeois ideals of self-presentation. Such a manifesto of extravagance,

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<sup>24)</sup> Jacob (2006: 151).

<sup>25)</sup> Cloutier-Blizzard (2010: 112).

<sup>26)</sup> The balance sheet listing the 50 *Japonsche rocken* sold in 1765 gives, among others, such descriptions: „1 st. paarl wit met een werkje, jonquille gevoert – f. 68, 1 st. oranje met carmosijn gevoert – f. 115, 1 st. papegaaije groen, met een werkje, m. carmosijn gevoert – f. 78, 1 st. celadon m. een werkje met carmosijn gevoert – f. 71, 1 st. stroo couleur, m. een werkje m. carmosijn gevoert – f. 73, 1 st. paars met een werkje m. wit gevoert – f. 67, 1 st. donker blaauw m. een werkje m. mode couleur gevoert – f. 80”. Also, cotton and silk padding were imported separately to make the lining of kimonos. During his trip to India Jean de Thévenot reports that only in one year, i.e. 1664, „2332 pieces de watte de soye du Japon pour des robes” were brought over from Surat to Europe. Lubberhuizen-Van Gelder (1947: 145–146).

<sup>27)</sup> Breukink-Peeze (1989: 56).

wealth and power was reserved for the highest dignitaries of the state as it was the visual language of the nobility. Jan de Wit (1625–1672), the Grand Pensionary of Holland, one of the most distinguished Dutch statesmen in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a great and tragic figure of the Dutch Republic, is presented in a rich patterned *Japansche rock* (de Wit's two portraits in a "robe de chambre japonaise", as described by his biographer, Lefèvre-Pontalis, are known only from prints, among others, by Hendrik Bary) (Fig. 4). The rejection of luxury and ostentatious wealth characteristic of a Protestant society gives good reason for the thrifty Dutchmen's choice, at the beginning, of plain silk or damask of subdued colour tones contrasting with the lining and sometimes the *eri*, or the outside of the collar, of different colours. Evidence of their endeavour to retain appropriateness and modesty in exotic clothing is found not only in preserved portraits but also in commissions from the year 1642 precisely specifying the preferences of the VOC. The archive trade documents of the Company dating 1645 make mention of contracts for 60 solid silk *rokken* – 10 for each colour: purple, dark green, dark blue, light-feuillermorte, dark yellow and black with a feuillermorte coloured lining; "60 stux rocken, die alle met de beste zijden watten, dicker als ordinarij, gevoert sullen worden". All of them were sewn in Japan from Chinese or Indian silk. VOC began to bring over the material as well: Tonkin silk and Bengali damask; „golden floral damask" was noted to be imported from Deshima. The inside layer of these usually padded gowns was a cotton or silk lining made of solid fabrics of equally good quality which always matched the outer layer, basing on a harmonious contrast of colours. A good example of a brilliant scarlet satin silk cloth is presented in the *Portret of Jacob van Wassenaer van Duivenvoorde* by Willem van Mieris (c. 1690, Voorschoten, Museum Kasteel Duivenvoorde, recently bought at a Lempertz sale in 2004) where the model in a frontal pose is surrounded by the attributes of *vita activa*. In the *Portrait of Jacob Pietersz Kops*, the subject is posing frontally in a casual but more contemplative allure and facing the viewer. He is dressed in a plain silk gown of a subdued shade of feuillermorte contrasting with an emerald green lining (Emanuel Ehringer, 1687, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem).

The seventies of the 17<sup>th</sup> century produced a considerable number of fashionable portraits representing subjects clothed in more or less original "Japanese dresses". In accordance with the Baroque mode, the figures are draped in rich, glossy fabrics and are shown in sophisticated poses: with bodies bent, in counterpose, reclining on a pedestal and often sideways, facing the viewer. The irresistible charm of fabrics with their multitudinous folds of shimmering silk, taffeta, damask or sumptuous brocade provided the fuel for the artistic

