

THE WAXPRINT
ITS ORIGIN
AND ITS INTRODUCTION ON THE GOLD COAST

Willem Ankersmit
Driedistellaan 19
2554 HN DEN HAAG
The Netherlands
Tel: 31 (0) 703688309
E-mail: w.ankersmit@planet.nl
Student number: 0417890

Master Thesis
Willem Ankersmit
University of Leiden
Faculty of Humanities
Institute for History
Specialization:
European Expansion and
Globalization.
Tutor: Dr. H.J. den Heijer

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.	TEXTILE TRADE BEFORE 1874.....	7
2.1	Trade with the Gold Coast up to 1807	7
2.1.1	General trade	7
2.1.2	Textile market on the Gold Coast up to 1807	9
2.2	Trade with the Gold Coast from 1807 to 1874.....	16
2.2.1	General trade	16
2.2.2	Textile trade 1808 - 1874	26
2.3	Summary	29
3	THE ORIGIN OF THE WAXPRINT	31
3.1	The development of a cotton printing industry in Europe	31
3.2	The market for European textiles in the Dutch East Indies.....	31
3.3	The development of the Dutch cotton industry in the 19 th century	32
3.4	The market for (imitation) batiks in the Dutch East Indies in the 19 th century.....	35
3.5	The wax batik or wax print of Prévinaire.....	37
3.6	Summary	39
4	THE INTRODUCTION OF DUTCH WAX PRINT ON THE GOLD COAST	41
4.1	Scramble for the Gold Coast and the start of colonialism.....	41
4.2	Textile trade at the end of the 19 th century	44
4.3	The introduction of the wax print.....	46
4.3.1	The influence of missionaries on clothing	54
4.3.2	The Basel Mission Trading Company.....	55
4.3.3	Other Dutch producers of wax prints	56
4.3.4	The demise of the HKM, Roessingh and the LKM.....	64
4.3.5	Wax print producers in Great Britain	65
4.3.6	The Swiss cotton printers and The Basel Mission Trading Company after 1920....	67
4.4	Summary	69
5	CONCLUSIONS	71
6	EPILOGUE	73
7	SOURCES	77
7.1	Archives	77
7.1.1	Basel Mission Society Archives.....	77
7.1.2	Manchester Archives	77
7.1.3	Municipal Archive of Rotterdam	77
7.1.4	Dutch National Archives The Hague	77
7.1.5	Museum P.F. van Vlissingen, Helmond.....	77
7.2	Unpublished documents	77
7.3	Digital sources.....	77
7.4	Literature	78

1 INTRODUCTION

Visitors to West Africa are often impressed by the colourful fabrics of intricate design worn by many Africans. The majority of the fabrics are printed textiles. These textiles are of two main types: wax prints and non wax prints (fancy prints). Both these African prints were once produced in Europe for the African market. Now only the top quality of wax prints is still being produced by Vlisco in Helmond the Netherlands. These wax prints bear the trade mark *Real Dutch Wax* or *Veritable Wax Hollandais*. The other types of prints are produced locally or in Asia. Wax printed cloth and cheaper roller printed imitations have become one of the most widely distributed forms of African textiles today, worn in every West African country and also in many other countries of sub Saharan Africa.

They play a major economic role through trade, involving a network of wholesale and smaller retailers, in which women traders play a very important part.

This study is limited to the top end of African print hierarchy the wax print.

Wax-printed cloths are industrially produced following a resist-dye technique inspired by the Indonesian art of batik.

The so called wax prints are produced by printing a warm resin paste onto both faces of the cloth.

Although the cloths are known as wax prints, the actual substance applied to the fabric in order to resist the dye is a type of resin.¹

The cloth is then dyed, usually in indigo, which is resisted by the resin paste. After this paste is removed other colours are added.²

These additional colours used to be printed by hand blocking but as it is a labour intensive process it is now almost being replaced everywhere by machine printing.



Figure 1 Printing additional colours by hand blocking
Source: Photo W. Ankersmit Ghana Textile Printing Co, Tema, Ghana, 2008

The complex history of the wax print links together Europe, Africa and Southern Asia.

The development of the wax print began with an attempt of European manufacturers to undercut the local batik industry in the Dutch East Indies by supplying machine –made imitations of the Javanese batiks to the population there.

This attempt was successful in the 1860s, but after that period the European manufacturers faced stiff competition from the local batik industry and they stopped producing wax prints except one, the *Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij* (HKM). Because of the difficult market

¹ Clarke Duncan, 114

² Picton John *The art of African Textiles* 24

for wax prints in Asia the HKM had to look for other markets for this product and found one on the Gold Coast.

The story of the wax print in Africa began on the Gold Coast in the late 19th century when a Scottish trader, Brown Fleming, introduced the wax print of the HKM in the former British colony Gold Coast (now Ghana) to meet the demand of the increasingly prosperous local population for high quality fabrics. The wax prints destined for the Gold Coast were first manufactured in The Netherlands and later also in Great Britain and Switzerland. From the moment of their introduction in the Gold Coast, they became an instant success. From the Gold Coast the popularity of the wax print spread also to other West African colonies.

After independence of the West African colonies in the second half of the 20th century local manufacturers have successfully taken over most of the former European production, but the top segment of the market is still being served by one European producer, Vlisco in Helmond, The Netherlands. The last Swiss factory Hohlenstein AG closed down in 1974 and the last British one, Newton Bank Print works in 2007.

The wax prints are full of tradition, contain expressions of West African culture and are geared to the tastes and preferences of the people. They are often adopted as the national costume and acquire the significance of a status symbol, indicating wealth and social prestige. Although the wax prints were produced in Europe during the colonial era, African traders and consumers determined the development of this product.

So European production was determined by African patronage.³

The product at first of European and Asian design became increasingly African in appearance by a process of cultural appropriation.

The designs mediate local concerns that can be described according to Picton, variously as decorative, commemorative, proverbial, didactic and funerary.⁴

Nielsen arranges wax prints in categories according to the subject of the main motif, religion, mythology, tradition, history, current events, nature, science, technology, artefacts, musical instruments, personal objects as well as all other objects of daily life.⁵

In West African culture cloth and wax prints in particular play an important role in daily life and ceremonies and they have a significant communicative value, indicating status or wealth, conveying messages as a mean of non-verbal communication.

Cloths are widely used as powerful mass communication media, for commemorative, political, religious, social and other purposes.

As the gold Coast was the first colony, where the wax print was introduced this research is limited to the former Gold Coast colony and not the whole of West Africa.

The period of research stretches from the early 19th century to the end of the First World War, when the introductory phase of wax print development had ended and the market for wax prints in the Gold Coast was well established.

The aim of this research is to find out why the wax print became such a success on the Gold Coast, who prepared the market for this product and how was it achieved and why Dutch manufacturers in particular were the most successful in producing wax prints for the West African market.

So the whole supply chain from producer to consumer will be investigated.

This research combines textile history with economic and social history of the Gold Coast Colony (colonial Ghana). The introduction of the wax print on the Gold Coast is viewed in the context of the era of trade between the Gold Coast and Europe and Asia, which lasted for

³ Picton J. *the Art of African textiles* 25,29

⁴ *Ibidem* 28

⁵ Nielsen Ruth. 487

centuries. In the next chapter the textile trade before the “scramble for Africa” will be investigated in the context of changing patterns of general trade on the Gold Coast. Distinction is made between the period of trade before the arrival the Europeans on the Coast of West Africa, the period between the arrival the Europeans and the abolishment of the slave trade (1807) and the period after this event and the start of the scramble for Africa at the Gold Coast in 1874. This was the era of old colonialism. It had a maritime and mercantile character. European traders purchased the wares brought to them by local merchants. European governments had no territorial ambitions beyond the protection of their trading centres at the coast.

In the third chapter, the origin of the wax print will be presented. Emphasis lies on the Asian roots of the wax print and its development in Europe in the 19th century.

In the fourth chapter changes in general trade during the beginning of the era of new imperialism and the establishment of formal British Empire at the Gold Coast will be described. Under the new imperialism the British were no longer content simply to buy what local merchants provided. They considered local political institutions and local infrastructure and industry an impediment to trade. They moved into the hinterland of the Gold Coast by force and introduced a European way of administration, invested capital there setting up mines, plantations, factories, banks, railroads and river steamers.

These changes and the rise of favourable economic conditions at the turn of the century caused an expansion of the economy and a rise of the standard of living on the Gold Coast.

This created a growing market for luxury textile products like the wax print.

All this had a profound impact on trade this will be discussed with emphasis on the changing market for textile products during that period.

This changing market for textile products on the Gold Coast coincided with important innovations in the textile printing industry in Europe. This coincidence made the introduction of the wax print on the Gold Coast possible. The various theories on the preparation of the market on the Gold Coast for Wax prints will be presented and analysed.

The fifth chapter consists of the conclusions.

Many sources of information have been used for this research. In Helmond several documents have been consulted from the archives of the *Museum P.F. van Vlissingen* (Vlisco museum) with the generous assistance of Frans van Rood, Ruud Sanders and Jan van der Heijden. The most important document was the *HKM Stalenboek I, 1904-1906* (pattern book).

Also sources have been used from the Dutch National Archives in The Hague and the Municipal Archive of Rotterdam.

Important sources were found in the archives of the Basel Mission Trading Company which are part of the archives of the Basel Mission Society in Basel like the *Warenlieferanten, Zahlungsbuch 1911-25, M. Binnhammer Korrespondenz 1907-1908* and correspondence of the *West Afrika, General Agent 1912-14*. Mr Guy Thomas and Ms Claudia Withlin were very helpful in making these sources available.

A rich digital source of information is the Basel Mission Image Archive (www.bmpix.org).

This digital picture gallery contains photographs taken at the intersection of European African and Asian cultures from 1850 to 1950.

Some documents from the Accrington Library and from the archive of the Calico Printers Association in the Manchester Archives contained interesting information on the various British wax print producers. On these producers valuable information was also provided by ABC Wax Ltd Hyde Cheshire.

On the Swiss producers of wax prints useful information was provided by Ms Susanne Grieder of the *Textildruck Museum* in the *Freuler Palast* in Näfels and by Dr. Sybill Kindlimann of the *Glerner Wirtschafts Archiv* in Schwanden (both in canton Glarus).

From the literature and unpublished documents which were consulted some need to be mentioned here as particularly important.

A unique document by former Ankersmit sales manager Mr. G.J. Meeles is the *Geschiedenis van het wasdrukartikel van Ankersmit's Textielfabrieken NV*. Mr Meeles started to work for the firm as a fifteen year old boy in 1905 and retired in 1957.⁶ After the closure of the Ankersmit textile company in 1965, Vlisco gave Mr Meeles the assignment to write the above document to keep the memory of the Ankersmit wax print product alive.

In his master thesis of 1996 *Een overzeese afzetmarkt. De marketing van Vlisco in Ghana 1900-1996* Mr. Paul Ingenbleek gives a very elaborate account of the marketing of the wax prints on the Gold Coast with emphasis on the products of P.F. van Vlissingen & Co.

A monumental work on the development of the Dutch printing and dyeing industry in the period 1835-1920 is the dissertation of G.P.J Verbong *Technological innovations in calico printing factories and dye works in the Netherlands 1835-1920*, (Amsterdam 1988).

Unfortunately the archives of the HKM have disappeared. Except for the *Stalenboeken* (pattern books) which are kept at the Vlisco museum in Helmond, there seems to be no documentation left on the relation of the HKM with Brown Fleming.

No more information on this Scottish trader and his company was obtained than the facts presented by Dr W. T. Kroese in his very informative booklet *The Origin of the Dutch Wax Block Prints on the Coast of West Africa* published in 1976.

⁶ Ankersmit J Bij een afscheid *Ankerpost* 2 (1957) 1

2. TEXTILE TRADE BEFORE 1874

2.1 Trade with the Gold Coast up to 1807

2.1.1 General trade

Long before the arrival of the Europeans in the 15th century, caravan routes through the Sahara connected West Africa with North Africa. The latter region traded with the Middle East and Asia. As the transport capacity of the caravans was very small only luxury low volume commodities could be traded profitably.

The arrival of the Portuguese on the Gold coast in 1471 ushered in an era of trade that lasted for more than three centuries. The Portuguese started a very lucrative gold trade, which they dominated for more than a century. They built their first fort Sao Jorge da Mina (Elmina) at the Gold Coast in 1482.⁷

The success of the Portuguese attracted several other competing European nations. The Dutch started trading with the peoples on the Gold Coast in the late sixteenth century. In the early seventeenth century the Dutch got several footholds there, by conquering Portuguese forts like Elmina and building new ones. Also the British, Danes, Swedes and the Brandenburgers built trading forts along the Gold coast and the Portuguese monopoly ended.



Figure 2 Elmina Castle

Source: Foto A. Ankersmit (1960)

In the 18th century the Portuguese still traded on the Gold Coast but like the French had no longer permanent bases there. The Danes expelled the Swedes from the Gold Coast in 1657.⁸ The Brandenburgers maintained two forts in the extreme west between 1685 and 1709.⁹ They eventually sold out to the Dutch.¹⁰ All the European nations had established chartered trading companies, like the Dutch *West Indies Company* (WIC), the British *Royal African Company* and the Danish *West Indian and Guinean Company*.