talent of such recognized painters as Michiel van Musscher, Nicolas Maes, Caspar Netscher, Willem van Mieris or Jan Steen. In the latter's oeuvre we can find beautiful examples of Japanese gowns worn by the portrayed pair, Gerrit Gerritsz Schouten and Geertruy Gael, his first wife, painted in 1665 (private collection). The woman's genuine refined olive green padded robe shows small delicate patterns and, additionally, traditional Japanese emblems called *mon* or *kamon*. These round badges not only identified the wearer or his family but also indicated the level of formality of the kimono. The more formal the dress was, the more prominent they were and the larger the number of crests (there could be one, three or five). A kimono with two *mon* on the sides of the chest, one on the back and also two on the sleeves was worn by the privileged ruling class; it was known as *itsutsu mon*. Such a decoration can also be seen in the portrait of *A Man dressed in silk* by Michiel van Musscher (1680s, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg, France). In the picture the emblems which stand out clearly against the background of a plain golden material are a statement about the high level of formality of this kimono. The padded *kosode* draws its simplicity and refinement from the perfect choice of solid shiny fabrics. It should be stressed here that the painter made clever use of the contrast of a fabric of this kind with the thick matt texture of the beautiful patterned oriental rug falling from the table.

It was not the rule any more to wear these robes with belts in the classical manner. It seems that original *obi* were not imported together with the kimonos. Other belts, oriental, Turkish or Persian, were worn instead, which is illustrated in Nicolaes Maes's *Self-portrait* from a private collection or in Bol's self-portrait already mentioned. Over time, actually, a utilitarian purpose which emphasized comfort and simplicity supplanted their traditional role. The standard model would present seated figures wearing the gown open in an informal manner with the inseparable white cravat or a loosely knotted scarf and European clothes showing under.

In some cases the garment is loosely belted and, in trois quarts and full-size portraits in particular, the subject holds its border in his hand resting on the hip. Maes, Rembrandt's most gifted pupil, executed elegant portraits which depict subjects decked out in their most elegant attire. Among his numerous models who stand in graceful poses with a loose unbelted Japanese gown are the merchant, Abraham de Sadelaer, presented in 1670 in an unpatterned "Japanese gown" with a mustard gold lining (Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Holland), a doctor in law and the secretary of the Amsterdam Town Hall, the future mayor Cornelis Munter (1679, Mauritshuis, Amsterdam), and a lawyer and book keeper from Vliedingen, Willem Pottey (between 1686–1693, Rijksmu-

seum, Amsterdam) – all of them were associated one way or another with the powerful Dutch India Companies and were rich enough to buy immortality. It is probably Munter who wore the most original *Japansche rock* in all the painter's works. The handsome young man of disturbing and seductive charm is standing in a "nonchalant" pose, casually leaning with his right elbow on an ornate desk covered with various books and letters. His left hand holding the silk gown rests on the hip. The robe is painted with bravura: its densely gathered folds are blurred by brisk brushstrokes, and alternately swirling streaks of luminous olive and *chartreuse* flood the picture. This ostensible free style is in contrast with the careful manner of portrayal in which the subject was memorialized as a twenty-six year-old man the year of his marriage to Maria Pizo, the daughter of the personal doctor of Prince John Maurice of Nassau, the Dutch governor in Brazil. The solid shantung silk which could be the covering material of this graceful robe is lined with patterned dark gold silk. The reversed order of fabrics in this model creates a surprising effect: all the luxury and great refinement of the seemingly dull plain outer piece is brought into focus. In this picture the extraordinary skill with which Maes created texture, shine and the free array of folds of silk and satin is unparalleled. A similar effect of a darker patterned damask lining decorated with flowers alongside a plain satin golden gown is achieved in the portrait of Isaac Newton (James Thornhill, ca 1712, Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire). In one of his earliest portraits, by Sir Gottfried Kneller in 1689, the eminent scientist is shown at the height of his power in a purple gown (Farleigh House, Somerset). Newton often had himself portrayed in this informal and comfortable Japanese gown or banyan (among others, in a less formal purple Japanese robe, by Kneller from the London National Portrait Gallery; in a purple velour gown with brilliant violet silk lining also by Kneller, 1702, Hunterian Art Gallery in Glasgow University; by Charles Jervas, 1708, Royal Society, London; in a beautiful damask banyan with large floral and arabesque motifs of intense deep sea green, by Enoch Seeman, ca 1726). It is noteworthy that in the course of the peregrination of objects the overwhelming majority of Japanese gowns from all European seventeenth-century portraits or inventories was incorporated into European culture by the VOC who imported or offered them, and through the Dutch East India Houses where they could be purchased.

In Michiel van Musscher's portrait dated 1686 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) of Johannes Hudde, we see the mayor of Amsterdam dressed in a genuine shiny violet silk *Japansche rock*, exquisitely decorated with branches of flowers embroidered with mingled threads of gold, green, rich blue and yellow.