The advent of the Europeans increased the trade volume of West Africa, as shipping made trading larger volumes of merchandise much easier than transport with camels through the Sahara.

The growing demand for slaves on the plantations in the Americas in the 17th century created the Atlantic Slave trade. A vast trade arose, based on the classic triangular pattern of

⁷ Fage J.D. 49

⁸ Ibidem 70

⁹ ibidem

¹⁰ Heijer H.J. den 131

consumer goods going from Europe to the West African Coast, slaves to the Americas and rum and sugar back to Europe. The consumer goods from Europe consisted of European and Asian merchandise like textiles, gin, metal bars, utensils, gunpowder, rifles etc.

All but two of the roughly 60 forts and trading lodges, built along a coastal strip of about 500 km of the Gulf of Guinea over, were sited on the Gold Coast.

The main reason for this was that this coast was close to significant gold deposits. Hence its name given by the Europeans. But that is not the only explanation, as the above buildings on the Gold Coast were built to serve the infamous Atlantic slave trade rather than the gold trade. Just as important as the presence of gold inland was the physical nature of the Gold Coast.

Studded with large rocky outcrops rather than mangrove swamps and sprawling shallow lagoons, Ghana boasts a great many good natural harbours, easily approached by ship, but also easily guarded and protected, with ample local material for constructing fortified buildings, according to Philip Briggs in the Bradt travel guide on Ghana (2007).

Because of its favourable location near the gold fields and the above suitable geographical features the Gold Coast became the centre of European trading activities in West Africa.

The European merchants had no authority outside their forts and trading posts. They did not venture inland but traded with local chiefs and merchants on an even footing.

They were therefore very dependent on the local brokers. These were rich African middlemen, who organised and financed the trade with the interior. The European merchants provided the brokers with their merchandise in good faith only to be rewarded after the brokers returned with the required volume of slaves, gold, ivory and other African produce.

This is how the credit system of the West African trade came into being. This system remained in use until the end of the 19th century.¹¹

In due course the financial viability of the chartered companies proved to be unsustainable.

They had difficulties in raising money for the defence and the upkeep of the forts.

Moreover as rather bureaucratic institutions, they were not able to adapt to the requirements of the rapidly increasing slave trade in the 18th century.

The most serious challenge to the chartered companies was the continual intrusion of "interlopers" or private merchants, who ignored the prerogatives of the chartered companies and reaped great profits at the latter's expense.¹²

These private traders were much more flexible and would ultimately take over from the chartered companies.

In 1776 the Danish West Indian and Guinean Company was dissolved. Their establishments on the Gold Coast had already become a Danish crown colony in 1754.¹³ The Dutch WIC was liquidated in 1791.¹⁴ The British Royal African Company was dissolved in 1750 and replaced by an association, called the *Company of Merchants Trading to West Africa*, membership of which was open to all English merchants wishing to engage in the West African trade.¹⁵

The European traders had to deal with various population groups on the Gold Coast. The most significant one was the Twi speaking Akan. They migrated to the territory of modern Ghana from the Sahel before the end of the 13th century. The Akan formed a majority of the population of the Gold Coast and continue to do so in present day Ghana. They include the Ashanti and the Fante. By the 18th century the Ashanti had become the dominant people of the Gold Coast. Controlling the sources of gold they prospered through trade with the Europeans. The Fante inhabited the central portion of the coastal plain and they acted as intermediaries between the dominant Ashanti confederation and the European traders at the

¹¹ Hopkins A.G. 109

¹² Fage J.D. 71

¹³ <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/region/westafrica/xgcdan.html>

¹⁴ Heijer H.J. den 187

¹⁵ Fage J.D. 71

coast. The area to the east of Lake Volta was inhabited by the Ewe since the 15th century. They were immigrants from Eastern Nigeria. The other important group of the East is the Ga people of the Accra coastal plain. A map with the areas of main population groups and main settlements of the 19th century is shown in the figure below.

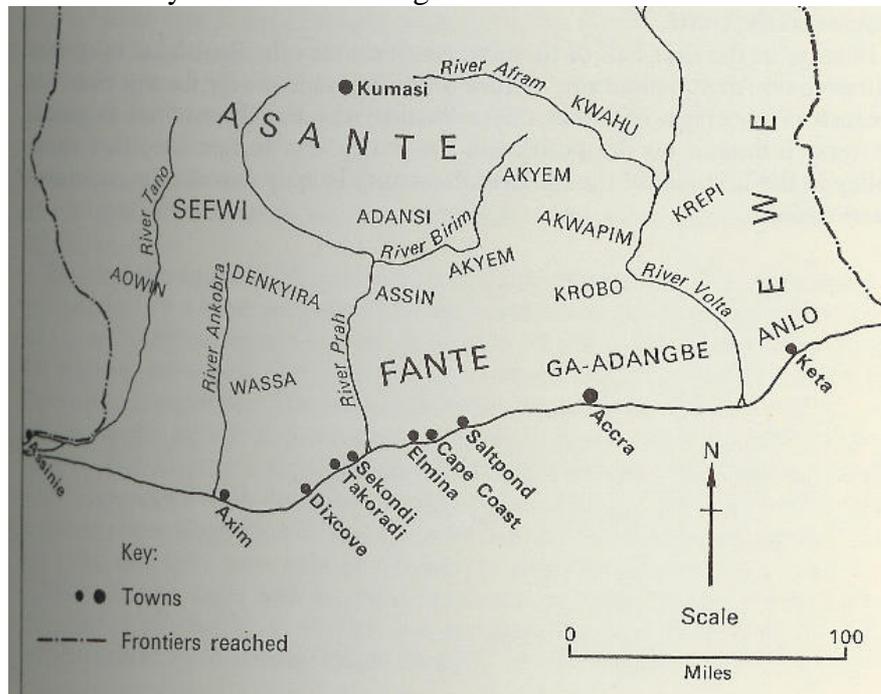


Figure 3 Population groups and settlements on the Gold Coast in the early 19th century

Source: Agbodeka F. *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast 1868-1900* (Illinois 1971) 13

2.1.2 Textile market on the Gold Coast up to 1807

The arrival of the Europeans stimulated the market for locally made textiles.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, there was already a thriving local textile industry in West Africa. The materials used in this local production of cloth included bast fibres, wool, cotton raffia and the bark of certain trees. Textile manufacturing in West Africa was both supplemented and stimulated by imports from the trans-Saharan trade, luxury textiles from Asia and Europe like Chinese silk, printed cloth from India and fancy brocades reached West Africa via the Sahara. The demand for textiles was satisfied by these imports and by indigenous production. The imports of foreign textiles stimulated the transfer of knowledge of weaving, dyeing and printing. Both cotton and its weaving appear to have been introduced by Muslim traders in Mali at the beginning of the second millennium.¹⁶

The use of cotton became more common in the 17th and 18th century because of the great variety of Asian cottons brought in by the Europeans. Local textiles, plain or with warp- or weft stripes created with dyed yarns were probably only worn by the elite groups but became more common over time.¹⁷ From the 17th century dress for the elites became more elaborate as more complicated techniques and the use of red materials unravelled from cloth imported from Europe opened up new design possibilities.

¹⁶ Iliffe J. 84

¹⁷ Kramer Malika 163

Various visitors and traders have described the various colourful garments of the inhabitants, among them Willem Bosman, WIC merchant and famous author of *New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (1705), who wrote on women's dress the following: *Their common Habit is made of three or four Ells of either Velvet, Silk, Cloath, Perpetuana, or some sort of Stuff; and several have this sort of Habit or Paan, as they call it, made of fifty sorts of stuff This they wind around their Waste and bind it on with a Fillet of red Cloth, or something else about half Ell broad, to make it close to the Body, both ends of Fillet hanging out of their Paan, which in Ladies of Quality is adorned with Gold and Silver-lace; On the upper part of their Body they cast a veil of Silk or some other fine Stuff.*¹⁸



Figure 4 Willem Bosman WIC trader

Source : Bosman W. *Nauwkeurige beschrijving van de Guinese goud- tand- en slavekust* (Utrecht,1704)

Local textile manufacture continued to thrive alongside the international textile trade and was further stimulated by the new era of global trade on the West Coasts of Africa in the 17th century. The Bight of Benin was one of the several areas where West African weavers in the interior produced cotton cloth for export. The so called “Benin cloths” were taken up to the coast and sold to European merchants, who would trade them further along the coast.¹⁹

The growth of the textile trade resulted in the establishment of several weaving centres like Kano in Nigeria and in Bonwire, near Kumasi the capital of the Ashanti.

The major form of artistic production in Bonwire was the Kente cloth, whereby narrow strips were woven from coloured yarn, in complicated patterns and the sewn together to produce highly decorative –and highly expensive- cloths, which were then draped around the body.²⁰

The cloths were woven for the court of the Ashantene, the King of the Ashanti Empire, which extended over much of the present-day state of Ghana.

The raw material for this artistry came from Europe in the form of silk fabrics that were carefully unpicked to obtain thread which could then be rewoven into the narrow strips.

Although the high point of the Ashanti royal weavers seems to have passed with the conquest of the kingdom by the British at the end of the 19th century, Kente cloth remains an important contributor to African dress today.

¹⁸ Bosman W. 119,121

¹⁹ Kriger Colleen E. *Production and Consumption of Cotton textiles in West Africa* 7

²⁰ Ross R. 127



Figure 5 Chief of Butre (Fort Batensteijn) in Kente cloth

Photo W.Ankersmit, Butre 2008

Recognised worldwide, it has taken on a new role as a symbolic affirmation of African identity and pan African unity that has struck a particular chord with Afro-Americans and exiled Africans today.²¹

The Kente cloths were given a traditional name and a symbolic meaning was attached to each design.²²

Next to this weaving technique local printing and dyeing techniques were also developed; like Adinkra, also a traditional fabric decorated with symbolic designs printed on by hand with stamps carved out of calabash gourds, and Tye and Dye (Plangi) a widely used resist technique that involves enclosing portions of a fabric within tightly drawn thread ties to prevent them from taking up the dye.²³

²¹ Clarke, Duncan 64

²² Ingenbleek, Paul *Een overzeese afzetmarkt* 29

²³ Gillow, John 83

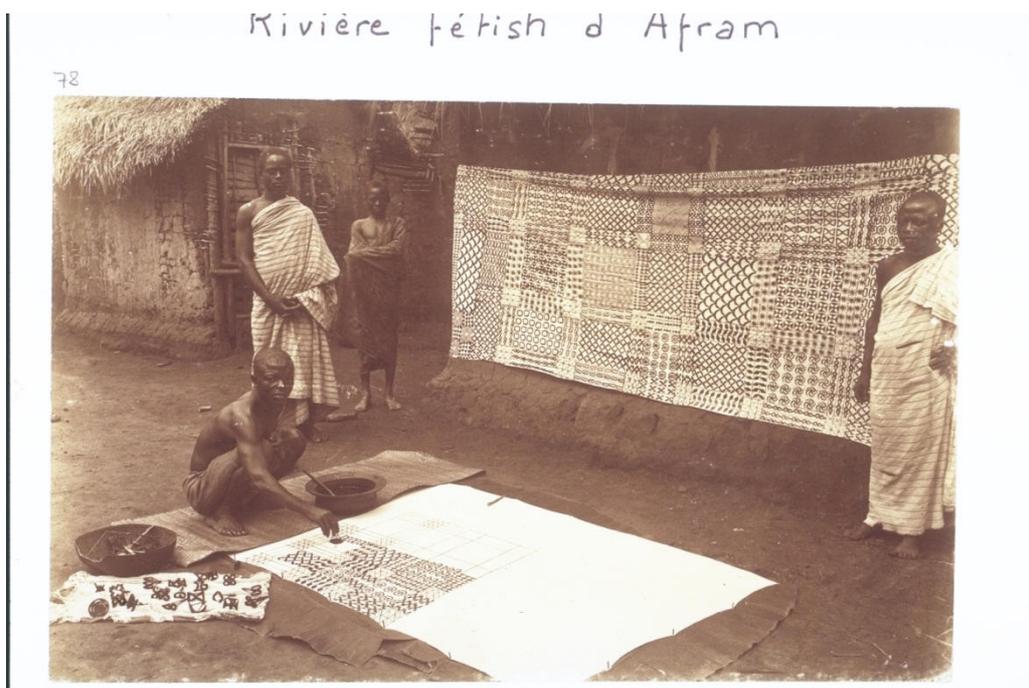


Figure 6 Adinkra printing 1888

Source: Basel Mission Archive, [www.bmpix.org_\(QD-30_043_0078\)](http://www.bmpix.org_(QD-30_043_0078))

The arrival of the Europeans increased the volume of trade and also the market for imported textile products was enlarged.

The Portuguese noticed several kinds of cloths imported via the caravan routes through the Sahara, like printed cotton cloth from India (chintz), Chinese silk and woven cloth from Morocco and Tunisia.

They discovered that for a profitable trade with the Gold Coast textiles were indispensable.

They -and the other European traders, who came after them- also found out that- although Africa was a ready market for almost all forms of cloth- the African customers rejected any novel imports which did not suit their taste. This became a recurrent theme in the history of African textile trade with Europe.

The market was therefore very unpredictable for the European trader. That is why they always took a great variety of cloth with them. Dutch and English accounts from the 17th century, for example, specify by name seemingly innumerable types of textiles their ships carried to the Guinea coast, most of them coming from European and Indian manufacturers.

cotton	linen	wool	silk	mixed
baft	cambric	kerseys	damask	annebaas
calico	canvas	perpetuanas	velvet	fustian
campay	damask	says		gingham
chintz	Haarlem			gold/silver brocade
coromandel	plathilios			
gingham	sheets			
kannekins	Silesian			
muslin	tickings			
nicanees	Ypres			
salempor				

Table 1 Textile imports to Benin from Europe and India

Source : Kriger Colleen E . *Cloth in West African History* 59

The African consumer had always had a preference for colourful garments and also cotton ranked high for being comfortable to wear in the tropics.

So the Portuguese began to import them from their establishments in India to West Africa in the sixteenth century.

After the arrival of other European traders on the coast of Guinea and India they also started trading Indian cottons in West Africa.

The most popular of these commodities for the lower end of the market were plain white, loom patterned, or piece dyed cotton textiles. They were called *Guinees Lijwaet* or *Negros- kleeden* by the Dutch, *Pintados* by the Portuguese and Guinea cloth by the English. They were woven and dyed in India, shipped to Europe to be re-exported by European traders to Africa's Guinea coast and the West Indies.

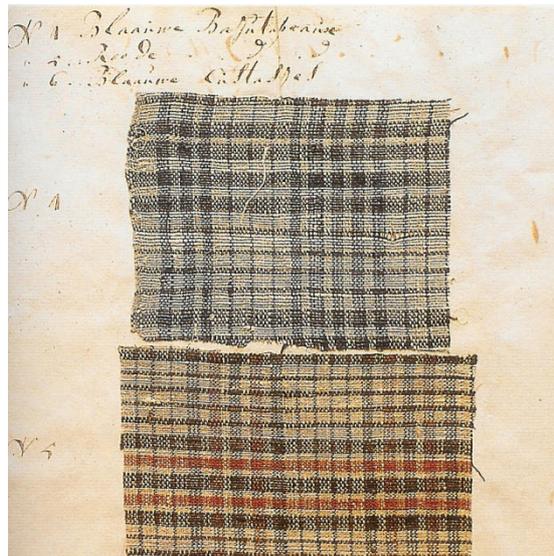


Figure 7 Cloth samples of the cargo list of the *Vrouwe Maria Geertruida* on her way to West Africa 1787
Source : Brommer B. *Bontjes voor de tropen: de export van imitatieweefsels naar de tropen* (Helmond 1991) 41

They formed a considerable part of the total volume of Indian textiles the European traders exported from India.²⁴

²⁴ Gaastra Femme De textielhandel van de VOC *Textielhistorische Bijdragen* 34 (1994) 55

A°. 1687.

GENERALE CARGA,

Ofte

Ladinge van zes Oost-Indische Retour-Schepen met Namen: *Castricum*, en *Spierdyck*, voor de Kamer van Amsterdam, *Oosterlandt* ende *de Scheide* voor de Kamer van Zeelandt, *Hombelredyck* voor Hoorn, en *Guldensygen*, voor de Kamer Enckhuysen; alle van Batavia vertrocken den 12. December, 1686. waer van *Spierdyck*, den 12. Augusti, 1687. behouden in Texel is gearriveert, en de resterende tegenwoordigh voor het Landt zynde.

121254	Catty swarte Peper.	16160	ps. gebleekte Salampouris ordinary soort.
1700	Catty witte Peper.	1680	ps. fyne gobl. Salampouris.
1060500	℥ Salpeter.	1600	ps. rouwe Salampouris.
213000	℥ Siam Sapanhout.	2600	ps. gebleekte Parcallen ordinary soort.
102660	℥ Binnas Sapanhout.	1100	ps. roode Mouris.
276000	℥ Nagelen.	3700	ps. Allegias Bethilles.
220000	℥ Nooten.	500	ps. Calcaphos Bethilles.
104000	℥ Canneel.	1700	ps. Sester Gantyn Bethilles.
80157	℥ Foulie.	310	ps. gebleekt brede vierdrats Gingans.
2800	℥ Benjuyn.	1080	ps. gekerpe Gingans.
21784	℥ Radix China en Galga.	500	ps. Chistolou Gingans.
4156	Catty Thee.	4750	ps. Roemais d'Esta.
17100	ps. geconhijte Nooten.	6560	ps. Negros Kloden.
240	Catty Tonquinse Muska.	1920	ps. Cambuyen.
21700	℥ Florette Garen.	1000	ps. gefchild. Chintzen van de Oost.
11225	℥ Benzelle rouwe Zyde.	1220	ps. Patensie Chintzen.
31588	Catty Chintz. rouwe Zyde.	1280	ps. rouw Zeyd van de oost.
1190	℥ Persuente rouwe Zyde.	1220	ps. rouw Bengaels Zeyd.
24640	ps. gebleekt Guinees Lywact ordinary soort.	100	ps. Mallamolen.
750	ps. gebleekt Guinees Lywact syn dito.	24	ps. gekhild. Takt-Kloden.
7560	ps. rouw Guinees Lywact.	40	ps. Aflawedys.
5660	ps. bruyn blaue Guinees Lywact.	70	℥ Manneijs Nooten.
1440	ps. bleek blaue Guinees Lywact.	1	ps. Podro de Pocco.

Nota: Catty is 15 ℥.

Amsterdam, by dezelvig van Paulus Maché, Broeker van de N. Oost-Indische Compagnie.

Figure 8 *Generale carga*; list of goods in 1687 delivered in the Netherlands by six VOC ships
Source http://www.tanap.net/content/voc/organization/organization_central.htm#top

Printed cloth from India had already been a valued commodity in the Sahara trade for the top segment of the market and it continued to be so after the arrival of the European traders. They took the coveted Indian cotton prints, called Chintz, from India to Europe and re-exported them partly to other regions of the world like West Africa.

Chintz was also very much desired in Europe, because of its beauty. It featured bold exuberant printed and painted illustrations of flowering vines, birds, animals and similar natural motifs.

With the chintz, a quality of cotton printing was reached which was unmatched in the 17th century world.

These brilliantly hued fabrics maintained their shimmering intensity when laundered - contrary to European dyed garments, which quickly lost their colour when washed.²⁵

The dyes of the Chintz held fast and that alone counted for much of the hype, the chintz became in Europe in the 17th century. In Holland these Indian fabrics were called *Sitsen* and in France *Indiennes*.

²⁵ Yafa S. 27



Figure 9 18th century Chintz from Coromandel Coast India

Source: Zuiderzeemuseum Enkhuizen

Europe prized that colourful cloth so highly that entrepreneurs like Peel in England, Oberkampf in France, and others in Holland and Switzerland began to build factories to produce their own fabrics, based on colourful designs of the Indian imports. The success of the new European cotton printing industries was encouraged by protective measures of the respective European governments, curbing imports of textiles from India.

In the 18th century some of these industries began to produce for the West African market also. They had to adapt their designs to the African market. The result was that the manufacturers from Manchester in the middle of the 18th century were able to conquer a considerable share of the West African textile market.

The French were also successful in producing printed cotton cloth for the African market. Nantes, with a share of 45% in the French slave trade, was an important city in this respect. Its position could be compared with Liverpool. There were about a dozen important manufacturers of *Indiennes* in the city. For a large part they produced printed cloth specially designed to the taste of the consumers in the big slave ports along the West African coast.²⁶ An example of cotton print specially designed and produced by *Favre Petit Pierre & Cie*, to be thought a delight for the African eye is shown in the following figure.

²⁶ Stettler N., Haenger P., Labhart R 80

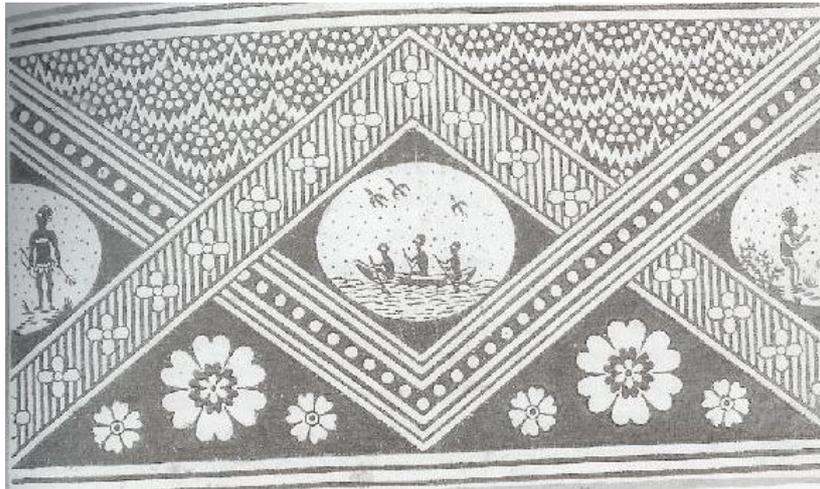


Figure 10 “Indienne” adapted to African taste by Favre Petit Pierre & Cie, Nantes 18th century
 Source: Stettler N., Haenger P., Labhart R. *Baumwolle, Sklaven und Kredite* (Basel 2004) 139

There is no firm evidence that any batiks from the Dutch East Indies were traded on the West Coast of Africa before the nineteenth century. Between 1762 and 1776 the Dutch trading company Coopstad - Rochussen shipped 117 different textiles to West Africa, three of them labelled as ‘East Indian’.²⁷ However these textiles were probably chintz from the Coromandel Coast, specially made for Javanese customers. As the local batik industry in the Dutch East Indies was not fully developed at that time - it reached its highest grade of perfection in the early years of the 19th century when imports from India to Java had virtually stopped because of the demise of the Dutch East India Company and its departure from the Coromandel Coast- a large share of the Javanese textile market consisted of imported Indian printed cotton. The Dutch traders at the Coromandel Coast named the cloth purchased there for the East Indies, East Indian or Javanese cloth as they were specially made to suit Javanese tastes.²⁸

Similar to the textile printers the owners of the Lancashire weaving mills started to undercut the Indian weavers by producing vast quantities of imitation Indian Guinea and Madras cloth, displacing most of the genuine Indian cloth, that European traders had previously sold in West Africa.

So by the end of the 18th century the market share of European textile industry and particular the British had taken over a major share of the market of imported textiles in West Africa from the Indian textile industry.

The decline of the export of Indian textile industry would continue up the end of the 19th century. In 1750 India provided nearly one –fourth of the worlds textile output; by 1900, its output had shrunk to less than 2 percent.²⁹

2.2 Trade with the Gold Coast from 1807 to 1874

2.2.1 General trade

In the beginning of 19th century only three European nations had trading forts on the Gold Coast, the Dutch, the British and the Danes.

²⁷ Ingenbleek, Paul *Een overzeese afzetmarkt* 31

²⁸ Rodenburg G.H. 31,39

²⁹ Bernstein William 299

The security of their forts was threatened by the Ashanti invasion of the Fante and other coastal states and their trade had been interrupted by the hostilities.

There was continual friction between the Ashanti and the coastal states. The Europeans were involved in this conflict since the Ashanti's held them responsible for the actions of the peoples living under the influence of their forts.³⁰

The British were on friendly terms with the Fante, while the Dutch were allied with the Ashanti's.

Because of these conflicts the Europeans had to spend large sums of money on the defence of their establishments on the Gold Coast (for instance, the Dutch spent about 40 000 guilders a year for the upkeep of the fortresses).³¹

Although the Danes had already abolished the slave trade in 1792, it was only in 1808 when the British outlawed the slave trade within their own Empire, that this measure began to be effective. Only the British Navy had the power to suppress the slave trade as Britannia ruled the waves after the Napoleonic wars.

After 1808 a British squadron patrolled the Atlantic coast of West Africa. The British founded Freetown at Sierra Leone as a base against the slavers in the same year.³²

Because of the abolition of the slave trade in 1808, trade on the coast of West Africa underwent a major change.

It brought about a strong need to find substitutes for this notorious trade and to encourage the export of the old staples like gold and ivory as well as tropical agricultural produce for overseas trade.

The disruption caused by local wars, the half hearted efforts of the Europeans on the coast to establish and cultivate plantations delayed economic recovery after the abolishment of the slave trade.

Nevertheless in spite of these impediments, after 1830 considerable progress was made towards an economy based on the export of natural produce, which was called legitimate trade.

New opportunities for profit arose from the palm-oil and groundnut trade.

These commodities were - with the industrial revolution and population growth - in greater demand for the production of soap, candles and machine lubricants.