These shades brilliantly contrast with the dark brown lining and the red rug on the table. In this picture the books, globes and the paper carrying an official seal conjures up images of learning and of the authority of this accomplished mathematician and member of the board of directors of the Dutch East India Company. Together with the ravishing exotic garment, they create the man, a man of means in every respect. Hudde's gown, as seen by Martha Hollander, is a classical example of a gorgeous *kosode* with a beautiful pattern of Indian origin.<sup>28)</sup> Around 1700 a similar purple "Japonsche Schlafrock" is known to have been in the possession of Prince William of Orange.

The Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem presents the city mayor, Willem Fabricius, in two pictures, the work of Daniel Haringh (1636–1713) dating back to the seventies of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The model, portrayed en trois quarts sitting in an aristocratic pose against the backdrop of a formal garden, appears in two different glorious *Japonsche rocken*. The first is a flowered robe with a graceful lustrous olive silk background on which are painted or embroidered multicoloured flowers, the second is a rich, shimmering silk olive green brocade cloth of gold with discreetly subdued large floral motifs. The warm and bright colours of the gowns' lining provides a desired and subtle contrast. In these paintings, the pride, composure and dignity emanating from this bourgeois gentleman attired in gorgeous exotic robes are framed in truly royal style. Such ostentatious emphasis laid on the high status of the model is especially noticeable in the representative portrait of a man in a sitting position, dated 1679, from the London antique market and attributed to Caspar Netscher (*Portrait of a gentleman, seated in a japonsche rock*).<sup>29)</sup> The man, traditionally portrayed en trois quarts, is dressed in a rich exotic "japon" of silk brocade with a clearly visible contrasting collar – *eri*, fitted on the outside of the garment. How very different from these elaborated paintings is the characteristic brisk manner of Frans Hals who some time earlier sketched his casually-clad model with a few swift strokes in masterly style (*Portrait of a man in a Japanese gown*, c. 1660–1665, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).<sup>30)</sup>

Not only mayors of the proud cities of the United Provinces had their portraits painted in this fashion: a case in point is the superior of the magistrate in Gdańsk, Friedrich Gottlieb Engelke (1658–1716) endowed with a sharp

<sup>28)</sup> Hollander (2011: 182, 186).

<sup>29)</sup> London 2002. Picture signed and dated: C Netscher. fec./1679.

<sup>30)</sup> See also *Portrait of an unknown man in a kimono* from the Franz Hals Museum in Haarlem, Slive (1989: 358–360).



look in Andreas Stech's portrait (*Portrait of the Mayor Engelke*, 1686, National Museum in Gdańsk, Poland) (Fig. 5). The mayor, portrayed en trois quarts in the aristocratic convention by the famed Gdańsk painter, is seated against the background of a velvet curtain. A subtle and elusive smile appears on his face. He is wearing the familiar silk padded robe of a rich shade of vermilion contrasting favourably with the glossy turquoise lining. The whole dress, loosely fitting and trimmed with the same material, is of timeless beauty. Clearly, there is no doubt as to the Dutch origin of this portrait and of the elegant *japonsche rock* of the subject rendered in contrastive colours.

In keeping with the new trend, Stech presents us with another portrait, that of the celebrated scholar from Gdańsk, Jan Hevelius. This portrait is a replica of the one of two similar portraits, executed in 1677 by the greatest painter native of Gdańsk – Daniel Schultz, at the astronomer's request. To this day, one of the Schultz canvases is housed in the Polish Academy of Sciences, Gdańsk Library (Fig. 6). It was the very urge to create an immortal impression of himself that Hevelius commissioned Stech to make replicas of his portraits by Schultz and had one sent to the Royal Society of London in 1677 (Andreas Stech, signed, 1677, Oxford, Bodleian Library, on display in the Museum of the History of Science in Oxford)<sup>31</sup>. We see the astronomer sitting with his back turned to rows of books: his right hand holding a quill rests on a bound manuscript, his left on a large globe. Occupied with his work, he pauses to take a brief yet deep glimpse at the beholder. His look translates as a sense of realistic immediacy, as if he had been stopped in mid-action. In the picture are displayed lavish fabrics which make the loose dress, the white scarf wrapped freely around the neck and drape in the foreground stand out in an interior that betrays the character of the model's trade. The scroll, books and globe are identifying symbols of the astronomer, emphasizes his achievements shown by the Moon and Mercury observations.<sup>32</sup> It is typical that learned men often dressed in clothes which resembled the Japanese robe or the Indian *banyan* or the Turkish *kaftan*; in fact all of them were stereotypes.<sup>33</sup> Hevelius, a committed dandy who kept abreast of the latest trends in both science and fashion, did not hesitate to succumb to the new rage. His gown, a rich and colourful version of the Japanese

<sup>31</sup> A detailed study and description of the discussed portraits of Hevelius (the four large canvases were executed by the two painters in 1677) is in: Jackowska (2013: 69–90).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jackowska 2013, Hollander (2011: 189).