The size of the export from West Africa increased as a result of the growth of demand for these commodities. Also the volume of imports rose considerably. The employment of many people in the palm oil and groundnut industry led to more equal distribution of income, causing greater demand for cheaper mass produced goods.³³ By 1830 virtually a century of continuous technological advance had transformed the manufacturing process for consumer products in general and textiles in particular. As a result of this industrial revolution the consumer imports of the 19th century were mainly cheap mass produced goods, which offered large numbers of Africans opportunities of material improvement.

The Africans on the Coast began to see these mass produced consumer goods as necessities as Brodie Cruickshank noticed in his remarkable book *Eighteen years on the Gold Coast of Africa: Since the commencement of the carrying trade, they had become accustomed to many trifling luxuries within the reach of their scanty pay, to which they had formerly been strangers. These had now become absolutely necessary for them and they were willing to turn their hands on any work, in order to obtain the means of procuring them.*³⁴

³⁰ Fage J.D. 124

³¹ Jonker J., Sluyterman K. 150

³² Bowle J. 292

³³ Hopkins A.G. 127

³⁴ Cruickshank B. Volume 2, p 40

Much more imported goods particularly textiles were transported than ever before.

British traders

As leaders of the Industrial revolution the British were the first to recognize the opportunities for profit from the palm-oil and groundnut trade. The main British firms trading on the Gold coast were Forster and Smith and F. & A. Swanzy. James Swanzy began trading on the Gold Coast in 1789 at the British Fort in Dixcove, where he was a governor. Around 1850 Francis Swanzy and his brother Andrew founded F. & A. Swanzy. The company had its head office in London and a lot of agencies on the coast. They were staffed by European and African employees, the latter being educated at some of the many mission schools, which were being established at the Coast during the 19th century. Swanzy gained ascendancy and by 1863 was handling nearly all the trade.³⁵ By 1873 Forster and Smith had disappeared from the Coast, leaving Swanzy a free hand.³⁶ Swanzy operated its own fleet of sailing ships up to the 1870s.



Figure 11 Logo of F. & A. Swanzy Ltd

Source: Pedler F. *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa* figure 21

Dutch traders

The abolition of the slave trade reduced trade (already at a very low level) at the Dutch trading fortresses to less than a trickle. In the 1830s some Dutch merchant firms tried to revive the trade with the Gold Coast. These traders were attracted by the success of the British traders with their palm-oil business. They had preceded the Dutch traders several years. Rotterdam firms developed the West African trade as a special feature.

The firm Van Hoboken from Rotterdam repeatedly sent ships to West Africa chartered by the Colonial Ministry to pick up African soldiers recruited in the Gold Coast and take them to the Dutch East Indies for service in the Dutch colonial army. It was the only successful enterprise of the Dutch Government on the Gold Coast in the 19th century. The recruitment was a reason to hold on to the Possessions on the Coast of Guinea.

³⁵ Pedler F. 42

³⁶ Howard, Rhoda 95

The costs of recruitment were covered by the Dutch East Indies Government, which subsidized in this way the Dutch Possessions on the Coast of Guinea.

In total 2300 recruits were sent in the period of 1831 to 1841 from Elmina to Batavia. About 90 % of them made trip on a ship of Van Hoboken.³⁷

In 1856 the recruitment was resumed and lasted until the handover of the Dutch possessions to the British in 1872.

The total number of recruits shipped to the Dutch East Indies was 3080.³⁸

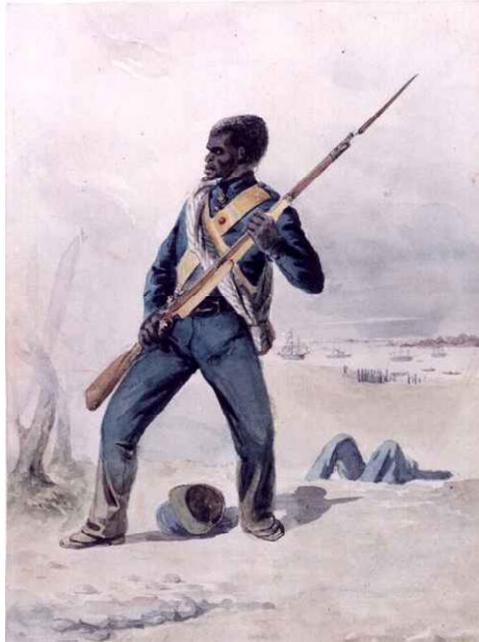


Figure 12 African soldier in Java

Source : Lithograph by Ernest Hardouin 1850

The reason for mentioning the recruitment of African soldiers for the Dutch East Indies here at length, is that the returning soldiers might have brought home batiks from the Dutch East Indies. This might have prepared a market for these textiles on the Gold Coast.

Whether there is any evidence to substantiate this claim or that it is just a myth will be discussed in chapter four.

In 1847 the Rotterdam merchant Huibert van Rijckevorsel started to trade with the Dutch Possessions of the Coast of Guinea mainly cloth for palm oil.³⁹ He owned a fleet of about 18 sailing ships in the period 1855-1856.⁴⁰

Van Rijckevorsel took the Dutch governor, Anthony van der Eb as a partner; something that would now be considered as unacceptable.

This was however a sensible thing to do as van der Eb used his influence to persuade the Dutch Government to object to the British plan to introduce custom duties on the West African coast.⁴¹

As a token of appreciation, Huibert named one of his ships *Governor van der Eb* (see the following picture).

³⁷ Oosterwijk B. 220

³⁸ Doortmont M.R. 299

³⁹ Jonker J.,Sluyterman K. 151

⁴⁰ Herwaarden, Jan van 202

⁴¹ Jonker J.,Sluyterman K. 151

(923) De Makelaars *H. Montauban van Swijndrecht*, *F. N. Montauban van Swijndrecht*, *J. F. Wischerhoff*, *C. J. de Lange* en *W. H. Montauban van Swijndrecht*, te *Rotterdam*, zijn van meening als last hebbende van hunnen Meester, op *Woensdag den 2den Maart 1853*, des middags ten *twaalf ure*, in het Notarishuis aan de *Geldersche Kade*, publiek te verkoopen:

EEENE PARTIJ VAN
Ca. 100,000 Ned. Ponden
PALMOLIE.

Alhier regtstreeks van de *Kust van Afrika*, aangebragt per de Schepen *Gouverneur van der Eb*, Kapt. v. D. HARST en *S. George de la Mina*, Kapt. W. v. D. HOEYEN, en zulks bij Kavelingen, zoo als nader bij Notitie zal worden aangewezen.

De PALMOLIE is liggende achter, naast en v. Mer het Kantoor van den Heer *H. VAN RIJCKEVORSEL*, Leuvehaven, wijk 1, No. 244 en 245.

Figure 13 Palm oil from the Coast of Guinea traded in Rotterdam

Source : Muller H, *Muller Een Rotterdams zehandelaar* Figure 7

After 1858 Dutch officials on the Coast were no longer permitted to conduct private businesses.



Figure 14 Huibert van Rijckevorsel 1813-1866

Source: Muller H, *Muller Een Rotterdams zehandelaar* Figure 4

Van Rijckevorsels trade with West Africa continued to expand and his firm reached a near monopoly in the Dutch Possessions on the Coast of Guinea.⁴²

In 1850 Van Rijckevorsel went into partnership with his brother in law Hendrik Muller.⁴³

At the end of the 1850s the West African business of van Rijckevorsel was declining probably due to the introduction of steam shipping on the West African coast by the British and the start of the Great Depression in world trade, which would last till the end of the century. This led to a drop in prices of commodities like palm oil.

The business was taken over by Hendrik Muller in 1862 after Van Rijckevorsel had to withdraw from the firm due to illness. Muller continued the business under his own name.⁴⁴

Hendrik Muller started his career as a merchant in textiles in Amsterdam in 1839.⁴⁵

⁴² Herwaarden, Jan van 205

⁴³ Ingenbleek P., Muller, Hendrik 161,162

⁴⁴ Ibidem 162

In the next chapter will be elaborated on the significance of Muller for the development of the textile industry in the Netherlands.

He became the most prominent businessman in Dutch trade with West Africa.



Figure 15 Hendrik Muller Samuelzoon (1819-1898)

Source: Muller H. *Muller Een Rotterdams zeehandelaar* Figure 29

As before his ships sailed to the Gold Coast but they also regularly called at trading posts in Liberia, Muller began to focus more on trade with Liberia. Muller's Liberian agent also acted as the Dutch consul general there, while Muller became the Liberian consul-general in Rotterdam.⁴⁶ In 1862 the Netherlands had entered into a trade agreement with Liberia.⁴⁷

In 1872 Britain was the only European power left on the Gold Coast.

The Danes had already sold their establishments on the Gold Coast to the British in 1850 and in 1872 it was the turn of the Dutch to do the same.⁴⁸

The last phase of the Dutch presence on the Coast of Guinea was determined by an exchange of territories between the British and the Dutch in 1867-1868. In order to achieve a more efficient administration and the introduction of levying in and export duties, they decided to swap territories.⁴⁹ The British got all trading forts east of El Mina and the Dutch got all the forts west of Cape Coast. The swap proved to be disastrous for the Dutch. Many of the coastal tribes, who used to be under British protection, were hostile to their new protectors and some resorted to armed rebellion. They formed the so called Fante Federation and laid siege to Elmina. Only intervention by Dutch warships and by an expeditionary force saved the inhabitants of Elmina from their awkward predicament.⁵⁰

The high costs of protecting its possessions and the lack of profitability of Dutch trade with the Gold Coast – the Dutch traders like Muller & Co had not invested in steam shipping to the Gold Coast and could therefore no longer compete- made the Dutch Government decide to sell its possessions on the Coast of Guinea to the British altogether.

There was however a fierce public debate on a possible sale of the West African possessions to the British. The burden of high costs involved keeping them were weighed against possible economic benefits and keeping up national prestige. This debate continued into the 1870s.

⁴⁵ Ingenbleek P., Muller, Hendrik 161

⁴⁶ Jonker J., Sluyterman K. *At home on the Worldmarkets* (Utrecht 2000) 192

⁴⁷ Aa van der R. 81

⁴⁸ Fage J.D. 132,137

⁴⁹ Doormont M.R. 246

⁵⁰ *Ibidem* 275

In the end the economic interests in West Africa were considered too small compared to those in the Dutch East Indies. It was there that the Dutch Government was going to put all its efforts to extend its colonial power.

After a presence of almost 250 years the Dutch handed over their last African possessions to the British in 1872 for the sum of 38 000 guilders.⁵¹ These territories became part of the British colony Gold Coast.

Part of the deal was that the Dutch were permitted by the British to extend their sphere of influence in Sumatra and that Dutch manufactures imported into the Gold Coast were subjected to the same import duties as British imported goods.⁵² Notwithstanding these favourable conditions for trade the Dutch trade with the Gold Coast went into decline after their departure.⁵³ It revived at the turn of the century.

Basel Mission and Trading Company

Another prominent trading firm on the Gold Coast was the Basel Mission and Trading Company (BMTC) which was founded by Basel Mission Society (BMS). The BMS was the pioneer protestant mission on the Gold Coast. Most of its missionaries were not Swiss nationals but they came from the neighbouring German Kingdom of Württemberg. Its first establishment was in the Danish part of the Gold Coast at Christiansborg in 1828. The BMS was not only concerned with the spiritual needs of the native population there but they also cared for its economic advancement. The development goals of the Mission were to promote literacy, vocational training and economic development by stimulating an environment conducive to small rural enterprises.

To this effect the BMS set up schools, vocational training centres, translated the Bible into indigenous languages (Twi and Ga), fought disease and helped to introduce such crops as coffee, cocoa and tobacco.

The emergence of Ga artisans as the best and most abundant on the coast has been attributed to the establishment by the Mission of a workshop at Osu in the late 1850s. Considerable numbers of coopers, carpenters, masons and blacksmiths were trained there.⁵⁴

The need to cater for the material needs of missionaries to satisfy their demand for products from Europe and the desire to help local producers to an easy access to overseas markets made the mission decide to found a trading company the Basel Mission and Trading Company in 1859.⁵⁵

The BMTC even operated a few sailing ships in the 1860s (under German flag from Bremen) and in the 1870s a river steamer *The Pioneer* on the Volta.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Oosterwijk B. 220

⁵² Ingenbleek P. *Een overzeese afzetmarkt* 82

⁵³ Kuitenbrouwer M. 54

⁵⁴ Parker J. 34

⁵⁵ Wanner G.A. 46

⁵⁶ Wanner G. A. 127,158



Figure 16 The Pioneer on the Volta

Source: Basel Mission Archive, www.bmpix.org QD-30_014_0025

They used the profits of their trading activities mainly for missionary activities. The fact that the Missionaries from Basel combined trading with spreading the gospel was not unusual in those days. The aim of the famous missionary and explorer David Livingstone had been to make Africa fit for Commerce, Christianity and Civilisation, a triple alliance of Mammon, God and social progress.⁵⁷

The Basel missionaries traded within moral limits. They did not trade weapons, ammunition and liquor (*kein Pulver und Schnapps*).⁵⁸ This was considered immoral.