<sup>33</sup> Further reading on the convention of the portrait of the scholar cf. Manuth, Rüger, Biker (1997).

dress and, at the same time, a reflection of his opulent lifestyle, tells the world about his unique social position. "Clothes make, not the man but the image of man..." truthfully said Anne Hollander in *Seeing through Clothes* (1975). These two preserved portraits of the eminent Pole encapsulate the *signum temporis* apparent in seventeenth-century Europe, a century which saw rapid advances in many areas of the humanities and modern science. Inventors, discoverers, men of letters and historians alike were fascinated with the ideas and beliefs expounded by the new schools of scientific and philosophical thought. Seen from this angle, the iconic robe displayed in Schultz's and Stech's portraits of Hevelius captures the quintessence of the pride and self-esteem of the intellectual elite in an age of knowledge. Such a silk Japanese gown is the dress worn by Gottfried Kirch, Hevelius's assistant, in Georg Busch's copperplate (Fig. 7). Many such representations appear in engravings, to mention only the portrait of Johannes Fabricius Altorfinus, drawn and engraved by Fleischmann.

Likewise, Matthijs Naiveu in the *Portrait of Adriaen Alberdingh* (c. 1690, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem) presents the anatomist in full face, dressed in a dark emerald green *kosode* decorated with *mon*. A similar convention of a "robed scholar" surrounded by the symbols and tools of his activity can also be discerned in one of many analogous paintings which have survived, for example, Jan Verkolje's well-known portrait of Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (c. 1680, Rijksmuseum) (Fig. 8). It is only natural then that the clothing style in the modern era was an essential attribute of the intellectual community of the republic of scholars.

How desirable this attire was is documented in the account of a very knowledgeable London dandy. In his *Diary* Samuel Pepys mentions an "Indian gown" he purchased on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1661 in London for 34 s and a similar one he rented to pose in for his portrait painted by John Hayls (the painting of Pepys in a Japanese olive green gown is in the London National Portrait Gallery): "30 March. Home and eat one mouthful, and so to Hale's and there sat till almost quite dark upon working my gowne, which I hired to be drawn [in] it – an Indian gown, and I do see all the reason to expect a most excellent picture of it".<sup>34</sup> And Molière, despite portraying himself in a rather slovenly dress, gives a satirical expression of the mode in the words of the main character of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) who boasts of the dress as follows: "Je me suis fait faire cette Indienne-ci [...] Mon tailleur m'a dit que les gens de qualité estoient comme ceux-là le matin". Pepys, known for his offhand manner, did not attach much

<sup>34</sup> Pepys (1978: 104).

importance to the correct usage of words denoting ideas or products of Asian origin; hence the misuse of such terms as “Indienne” or “japon”. Such an attitude was typical of his contemporaries in the Western world. We should also be aware of the fact that the inspiring exotic dress which aroused so much passion brought glory not only to the renowned subjects but also to the painters who delighted in exposing its manifold aspects – the luster of silk, depth of brocade, precision of embroidery, wealth of patterns, materials, colours and soft tones of the silk lining.

In the same way as Pepys, the son of Constantin Huygens (mentioned earlier), Christiaan, a prominent mathematician, natural philosopher, astronomer and physicist, wished to be portrayed à la mode, in the convention of a young dandys, by the unfailing, fashionable and very costly painter, Caspar Netscher (1671, Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague). The model, pictured en trois quarts, appears in a relaxed posture with his right arm on the side and his left elbow resting casually on a red velvet cushion. A whimsical smile seems to cross his face. The auburn shade of the refined *japonsche rock* is in distinct contrast to its sky blue lining. Seen emerging from the gown are puff sleeves of a splendid lace-trimmed blouse tied with red satin ribbons. Elsewhere, sleeves are loose and wide and, now and then, cut or rolled up to reveal the fine lace work of the blouse, which makes the contrasting lining look like a cuff. This rather small portrait was made during Christiaan’s convalescence in Den Haag where he was staying following the suspension of his activities at the Académie des Sciences in France. Already at the age of 37 Huygens is a recognized scholar who is credited with many publications and scientific discoveries, i.e. his revelation in 1666 of the true nature of Saturn’s rings. This learned man, also known for his extensive correspondence with luminaries of the age including Hevelius, chose not to be portrayed with the attributes of a scholar in he accepted convention. On the contrary, the image he wishes to expose is that of a man from which radiates the natural charm of youth and that of a man of the world. A comparable departure from the convention of the scholar portrait can be observed in the portrait of Gisbert Cuper by Caspar Netscher (1680, Stedelijk Muzeum Zwolle), a professor of ancient history and classical literature, rector of Ateneum in Deventer from 1668 to 1680, and then judge and member of the State Council. Seated on the terrace with a view on a Baroque garden, the model turns slightly one side to the viewer, resting his elbow on a pedestal. His satin silk gown has sparkling patterns: large motifs of fantastic exotic flowers are densely spread on a white background, telling us the Indian origin of the fabric. But Cuper, a classicist, could not break away altogether from the official

convention of portraiture which, as a matter of fact, he wanted to accentuate by surrounding himself with sumptuous and meaningful artefacts. In Jan de Baen's picture sold in Amsterdam with his wife's pendant<sup>35</sup>, Cupper is shown standing in a purple robe with his right arm resting on a cushion with a gold medal of the States General, on his right an allegorical figure of the town maiden of Deventer is holding the fasces and behind him in the background are the statuettes of Minerva and Harpocrates. These first-rate portraits of celebrated scholars in the Dutch Golden Age are a testament to worldly class, wealth and intellect.

And, interestingly, other young and anonymous (today) models emerge from oblivion only by virtue of vanity and their fortunate passage through a famous painter's atelier... Such is the case of the *Portrait of a Gentleman in a brocaded silk 'Japonsche rock', on the Terrace at Sunset* (c. 1670) by Nicolaes Maes sold at Christie's London auction.<sup>36</sup> The model is presented en trois quarts, with one arm resting on a pedestal of the terrace and the other on his hip, against the backdrop of a stately garden. The sun's setting rays send warm and golden reflections on the face, on the hair and on the sumptuous olive gold brocade silk Japanese gown displaying acanthus scrolls and lined with a brilliant orange material. In an undated painting by Pieter Cornelisz van Slingelandt (Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden), an unknown young man is standing by a table, sideways to the viewer, in a richly-furnished interior. His right hand rests on his hip, his left is held over a book. His slim and small body is draped to the ground with a voluminous padded silk gown, which makes him look even younger and smaller. A similarly padded and unpatterned silk gown of olive-brown shade is worn by Johannes van Crombrugge, portrayed by the same painter in 1677 (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam) (Fig. 9).

Another prime example of this garment is shown in the consummate portrait of François Leydecker (1650–1718), the Commissioner for the Generality Court due Zealand (anonymous, ca 1690, Rijksmuseum) (Fig. 10). The purple grayish gown is decorated with fairly wide bands bearing an ornament painted in rich gold, the same shiny colour as the lining.

A stunningly beautiful illustration of a model posing in a lavish Japanese kimono is the full-scale portrait of Anne Elizabeth van Reede (1652–1682), the work of the Dutch painter, Gerard Hoet (1648–1733) dated around 1678 (Slot-Zuylen Museum, Utrecht, Holland) (Fig. 11). This canvas of considerable dimensions presents the seventeen-year old model almost life-size in a palace

<sup>35</sup> Amsterdam 2010.

<sup>36</sup> London 1998. Signed: N:/Maes.

and garden scenery. The dark-haired young woman, the four-year wife of Hendrik Jacob van Tuyll van Serooskerken, a prominent member of the Council of State of the Netherlands, is wearing a long padded gown belted at the waist, with wide, three-quarter length sleeves. This highly desirable *Japonsche rock* could be an exquisite sample of an original kimono with a hand-painted or printed floral design. Here, the dark and delicately shimmering silk fabric provides the background for vivid, lifelike bouquets of densely tossed multicoloured flowers corresponding to the intense brick-red lining of the gown. The meticulous care and excellent taste with which the richness of this extremely costly exotic attire is rendered immediately define the high social and economic status of the model. An interesting explanation for this rare female portrait in a Japanese robe is given in the gender context. In this picture the author constructs a multiple identity of the figure. Her status symbol is that of a landed woman belonging to an influential family. An air of power and possession emanates from the figure, the well-aimed effect created by choosing an impressive but costly full-size representation. The vibrantly patterned Japanese robe suitable for both domestic and public use points to her private and public spheres. On another level, she carries masculine connotations, which, for the painter, challenges the conventions of gender as it was not typical to portray women in a *japonsche rock*. What's more, the robe evokes the ceremony of gift exchange in male circles and at the same time may also suggest gifting within the family. In this portrait Anne seems to traverse all boundaries in a world where function and gender intertwine.<sup>37)</sup>