Economic developments in the 19th century

In the first half of the 19th century prices of palm oil on the West Coast of Africa and in Europe showed an upward trend reaching a peak in 1854-1861 when the Liverpool price stood at 45£ /ton. At the same time the prices of manufactured goods imported into West Africa dropped as a result of the industrial revolution. Consequently the barter terms of trade moved in favour of the primary producers. The result was prosperity for the West African trade.⁵⁹

The position changed considerably in the second half of the century. The boom came to an end in 1861. The gradual decline in European palm oil prices from 1861 to 1890 is shown in the table below.

year	price (£ /ton)
1861	45
1861-1865	37
1886-1890	20

Table 2 European price of palm oil (£ /ton)⁶⁰

Palm kernel prices fell by about a third from roughly 15£ /ton in the 1860s to just over 10 £ /ton in the period 1886- 1890.

There was no recovery until after the turn of the century.

⁵⁷ Pakenham T. xxii

⁵⁸ Wanner G.A. 177

⁵⁹ Hopkins A.G. 132

⁶⁰ Ibidem 133

There were two main causes of this fall, though there were several contributory factors, such as reduced ocean freight rates.

First there was an increase in the supply of mineral and vegetable oils following the discovery of petroleum resources in the United States in the 1860s and the entry into the market of Indian groundnuts and Australian tallow after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

Second European demand for a wide range of raw materials, including oils and fats, was checked in the last quarter of the 19th century with the advent of the earlier mentioned Great Depression, which lasted up to the end of the century.

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century when export process fell sharply the barter terms of trade moved against the primary producers.

This created tensions. On the one hand European traders would try to pay less for produce and charge more for manufactured goods. On the other hand the African wholesalers ran into difficulties with their hinterland customers as they tried to pass on the price changes which they themselves had been forced to accept.

Prime producers and traders came under pressure to develop alternative exports and to adopt to cost reducing innovations. A reorganisation of West African trade was needed to make it more efficient in order to diminish falling profit margins. Two developments helped to bring about a fundamental reorganisation of West African trade after 1850 resulting in a greater degree of competition, the final liquidation of 18th century commercial practices and the beginning of a modern organisational structure for the expatriate firms.

The first developments in terms of chronology concerned ocean transport and the second involved the introduction of modern money on the West Coast of Africa.

The introduction of the steamship

In the first half of the 19th century the products of the legitimate commerce were carried to Europe by sailing ships and the leading trading firms on the Gold Coast like F.& A. Swanzy from London and H. Muller & Co from Rotterdam, all possessed ocean going vessels.

However shortly after the middle of the century the technical development of the steamship reached a point where it could begin to compete successfully with sail.⁶¹

Steamships were fast and regular; they did not depend on the wind. In the middle of the century sailing ships took about 35 days to reach West Africa, but by 1900 the steamer had reduced this time by half.⁶² With their speed they were able to transport previously unconveyable perishable commodities.

The steamship was cheaper per ton/mile than sail and this was an important consideration at a time when the West African export trade had become centred on bulky vegetable products.

But they also required large investments, which most merchants could not afford.

A new industry that of shipping lines developed and more and more merchants began to abandon their fleets of sailing ships and rely on the regular steamship lines to transport their produce. The advent of shipping lines facilitated competition, because merchant houses could now send small regular packages to the West Coast of Africa, instead of sending large shiploads comprised completely of their own goods, which if they sank, would bankrupt the merchant. Small traders who could not even afford to buy their own sailing boats were also able to ship by the regular steam lines.

The result was that trading and carrying became separate activities and the established firms were less able to keep control of new entrants than in the days when they also monopolised shipping space.

⁶¹ Hopkins A.G. 147

⁶² Ibidem . 150

Many old trading firms, which dominated the trade in the middle of the 19th century by operating sailing fleets, ran into difficulties and few lasted until the end of the century. Muller & Co disappeared and the competition of the steamships made Swanzy cease to send their own sailing vessels from Britain to Africa in 1873.⁶³

F. & A. Swanzy was taken over by Miller Ltd although Swanzy continued to operate as a trading company under its own name. The steamship had -it could be said- taken the wind out of their sails. In order to survive trading firms had to adjust to the advent of the steamship. The African Steamship Company was formed in England in 1851 and was joined by another the British & African Steam Navigation Company, first as a rival and then as an associate. Both businesses were run by the agency Elder Dempster in Liverpool, which in 1894 took over ownership of both firms.⁶⁴

The steamer also concentrated competition at the ports of call in contrast to the days of sail when ships could adapt their schedules to meet varying market conditions. Evidence of increasing concentration was to be seen in the expansion of a few favoured centres on the Gold Coast such as Takoradi and Accra and the decline of older well known trading stations like Butre, Dixcove, Cape Coast and Elmina.⁶⁵

The introduction of modern money

The second change was the decline of the main transitional currencies and on an increase in the circulation of modern money (British silver coins in the Gold Coast) in the key exporting areas.

In the second half of the 19th century iron currencies, *manillas* (iron horseshoe shaped rings, introduced by the Portuguese) and cowries underwent a serious depreciation and by the close of the century had ceased to play an important part in external trade.⁶⁶

The decline of these currencies was associated with a fall in cost supplying them to West Africa. The collapse of the traditional currencies undermined the barter system, which was closely associated with it.

The introduction of modern money reduced entry barriers to new traders. As long as barter and transitional currencies remained firmly entrenched, newcomers were at a serious disadvantage, for they had to master the complexities of a pre-industrial monetary system and they had to engage both in importing and exporting. Cash payments made it possible to separate the two trades and enabled firms to specialise in one or the other. This specialisation reduced the capital for entering West African trade and encouraged competition.

Trading conditions and political developments in the second half of the 19th century

In the long run the advent of the steamship and the introduction of modern money brought advantages to those engaged in overseas trade, because they assisted the expansion of the market. Without these innovations the Gold Coast and West Africa as a whole would certainly have become uncompetitive in international trade.⁶⁷

The expansion in the volume of overseas commerce in the second half of the 19th century combined with the adverse movement in terms of trade led to the modification or abolition of many of the early features of legitimate commerce and also caused the European powers to discard their traditional policy of limited intervention in West Africa.

⁶³ Pedler F.48

⁶⁴ Howard Rhoda 116

⁶⁵ Hopkins A.G 151

⁶⁶ Ibidem 149

⁶⁷ Ibidem 150

Because of their awkward predicament due to depressed markets the British merchants, though traditionally suspicious of government intervention, began to push for a more active government policy.

The merchants call for action was backed by colonial administrators and sometimes missionaries.

They formulated the required active policy through five demands.⁶⁸

First there was the imposition of law and order, because the continuing interstate conflicts were an impediment to trade and according to the missionaries, the practice of internal slavery and human sacrifice had to be stopped on humanitarian grounds.

Second the end or reform of the unproductive middleman system. The coastal middlemen were blamed for using their monopolistic powers to impose one-sided trading contracts.

Third the abolition of the tolls levied by African states.

Fourth was the construction of railways. Railways were thought to be capable of transforming the West African economy, just as those of Europe and the United States.

Finally the advance of the frontier of expatriate trading by creating a much larger market for European goods than had ever existed before. In other words: conquer the hinterland of the coastal areas.

Britain's traditional policy for West Africa however was to maintain free trade without political involvement.

By the 1870s Britain's imperialist politicians thought their commitments on the Gold Coast were too large to continue the policy of non intervention.

The decision of the British Government to participate in the scramble for Africa (in this case to conquer the Ashanti Kingdom) was made easy by the fact that the cost of coercion had been greatly reduced by the invention of two daunting pieces of military equipment, the Gatling and the Maxim gun and by advances in tropical medicine to protect the military on expedition and that Britain was now the only European power left on the Gold Coast.

In chapter 4 will be elaborated upon the course and the outcome of the Ashanti war.

2.2.2 Textile trade 1808 - 1874

The textile market changed considerably during the first half of the 19th century. Textiles like silk and linen got a smaller share of the market, the production of indigenous textiles became less profitable and Indian cotton - in the 18th century one of the most popular products on the Gold Coast - had in the middle of the century only a limited market share.

Indian cotton cloth disappeared almost from the market. This process had started already in the second half of the 18th century (see paragraph 2.1.2).

Indian textiles remained the top segment of the market only.⁶⁹

Textile remained the leading commodity which the Europeans traded in West Africa.

The industrial revolution in Europe increased the production of cheap textiles mainly cotton fabrics from Britain, which came available on the world market.

The quantity of cotton goods exported from the United Kingdom to West Africa increased thirty times in the short period between 1816 and 1820 and 1846-1850.⁷⁰

The increase was partly a reflection of the rise in value of trade but was mainly an outcome of the industrial revolution in Europe and of the shift in the social composition of demand in Africa, resulting from the new structure of the export economy.

⁶⁸ Hopkins A.G. 156

⁶⁹ Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de wax print op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt 85

⁷⁰ Hopkins A.G 128

So dominating were textiles as a commodity that it was often used as a medium of exchange to trade goods. The unit of trade in which the value of all other goods was expressed was the “long” for instance one gallon of rum for one long (6 yards of cloth).⁷¹ British textile exports to the Gold Coast are shown in the following table for the years between 1827 and 1841.

Year	Indian cotton	Indian silk	British silk	British woollen manuf.	British linen manuf.		British cotton manuf.		
	pieces	pieces	£	£	yards	£	yards	£	£/yard
1827	17325	216	-	819	1402	66	311937	11905	0,038165
1828	16686	755	200	1453	2488	157	600127	21411	0,035677
1829	15002	319	-	416	3817	167	551908	23827	0,043172
1830	19114	383	-	919	3831	234	746164	27446	0,036783
1831	5370	1523	15	2456	5078	276	765820	29195	0,038123
1832	3808	1613	563	2149	3712	252	922897	34094	0,036942
1833	4987	367	316	1639	1217	104	1562749	45685	0,029234
1834	2627	348	108	1444	4329	224	2411053	66743	0,027682
1835	1040	377	12	633	4602	290	1558397	53774	0,034506
1836	594	1219	108	1259	6483	332	2461547	84222	0,034215
1837	30	1168	150	1113	4091	200	1733546	55660	0,032108
1838	986	657	282	1216	8336	497	1991487	58119	0,029184
1839	10	594	40	1455	7979	380	2772481	85678	0,030903
1840	608	1407	120	1097	6538	265	2932338	84705	0,028887
1841	1067	1020	120	580	7766	330	3004871	73606	0,024496

Table 3 British textile exports to Gold Coast⁷²

The textiles from Britain traded in the above period were because of their origin frequently referred to as “Manchester cloth”.⁷³ The bulk of the textile trade was in printed cotton.

Large British trading firms Like John Holt and James Hutton had their own mills in Manchester where cottons were printed to order. Any cloth pattern which became popular was jealously guarded by the firm, who owned its patent.

The African tradition of attaching a symbolic meaning to the different designs added value to the different prints. This was a process the Europeans could not influence.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Sandick van O.Z. 40

⁷² Reynolds E 183-187

⁷³ Dutch National Archives 1.05.14 769 Den Haag

⁷⁴ Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de wax print op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt 84

The Manchester factories continued not only to produce printed cotton but also vast quantities of woven loom patterned striped and chequered imitation Madras cloths, displacing most of the genuine woven Indian Guinea cloth, which traders had previously sold in West Africa.⁷⁵ Later in the 19th century, Swiss (*Frölich, Brunnschweiler & Cie*” in Ennenda, Glarus) and Belgian (*le Tissage de Bornhem* near Antwerp) manufacturers started to compete successfully on this market.⁷⁶

Dutch textile exports compared with total exports to the Gold Coast are shown in the following table for two five year periods in the 19th century.

Period	Textile exports f	Total exports f	% textiles
1846-1851	311 116	814 972	38,2
1852- 1957	1 355 413	2 407 261	56,3

Table 4 Dutch (textile) exports to Dutch possessions on the coast of Guinea⁷⁷

The textiles traded by the Dutch on the Gold coast during the above periods were mainly of British origin as they are frequently referred to as “Manchester cloth”.⁷⁸

In the 1860s Dutch traders gradually replaced Manchester cloth by textiles made in the Netherlands.⁷⁹

The BMTC relied even more on textiles as their competitors, who were not hindered by a moral obligation not to trade in weapons, ammunition and liquor.

In the beginning the BMTC imported only Manchester cloth but from 1861 they also started trading Swiss textiles produced by Salomon Zellweger from Trogen.⁸⁰

They faced difficulties in adapting their designs to the African taste. The BMTC also learned that the Africans rejected any cloth that did not suit their taste.⁸¹

The European traders at the Coast as in the previous centuries still had had to rely on African middlemen for the trade with the interior. They sold their merchandise to “petty traders” who ventured even further into the interior.

Distribution and promotion (marketing) of the Manchester cloth remained in the hands of the African, middlemen and petty traders.

The increased volume of the textile trade changed the appearance of markets on the Gold Coast.

Brodie Cruickshank described this change as follows:

*Instead of the dull stagnant appearance which the country presented sometime before, all was now cheerful bustle and activity. There was not a nook or corner in the land to which the enterprise of some sanguine trader did not let him. Every village had its festoons of Manchester cotton and china silks, hung upon the walls of the houses, or round the trees in the marketplace, to attract the attention and excite the cupidity of the villagers.*⁸²

⁷⁵ Clarke D. 114

⁷⁶ Oehler F. 24,25

Brommer B. *Bontjes voor de tropen* 91

Laan, H.L. .van der 288

⁷⁷ Muller Archives lists of imports and exports on the Coast of Guinea 1846-1857

⁷⁸ Dutch National Archives 1.05.14 769 Den Haag

⁷⁹ Aa van der R. 129

Brommer B. *Bontjes voor de tropen* 91

⁸⁰ Wanner G.A.175

⁸¹ Ibidem 177

⁸² Cruickshank B. Volume 2, p 33

European textiles like the Manchester cloth had conquered the market now and paved the way for the introduction of other imported more refined textiles like the wax print.⁸³

This will be the subject of chapter 4.

The next chapter deals with the Asian roots of the wax print and its development by European industrialists in an attempt to undercut local textile production in their Asian colonies in the 19th century.

2.3 Summary

The arrival of the Europeans on the Gold Coast in the 15th century increased the external trade volume of West Africa.

They traded consumer goods for gold, slaves and tropical produce. They had no authority outside their forts and trading posts and did not venture inland but traded with local chiefs and merchants on an even footing.

They discovered that for a profitable trade with the Gold Coast textiles were indispensable.

Textile became the leading commodity which the Europeans traded in West Africa. Particularly Indian cotton textiles became very popular on the Gold Coast like in other parts of the world.

By the end of the 18th century Indian textiles were gradually being replaced by European imitations, which could now be cheaply mass produced because of the transformation of the manufacturing process during the industrial revolution.

As leaders of the industrial revolution the British had the major share of this market and their products were - because of their origin - frequently referred to as Manchester cloth.

Their share of the market rose even further after the abolishment of the slave trade in 1808, when a substitute of this notorious trade was found in the trade of palm and other tropical produce.

The advent of the steamship and the introduction of modern money in the second half of the 19th century brought advantages to those engaged in overseas trade, because they assisted the expansion of the market.

A far larger part of the African population benefited from this trade than during the period of the slave trade. Consequently income became more evenly distributed and the demand for cheap mass produced goods like Manchester cloth rose. The British were the best qualified to satisfy this demand being the main producers of cheap textiles. The fact that the British were the only European power left on the Gold Coast in the last quarter of the 19th century contributed also to their dominant position in the textile trade.

The Manchester cloth had conquered the market now and paved the way for the introduction of other imported more refined textiles like the wax print.

⁸³ Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de wax print op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt 85

3 THE ORIGIN OF THE WAXPRINT

3.1 *The development of a cotton printing industry in Europe*

As mentioned in chapter 2 multi- coloured Indian printed and painted cotton or chintz became very popular in Europe in the 17th century.

Demand became so overwhelming, that it could not be satisfied by trade alone and attempts were made in various parts of Europe to produce imitations of these Indian prints. It was not until the 1670s that a successful industry was established.

This industry used wooden blocks, at times with metal inserts but accompanied these with Indian methods of mordant dyeing.⁸⁴

Not only were European manufacturers able to stop the flooding of their domestic textile market by Asian prints, but by the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, with the industrial revolution gathering momentum, they-and particularly the British-were even capable of reversing the process by supplying their Asian colonies with cheap machine made imitations of local Asian printed cloth.

Particularly the invention of roller (*Rouleau*) printing by Thomas Bell in 1783 – a method of printing from engraved cylinders - was a decisive and revolutionary step forward.⁸⁵

This made cheap mass produced imitations of Asian printed textiles possible.

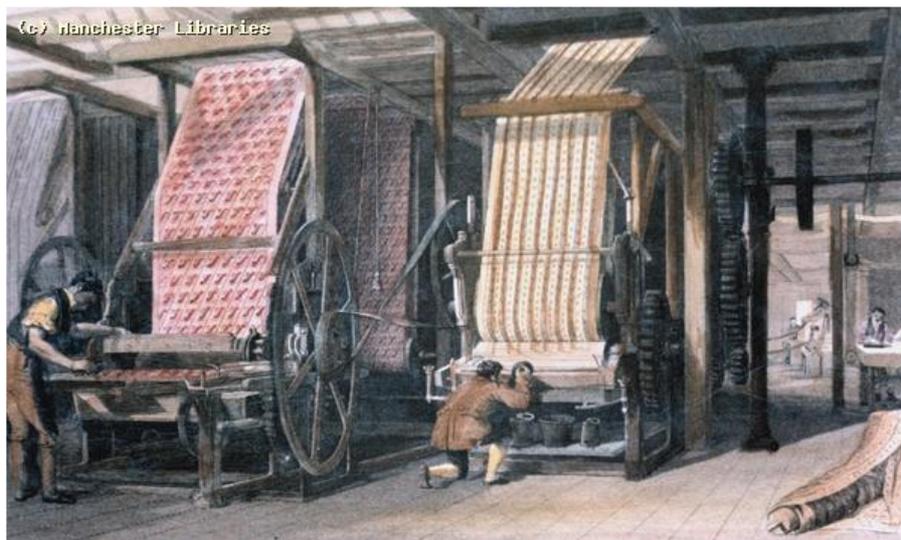


Figure 17 calico printing by rouleau and by hand blocks in the 1830s⁸⁶

Source: Manchester Libraries, <http://www.lancashirepioneers.com/thomson/calico.asp>

3.2 *The market for European textiles in the Dutch East Indies*

During their occupation of the Dutch East Indies in the period of the Batavian Republic the British recognized the possibilities these territories offered to the then rapidly expanding English textile industry.

Thomas Stamford Raffles who ruled Java as a Lieutenant-Governor from 1811 to 1816 formulated this business opportunity as follows: *if therefore it should be found that the Cloths can be exported from Europe and offered for sale at a cheaper rate than the present in Java;*

⁸⁴ Robinson S. *A history of printed textiles* (London 1969) 15

⁸⁵ *Ibidem* 26

⁸⁶ The worker on the left is using a *rouleau* with engraved copper rollers transferring the pattern onto the cloth. The worker on the right is using a hand carved wooden block. Note the buckets of dye under the machine.

*it appears likely to open a source of Commerce which may be expected to extend and which will of course be productive in proportion to the comparative cheapness in the price at which the Cloths can be imitated in Europe.*⁸⁷

The British who occupied Java from 1811 to 1816 succeeded to get a major share of the textile market with their mass produced cotton prints adapted to Asian tastes.

After the Dutch returned to Java in 1816 they tried to reconquer this market at first without success.⁸⁸ Other European manufacturers also showed interest in the Javanese textile market. In order to revitalise the colonial trade with the Dutch East Indies the *Nederlandsche Handelmaatschappij* (Dutch Trading Company), henceforth referred to as the NHM, was formed with the aim of nationalising the colonial trade. It was set up as a limited company in which King Willem I took shares valued at f 4000 000 and personally guaranteed an annual dividend of 4,5%.⁸⁹

The NHM was given a monopoly in the shipment of government products to- mainly textiles produced in the kingdom of the Netherlands- and from the Indies – colonial produce for resale in the Netherlands.

3.3 The development of the Dutch cotton industry in the 19th century

The NHM initially had to rely on the deliveries of the textile manufacturers of Flanders in the southern part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The textile industry of Flanders was the most advanced on the continent of Europe at that time. The textile industry in the northern part of the country was however in a sorry state.

The innovations of the British textile industry had made virtually no impression on the traditional textile areas of Twente and North Brabant.

At a time when there were 55 000 power looms operating in British factories, Dutch weavers had still to be introduced to the use of the flying shuttle- a hundred years after its invention.⁹⁰

In the 17th and 18th century the Dutch republic had known a thriving cotton printing industry. In the second half of the 18th century this industry went into decline because of foreign competition and the effects of the Napoleonic wars and by 1800 there was hardly anything left of this once successful business.

Given the primitive state of the industry in the North, the secession of Belgium in 1830 placed the NHM in a difficult position. So far it had traded textiles from Flanders successfully for the tropical produce of the Dutch East Indies. The secession led to an export collapse of textiles. The NHM solved this problem in the 1830s by encouraging Belgian entrepreneurs to move their factories to Haarlem and Leiden with the promise of financial assistance and guaranteed orders and by introducing the flying shuttle to the handloom industry in Twente. So under the direction of the NHM the modern cotton industry in the Netherlands was born. The policy of the NHM led to a geographical division between the production of woven bleached and unbleached calicos and the refining industry.

Initially alongside the hand-loom industry in Twente there also emerged a small nucleus of power-loom industry in the old industrial centres in the West, but it proved to be unsustainable because of technical problems. So weaving of cottons took place in Twente - first based on handloom weaving with the flying shuttle later to be transformed into factory

⁸⁷ Heringa R. 138

⁸⁸ Verbong G.P.J Katoendrukken in Nederland vanaf 1800 51

⁸⁹ Griffith R T 30

⁹⁰ Ibidem 138

based mass production- while the most important printing and dyeing works were those of Prévinaire and Wilson in Haarlem and De Heyder in Leiden.

Later a few factories were established in other parts of the country, mainly in the south, of which the most important was P.F. Van Vlissingen & Co in Helmond in 1846.

To exclude more or less foreign cloth from the market of the East Indies, preferential import tariffs for Dutch textile imports were introduced. All these protective measures were successful. In 1833 the Dutch textile imports into the East Indies amounted to f 89 000 and in 1839 f 6 003 231.⁹¹

Most of the calicoes were exported to the East Indies in a bleached or unbleached state and served as a half product for the local batik industry there. However the best quality calicoes were exported dyed or printed. In the 1830s cotton printing was dominated by two works of Belgian origin Wilson in Haarlem and de Heyder in Leiden.

For the highly specialized form of printing and dyeing, using madder root to produce a colour known as Turkey red the NHM had attracted to the Netherlands J.B.T. Prévinaire from Belgium. After the secession of Belgium he transferred his firm to Haarlem at the invitation of King Willem I.



Figure 18 J.B.T Prévinaire (1783-1854) and his family⁹²

Source : painting by Navez F.J (1822) in: Kroese W.T. Haarlem, textielstad in de 19e eeuw *Textielhistorische Bijdragen* 20 (1979))

Prévinaire was a skilled entrepreneur with a scientific approach. Attached to his factory was a small laboratory in which he experimented with chemical dyes and it was no accident that his products received a reputation for colourfastness, which surpassed that of the British.

Prévinaire was virtually the sole beneficiary of the growing market in Turkey red cloth which the NHM found in the Dutch East Indies in the 1830s.⁹³

⁹¹ Mansvelt W.M.H. *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappij II* 326

⁹² His son and successor Marie Prosper Theodore sits on his lap.

⁹³ Griffith R. T. 155



Figure 19 Turkey Red dyers in the factory of Prévinaire in Haarlem

Source: oil painting (1891) by A. G.A. van Rappard , Simonis & Buunk Art Dealers , Ede The Netherlands)

In 1840 the failure of the harvest in the Dutch East Indies resulted in a contraction in the market for textiles. Faced with mounting losses the NHM was forced to reduce the size of its orders.⁹⁴ This had serious consequences for the Dutch producers. Wilson ran into problems and ultimately had to sell his factory to Prévinaire in 1870.⁹⁵ Wilson could now dedicate the rest of his life to his impressive collection of paintings.⁹⁶ De Heyder almost had to close its doors but it was ultimately saved by Heinrich Driessen from Bocholt and his brother in law Ignatius van Wensen who bought the company from the owner, the Belgian Baron van den Berghe for 57 000 guilders in 1846. One of the sons of Heinrich, Louis Driessen became the new director of De Heyder.⁹⁷ Prévinaire, who by now had also started cotton printing, owed its continuing existence in those years to its Turkey red dyeing branch.⁹⁸

The NHM however continued its policy of not making any difference between efficient and inefficient producers. Good or bad, competitive or non competitive, all continued to suffer or benefit alike from changes in market conditions.⁹⁹

The textile trader Hendrik Muller- whom we met in chapter two- and a lot of liberal free traders like the politician Rudof Thorbecke, were not at all happy with the protection the NHM offered to inefficient and bad Dutch textile companies. It had made them uncompetitive on world markets and the quality of their products was not up to the requirements of Muller. He therefore mainly bought foreign cloth for his African trade, where a great variety of specialised printed cloth was demanded.

The Dutch cotton textile exports consisted for 80 % of half finished cloth like woven cloth (bleached or unbleached). These half fabrics served the local batik industry in the East Indies very well but in the overseas markets for finished products like printed cotton the Dutch performed poorly even in the Dutch East Indies where they enjoyed some protection from the Government.