In Poland, an interesting native historical source in which are found “Japanese robes” of great beauty and value is the General Inventory dated 1696 and compiled after the death of King John III Sobieski in Wilanow, the royal suburban residence. In it are listed several expensive gowns called “robes de chambre”.<sup>38)</sup> Their exact description allows us to classify them as oriental, however, specification of usage – menswear or womenswear – is not given. It is known that a loose, close-fitting casual dress cut in the “Japanese fashion” was also worn as a *déshabillé négligé* by trendy ladies in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>37)</sup> From an unpublished abstract presented in Amsterdam: Rife 2010.

<sup>38)</sup> *Inwentarz generalny klejnotów, sreber, galanterij y ruchomości różnych tudzież obrazów, które się tak w pałacu willanowskim jako też w skarbcach warszawskich Je K. Mci znajdowały [...], odprawiony d. 10 novembris Anno Domini 1696* (General Inventory of Jewels, Silver, Accessories, Movables and Various Paintings which were Found in His Majesty's Palace in Wilanow and Warsaw Treasuries [...], drawn up 10 novembris Anno Domini 1696) published in: Czołowski (1937: 29–84); Fijałkowski (1997: 160–201).

In the inventory, entry nr 180 reveals “a green lamé robe de chambre of Chinese cloth with a pearly taffeta lining” intended for Prince Jacob. And his brothers were also to receive one gown each (nr 234 and 235) from the long namban chest of His Majesty’s Dutch Cabinet. Prince Constantin’s gown was “a Chinese embroidered satin robe de chambre with floral patterns and a brick-red taffeta lining”. These two seem to be a good example of a Dutch Japanese gown as discussed in this paper. Prince Alexander’s was “a white satin one embroidered with flowers and a two-headed eagle in the middle and lined with scarlet satin”. Worthy of note is the fact that the absence of entries denoting clothes confirms that the position “robes de chambre” occupied in the inventory from 1696 is an uncommon occurrence, which has been completely overlooked so far. Hence the gowns intended for distribution must have formed a valuable part of the vast collection of John III. This illuminated ruler and patron of Hevelius fostered advances in such fields as natural science, geography and many other. How close their association was is demonstrated by the astronomer’s gift to the king: three lemons hand-grown by the scholar. As regards fashion, King Sobieski greatly appreciated the oriental origin of the Japanese gown or another “indian gown”, in particular its softness and comfort in the last years of his life when his health began to decline and he was forced to confine himself to his private quarters where he could wear a more informal dress. For the same reason, his successor, August II Saxe, used to wear a similar robe at the end of his life.<sup>39)</sup>

Such a characteristic interest in the discussed exotic attire may be interpreted as a valuable contribution to the history of artistic tastes in modern Europe and not only as an important aspect of fashion in the context of material culture. What surfaced from the immense collection of gowns was an idealized costume of social and intellectual standing, the appearance of which in allegorical representations and portraits is an essential formative element of “early modern masculine identities”, to borrow Martha Hollander’s term.

The fabulous exotic gowns and their derivatives epitomize the powerful impact the Dutch East India Company had on the creation of a taste for the oriental dress.<sup>40)</sup> Indeed, the permanent assimilation of the “Japanese robe” into European society may be convincing evidence of a transcultural phenomenon and of existent meanders of cultural exchange between East and West.

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<sup>39)</sup> On banyan, *japonsche rock* and the king’s gowns see Zaslawska (2008: 145–150).

<sup>40)</sup> Israel (1989: 186–187), Hollander (2011: 185).

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Fig. 1. Archita Ricci, *Portrait of Hasekura Tsunenaga*, oil painting, 1615, private collection



Fig. 2. Arnoldus Montanus, *Rich carriage of a Tai-kosama lady in waiting*, engraving, *Atlas Japonensis*, London 1670



Fig. 29

Robe de chambre. A d'après Bonnart — B du poète Lenoble.