⁹⁴ Ibidem 159

⁹⁵ Verbong G.P.J Katoendrukken in Nederland vanaf 1800 59

⁹⁶ Kroese W.T., Haarlem textielstad in de 19e eeuw 83

⁹⁷ Verbong G.P.J Katoendrukken in Nederland vanaf 1800 55

⁹⁸ Ingenbleek P. *Een overzeese afzetmarkt*. 19

⁹⁹ Griffith R T 160

In 1857 Muller published his book “The Dutch Cotton Industry and the system of protection the Dutch East Indies” (*De Nederlandse Katoen- Nijverheid en Het Stelsel van Bescherming in Nederlands Indië*).

This booklet deals with the problem of the lack of competitiveness of Dutch textiles and the reduction of protection.

It centres on the marketing capabilities of a large monolithic organisation like the NHM failing to read correctly the chancing tastes and fashions in the Indies. Muller has put the kernel of the problem in the following way: *It should not be forgotten that for such a large body as the NHM it is not possible to filter so accurately and so well all the details of the export trade as for the private merchant, who works in an a so much more limited and much more surveyable terrain and who is entirely free in his trading and has his own interest at heart. And yet it is exactly the knowledge of details that constitutes his trade.*¹⁰⁰

Muller and his friend C.T Stork travelled together to Switzerland France and Germany in 1854 to study the textile industry there. They returned quite impressed with the variety and quality of the products in these countries and the way they tried successfully to penetrate overseas markets.

The book and other efforts of Muller to advocate the abolition of the preferential rights and introduce competition have certainly contributed to the gradual abolition of the preferential rights and other protective measures for Dutch manufacturers in the period 1844 to 1874. This has indeed made the Dutch textile industry more competitive not only on the East Indian but also on world markets.¹⁰¹

The Dutch printing factories like” Prévinaire De Heyder, the Kralingsche Katoen Maatschappij and P.F. Van Vlissingen from Helmond) produced a great variety of products for the Dutch East Indies among them imitation chintz, mignonettes (all with flower motives). Also leminasses were popular. These were cloths with white motives against an indigo blue background.¹⁰² And then there were the famous Turkey red products of Prévinaire.

3.4 The market for (imitation) batiks in the Dutch East Indies in the 19th century

One of the local printed textiles the European manufacturers were eager to imitate was the Javanese batik. Batik is a method of dyeing in which patterned areas are covered with wax so they will not receive colour. Multicoloured and blended effects are obtained by repeating the dyeing process several times; with the initial pattern of wax boiled off and another design applied before redyeing.

Although batik techniques are used all over the world there is a wide consensus that batik reached its highest level of artistry in Java at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.

The batik technique improved considerably in Java when the *tjanting* became into use by the mid 18th century. The *tjanting* is a small crucible with a handle and a narrow application spout for applying the molten wax, producing a much more elaborately patterned cloth.

¹⁰⁰ Muller H. *De Nederlandse Katoen- Nijverheid* 69

¹⁰¹ Verbong G.P.J *Katoendrukken in Nederland vanaf 1800* 55

¹⁰² *Ibidem* 61

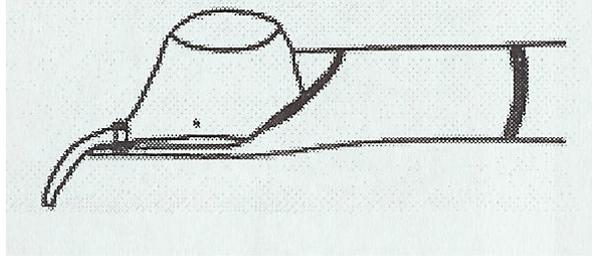


Figure 20 Tjanting

Source : Hermans Katrien *Import en creatieve adaptie* 110

Batiks gradually replaced the imported Indian chintz in the Dutch East Indies in the 18th century because of the high quality of the local product reached during that century and the demise of the Dutch East India Company and its departure from the Coromandel Coast of India.

Since the hand made batiks had reached their highest grade of perfection it was near impossible for European manufacturers to reach the same quality with machine made imitations. The East Indian consumers were very demanding concerning quality and patterns. The market was also very specific. For each type of garment, like long narrow scarfs (*slendangs*) and loose skirts made of long strips of cloth, wrapped around the body (*sarongs*), specific patterns were required. The European producers had to take this into account.¹⁰³

So far imitation batiks were cheap roller printed imitations mainly from Britain, without any wax resist layers being applied. They were also only printed only at one side while the real batiks were painted on both sides. So the difference in quality between such an imitation and the real thing was striking. It was now a challenge to European manufacturers to approach the refinement of the Javanese batik by copying the original production process as much as possible at competitive costs.

Swiss manufacturers who had started to operate in the East Indies in the 1840s became important players on the market for imitation batiks. Almost all of the Swiss producers came from the canton Glarus and this region became renowned for its production of quality imitation batiks. One of the most noted houses was that of *P. Blumer & Jenny* from Schwanden. Conrad Blumer was the first Swiss textile entrepreneur to survey the East Indian market during an adventurous business trip to Asia in 1840 and 1841.

From Batavia he reported in 1840: *Java bietet wirklich einen sehr bedeutenden Verbrauch fuer farbige Baumwollwaren dar, denn hier kleiden sich damit, man darf sagen alle Eingeborenen.....dasz schone gelungene Ware, wie wir sie zu liefern gewohnt sind, nicht nur verkauflich ist, sondern auch den hochsten Preis erzielen wird. Batavia wird fuer unsere Artikel ein guter Platz abgeben. Es braucht viel und zu guten Preisen, bei denen ein Bene herausshauen sollte.*¹⁰⁴

He took batik samples with him and his firm was able to produce several types of sarongs and slendangs within a couple of years using a negative reserve technique involving the printing of mordant on the cloth. Production developed slowly however, because of the complicated process of two sided printing and consequently the high costs involved.¹⁰⁵

Also other firms started to produce imitation batiks like *Bartholome Daniel Jenny & Cie* in Ennenda at the end of the 1840s and then in 1852 *Egidius Trümpy* from the canton capital Glarus and *Blumer & Tschudi* also from Glarus.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ingenbleek P. *Een overzeese afzetmarkt* 22

¹⁰⁴ Stussi Heinrich 27,28

¹⁰⁵ Jenny-Trumpy A. 456

¹⁰⁶ Verbong G.P.J *Techische innovaties* 210

The Swiss became formidable competitors for the Dutch printing companies operating on the East Indian market.

In Belgium there was the printing company *Texas SA* from Gent. It was owned by the Voortman family. They produced imitation batiks for Asia and West -Africa. In the 1880s the firm ran into difficulties and the factory was closed in 1989. With this closure the Belgian cotton printing industry ceased to exist.¹⁰⁷

3.5 The wax batik or wax print of Prévinaire

In the 1850s Prévinaire brought an imitation onto the market which would surpass all other imitations produced so far.

After experimenting for more than a decade J.B.T. Prévinaire was granted a patent for a *Perrotine* printing machine applicably called *La Javanaise*. The *Perrotine* was a printing machine that faithfully imitated the operations of a handprinter. It printed from flat blocks. It was invented by M. Perrot of Rouen in 1834.¹⁰⁸ *La Javanaise* was an adapted *Perrotine*, able to print a warm resin-wax resist on each face of the cloth. Additional areas of colour were being applied by hand using wooden blocks as stamps.

With this invention the wax batik or wax print was born.

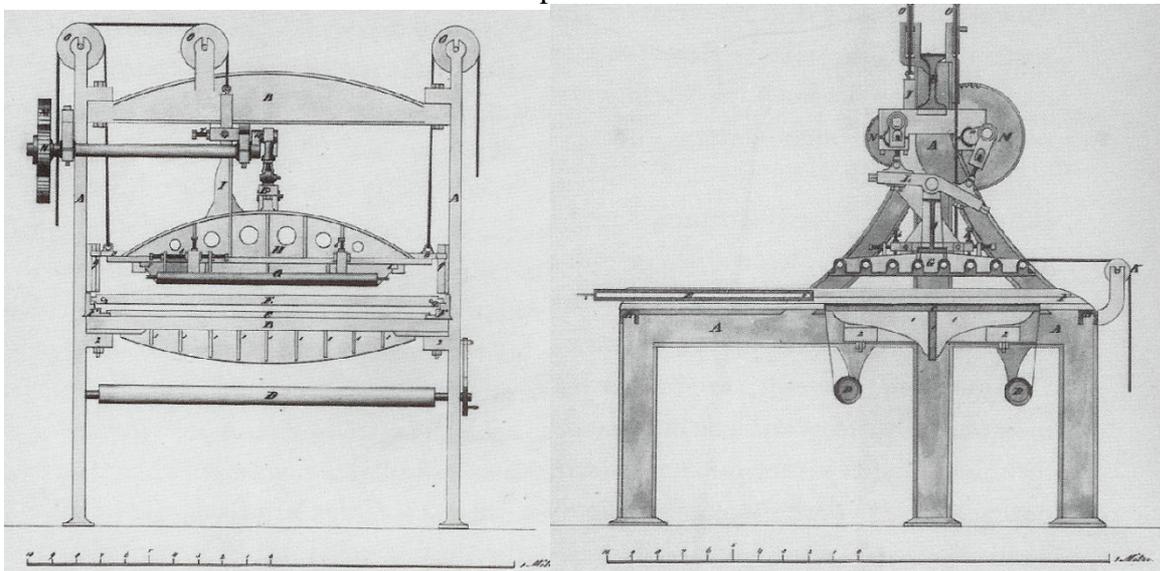


Figure 21 Front and side view of La Javanaise

Source Verbong G.P.J Katoendrukken in Nederland vanaf 1800 in: Brommer B. (ed.) *Katoendruk in Nederland* (Helmond/Tilburg 1989) 64

The productivity of *La Javanaise* was however not very high, as the printing process was intermittent. To improve productivity *La Javanaise* was -as soon as technology permitted - replaced by a duplex roller printing machine.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Sorber Frieda Vlaanderen – Nederland Een wisselwerking in katoendruk in :*Katoendruk* 46

¹⁰⁸ Robinson S. *A history of printed textiles* (London 1969) 106

¹⁰⁹ Verbong G.P.J *Techische innovaties* 220

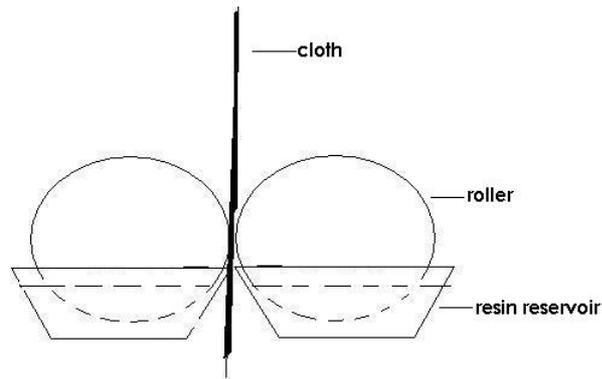


Figure 22 Simplified presentation of duplex roller system

Source: Gerlich Gabriele *Wax Prints im soziokulturellen Kontext Ghanas* (Mainz 2004) 33

The product was extremely successful. Many competitors tried to copy it but never reached the quality of the wax batik of Prévinaire. Nevertheless, it lasted until the 1860s before demand for these so called wax batiks began to rise in the East Indies.

During a relative short time from 1863 to 1867 huge profits were made by Prévinaire with his wax batik.¹¹⁰ The success of the wax batik encouraged several factories in the Netherlands (like De Heyder from Leiden and P.F. Van Vlissingen from Helmond) to start the production of wax batiks. Van Vlissingen and Wilson entered this market in 1866 and 1867. These manufacturers had their wax batik printed by hand blocking.

P.F. Van Vlissingen was founded on August the 15th 1846 in Helmond. The company started to export imitation batiks to the Dutch East Indies in 1846. They sold their their products via private traders and not via the NHM.¹¹¹

De Heyder tried to copy *La Javanaise* of Prévinaire. This took them many years. When they finally had succeeded in 1867, the wax batik boom was over.¹¹²

In 1867 the sales of imitation batiks reached a peak.

After this record, sales dropped and many trading houses lost interest in the product.

The export of imitation batiks to the Dutch East Indies went into a sharp decline.

There were several reasons for this. First there was the rising competition of the local batik industry. Small local batik firms had become more competitive by replacing the traditional use of a pen with a small reservoir of molten wax (*tjanting*) by a stamp (*tjap*).

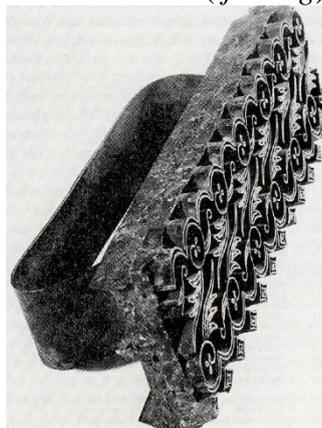


Figure 23 Tjap

Source: Rodenburg G.H. *Dutch Wax-Block-Garments Textielhistorische Bijdragen 7* (1966)

¹¹⁰ Verbong G.P.J *Techische innovaties* 200

¹¹¹ *Ibidem* 151

¹¹² *Ibidem*, 207

This reduced the production costs of local batiks considerably¹¹³.