Fig. 3. *Eustache Lenoble in robe de chambre*, print, 1695

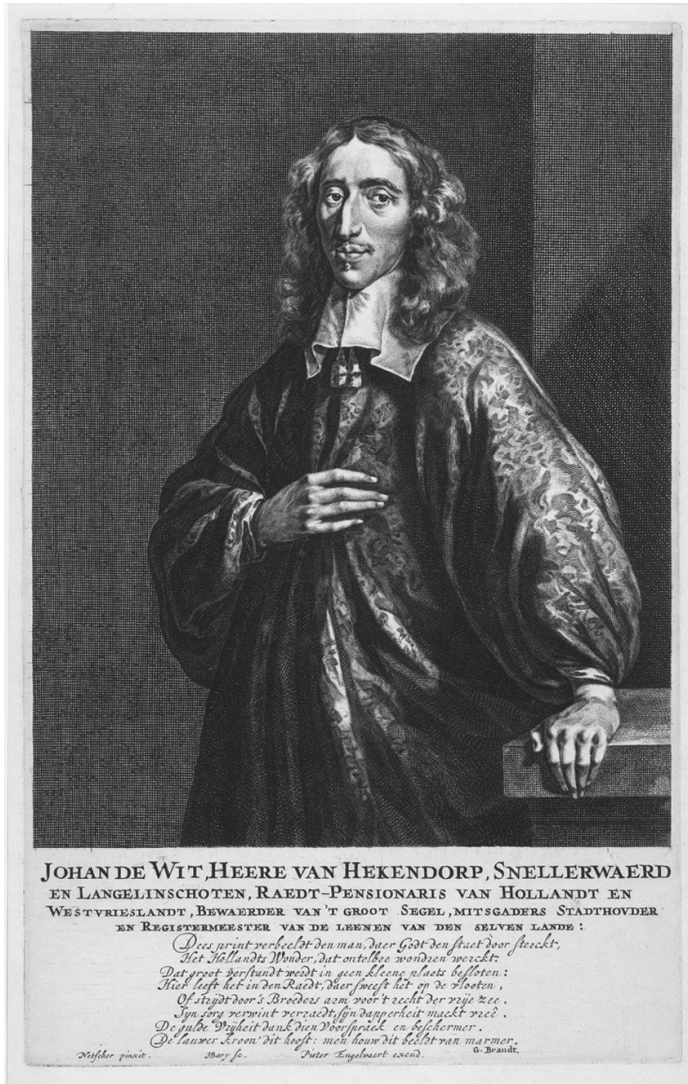


Fig. 4. Hendrik Bary, Pieter Engelvaert, Geeraert Brandt, *Portrait of Jan de Witt*, copperplate engraving after Caspar Netscher oil painting, 1657–1707



Fig. 5. Andreas Stech, *Portrait of Mayor Engelke*, oil painting, 1686, National Museum in Gdańsk, Poland

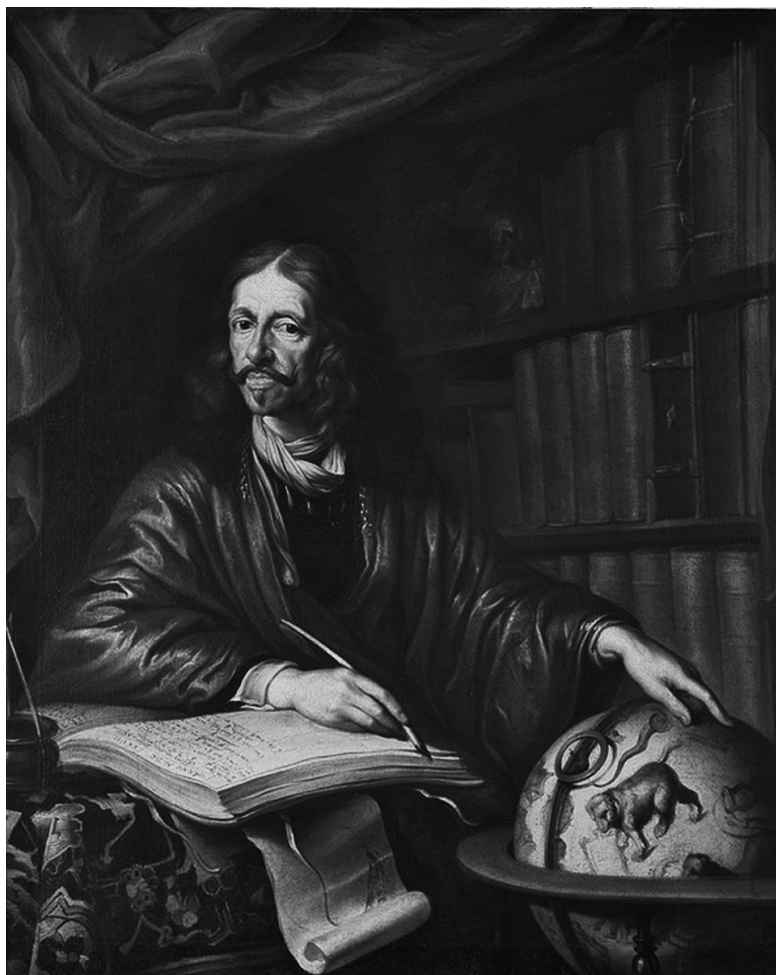


Fig. 6. Daniel Schultz, *Portrait of Jan Hevelius*, oil painting, 1677, PAN Biblioteka Gdańska, Poland.



Fig. 7. Georg Paulus Busch, *Portrait of Astronomer Gottfried Kirch (1639–1710), Hevelius assistant, in a Japanese gown*, copperplate engraving, PAN Biblioteka Gdańska, Poland



Fig. 8. Jan Verkolje, *Portrait of Antonie van Leeuwenhoek*, oil painting, ca 1680, Rijksmuseum

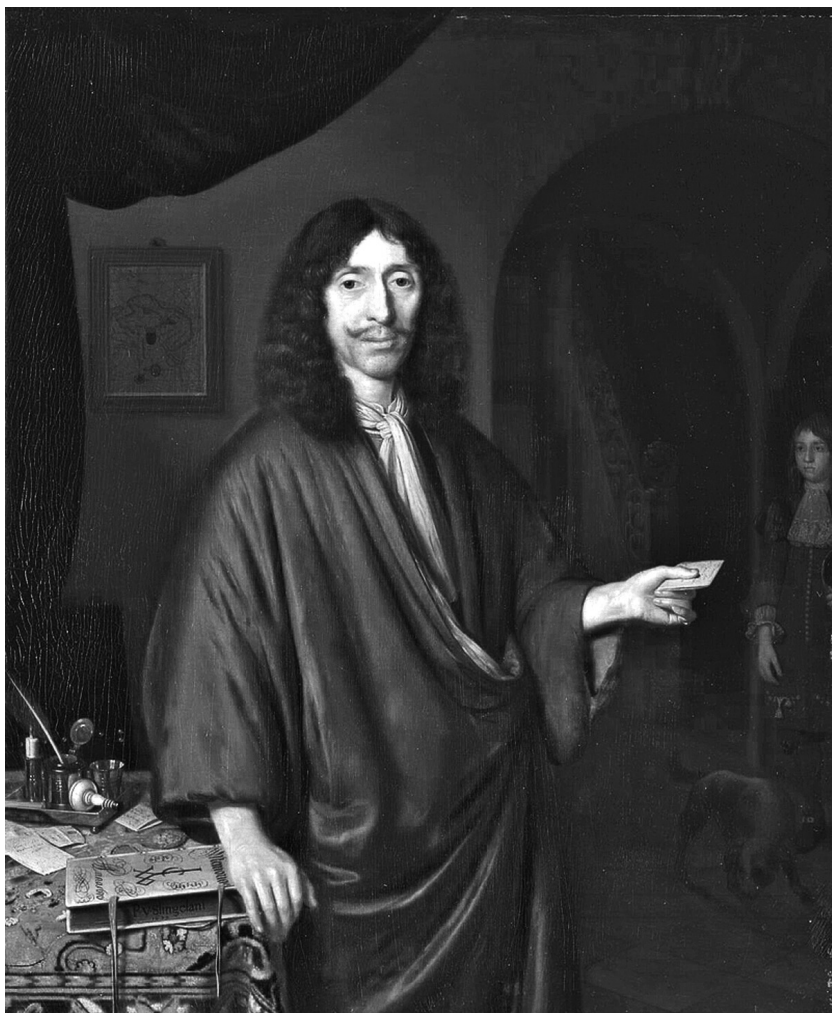


Fig. 9. Pieter Cornelisz. van Slingelandt, *Portrait of Johannes van Crombrugge*, oil painting, 1677, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam





Fig. 10. Anonymous, *Portrait of François Leydecker* (1650–1718), oil painting, ca 1690, Rijksmuseum



Fig. 11. Gerard Hoet, *Portrait of Anne Elizabeth van Reede*, oil painting, around 1678, Slot-Zuylen Museum, Utrecht, Holland