Second there was the crackling and bubbling effect on the cloth (see chapter 4). This was not acceptable to the Indonesian taste in the end.¹¹⁴

Most of the Dutch (and all the Swiss) manufacturers therefore stopped producing wax batiks but continued to produce cheaper imitation batiks (the so called Java prints) and other similar products for the world markets successfully.

Only Marie Prosper Theodore Prévinaire kept his faith in the future of this product. He continued his firm after 1875 under the name *Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij* (the Haarlem Cotton Company), henceforth referred to as the HKM, under difficult circumstances. He survived not only by producing small volumes of wax batiks but also by exporting Turkey red dyed yarns to British India. This was a market he had already explored during the 1850s. Later he also exported to Singapore and Rangoon.¹¹⁵ While he employed several hundred workers in the 1860s, at the end of the 1880s there were hardly a hundred left.¹¹⁶

How he was saved from his awkward predicament and was rewarded for his perseverance is the subject of the next chapter.

3.6 Summary

In the 19th century the Dutch East Indies became an important market for European – particularly Dutch- textile manufacturers.

The British who occupied Java from 1811 to 1816 recognized the possibilities the East Indies offered to the then rapidly expanding English textile industry and they were able to conquer the textile market there during that period.

In order to revitalise the colonial trade with the Dutch East Indies the *Nederlandsche Handelmaatschappij* (NHM) got after the Napoleonic wars a monopoly in the shipment of government products to- mainly textiles produced in the kingdom of the Netherlands- and from the Indies, colonial produce for resale in the Netherlands.

After the secession of Belgium in 1830 a new textile industry was developed in the north under the guidance of the NHM. Several Belgian entrepreneurs were persuaded to move their factories to the north. They established printing and dyeing factories in Haarlem and Leiden. Later a few factories were established in other parts of the country, mainly in the south, of which the most important was P.F. Van Vlissingen & Co from Helmond in 1846.

A weaving industry was developed with the help of the NHM in the region of Twente in the east of the Netherlands.

To exclude more or less foreign cloth from the market of the East Indies preferential import tariffs for Dutch textile imports were introduced.

All these protective measures were successful in the beginning and the Dutch were able to reconquer the market from the British.

But in the 1840s the protective measures of the NHM had become counterproductive. They turned the Dutch manufacturers into inefficient producers and their products could not compete on world markets and even in the East Indies, where they enjoyed so much protection they began to lose market share particularly in the market for printed cotton. The Swiss put up a stiff competition there.

¹¹³ Verbong G.P.J Katoendrukken in Nederland vanaf 1800 65

¹¹⁴ Picton J., *The art of African Textiles* 26

¹¹⁵ Verbong G.P.J *Technische innovaties* 219

¹¹⁶ Verbong G.P.J Katoendrukken in Nederland vanaf 1800 65

In the third quarter of the 19th century preferential rights and other protective measures were abolished and indeed Dutch textile manufacturers became much more competitive on the East Indian market and later in the century also on world markets. They traded their products no longer with the NHM but with different private trading houses.

The Dutch printing factories like Prévinaire, De Heyder, the Kralingsche Katoen Maatschappij and P.F. Van Vlissingen produced a great variety of products for the Dutch East Indies.

The most important of them were the imitation batiks. The features of the high quality Javanese batiks were difficult to imitate. Prévinaire from Haarlem was the most successful with his imitations. He went through many difficulties in a continuous effort to improve on his imitations. The ultimate result was the so-called wax batik; a partially machine made batik of unmatched quality. He was very successful with this product in the 1860s.

Attracted by his success many manufacturers in the Netherlands and Switzerland started to produce wax batiks but they were not successful.

Either their quality was not good enough or they entered the market too late.

At the end of the 1860s the market for European imitation batiks in the East Indies declined. The imitation batiks received more and more competition from local industries, which had introduced a cheaper production technique.

All the Dutch and Swiss manufacturers abandoned the production of wax batiks except Prévinaire. In the end he had to find another market for this product.

4 THE INTRODUCTION OF DUTCH WAX PRINT ON THE GOLD COAST

4.1 Scramble for the Gold Coast and the start of colonialism

The scramble for the Gold Coast began in 1873. This was part of the European scramble for Africa with European nations competing to carve up those extensive portions of the continent that were as yet unclaimed by any European power. This period of conquest from the 1870s to the beginning of the 20th century year marks also the beginning of the age of new imperialism for the Gold Coast and the end of the era of old colonialism, in which the Europeans had no territorial ambitions and only purchased wares from local merchants. Now the British were no longer content simply to buy what local merchants provided and they considered local political institutions and local infrastructure and industry an impediment to trade. But the aims of the British were not only economical, but also political. They wanted to confirm British supremacy over Ashanti and pre-empt French encroachments. They decided to extend their authority by moving from the coast into the hinterland of the Gold Coast by force. After the acquisition of the Dutch Possessions on the Coast of Guinea in 1872, the British were strategically well positioned to beat their old enemies the Ashanti's. They used the former Dutch forts and trading posts on the Gold Coast as a springboard for their final onslaught on the Kingdom.

From 1873 to 1874 Sir Garnet Wolseley and his troops waged a war with the Ashanti Kingdom. By 1874 the Ashanti state had fallen into pieces and its capital Kumasi was destroyed and its King Kofi Karikari deposed. However his successor Osei Mensa Bonsu was able to reassert authority over some of the breakaway territories.¹¹⁷

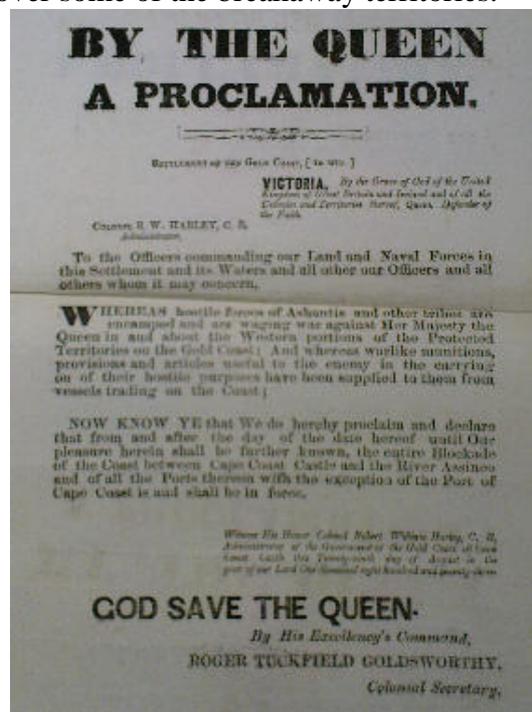


Figure 24 Declaration of war

Source: Dutch National Archives The Hague: archive nr 2.05.14.11 Consulaat Elmina 1872-1880

¹¹⁷ Gann L.H. Duignan P. 102

So Wolseley had not fully solved the Ashanti “problem”. In 1896 another expedition occupied Kumasi. The reigning Ashanti King Prempeh was deposed and he and his principal chiefs were packed off in exile to Sierra Leone and later to the Seychelles.



Figure 25 United Africa Company, fancy print pattern book "Nana Prempeh" 1929¹¹⁸
Source: Collection A. Brunnschweiler & Co, Hyde Cheshire UK

His people were fined a war indemnity of 50 000 ounces in gold.¹¹⁹ They were told to surrender the Golden Stool, the embodiment of the collective spirit of the Ashanti's. A serious rebellion because of this followed and it was put down in 1900 and the next year Ashanti formally became part of the Gold Coast colony.¹²⁰ This colony was knocked together in a little more than 25 years -like most of the colonies of the scramble for Africa- from an incongruous ragbag of territories and would ultimately be transformed in what is now considered one of the most politically stable nations of West Africa, Ghana.

After the British had occupied the hinterland of the Gold Coast they introduced a British way of administration and a British legal system, which put an end to inhuman practices as human sacrifice and slavery. They invested in railways needed for the economy to expand beyond the limits of 19th century export production and in education to decrease illiteracy.



Figure 26 First arrival of a train to Kumasi 1903
Source: www.bmpix.org picture D-30.18.30

¹¹⁸ The exiled king returned in 1923 and was reinstated. To commemorate his return the above fancy print was issued in 1929.

¹¹⁹ Pakenham T. 513

¹²⁰ Bowle J. 419

These investments were made possible by an economic upturn by the end of the 19th century. By the turn of the century the Great Depression had ended. The period from 1900 to 1913 was marked by a steady improvement in the barter terms of trade of African producers. Since the volume of exports was expanding at the same time, the income terms also rose, finally pulling the economy out of the slump, which had affected it so seriously in the late 19th century. The most spectacular increase was the Gold Coast cocoa export. It was the most famous of all Ga tradesmen, Ghanaian national hero *Tete Quashie* who returned from Fernando Po in the late 1870s with the seeds with which he would establish the first successful cocoa farm on the Gold Coast.¹²¹ Soon African farmers were growing cocoa on small, farms cleared from the forest. The first recorded export of cocoa was in 1893 when two sacks of cocoa were shipped from Accra to Hamburg by the Basel Mission Trading Company (BMTC) in the steamship *Professor Woermann* of the Woermann Linie.¹²² By 1913 cocoa comprised half the value of the colony's total exports of £ 5 000 000.¹²³

The effect was that more Africans entered the export market and got involved in the global economy, which led to a rise in the standard of living. The above favourable developments helped to reconcile Africans to colonial rule after the brutal Ashanti wars and this made the task of the new colonial administration much easier.

This administration had enormous consequences for trade.

Impediments to trade caused by former traditional local powers were eradicated.

The volume of trade rose in relation with the growth of tropical produce of the colony and European traders followed the British administrators and military into the interior.

The role of the once powerful middlemen was therefore reduced. The relations they maintained between the coast and the interior was now taken over by the European traders. However European traders still acted as wholesalers.

Petty local traders still sold the merchandise to the consumer.¹²⁴ Here women traders were about to play an important role.

How important the role of women in trade was and how independent they were is described in a note of Mr C.S. Burnett-Swanzy's head representative on the coast- to the Colonial Secretary in 1889 as follows:

*A very considerable trade in the Colony is carried on by women and a great many of these women are married, who carry on business apart from their husbands and so general a practice is it that it may be said that every married woman in some way carries on trade on her own account.*¹²⁵

Another new feature of the colonial era was the rapid growth of German commerce. By the 1880s Hamburg was said to handle nearly one third of all West Africa's overseas trade. This expansion was the result of three factors, the rise of the palm kernel market, which was dominated by Hamburg because German farmers were the main buyers of cattle cake, of which palm kernels were a major component and because the Dutch margarine manufacturers van den Bergh and Jurgens got their palm kernels for margarine production from the German colony Cameroon. Then there was the ability of Hamburg to supply cheap liquor (*Schnapps*) and last but not least the development of steamship services between Germany and West Africa, mainly to serve the new German colonies Togo and Cameroon.¹²⁶ The merchant house

¹²¹ Parker John 34

¹²² Franc A. 90

¹²³ Fage J.D 188

¹²⁴ Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de waxprint op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt 89

¹²⁵ Kaplow Suzan Beth 235

¹²⁶ Hopkins A.G. 130

of Woermann began to run steamers to the West Coast in the 1870s, before the establishment of the *Woermann-Linie* in 1886.¹²⁷

In 1895 Elder Dempster and the Woermann-Linie reached an agreement which limited competition between them and established a joint policy towards newcomers. French firms were not associated with this agreement because they did not compete on the same routes. This shipping conference (as such arrangements are called) enabled the two major firms to control the bulk of the trade. Their principal weapon was the deferred rebate system, by which shippers who agreed to use only conference vessels received a refund on a proportion of their freight payments.¹²⁸

So from 1895 most of the trade between British and German West Africa went via Liverpool and Hamburg and it explains why very few Dutch ships appeared on the west coast of Africa from 1895 up to the end of the First World War.

4.2 Textile trade at the end of the 19th century

During the first decade after the start of the Ashanti wars textiles remained the mainstay of the imports from Britain as the following table of imports from Britain for the period 1873-1882 shows.

period	Textiles £	Rum, spirits £	Guns, gunpowder £	Other articles £	Total exports £
1873-1882	3 007 347	63 467	122 313	1 832 356	5 025 483

Table 5 Imports from Britain into Gold Coast and Lagos 1873-1882¹²⁹

Petty traders bought the cloth from the European wholesalers in the important market places and sold it to consumers in the most remote corners of the colony.

The African tradition of attaching a symbolic meaning to the different designs was maintained in this way (See chapter 2).¹³⁰

The higher standard of living created a market for luxury products like lace, damask, brocades, embroidery and high quality cotton prints.

Concerning printed cotton the traders were therefore looking for other textile products than the usual Manchester cloth, which did no longer satisfy the needs of wealthier customers.

These customers could no longer distinguish themselves from others, by wearing rather cheap low quality Manchester cloth.

Indian printed cottons were no longer an option to serve the market for luxury textiles. They had almost disappeared from the market. Importing them became too expensive for the traders. One of the reasons the Indian cotton printing industry could no longer compete with European textile printing industry on world markets was the development of synthetic dyes in the second half of the 19th century -due to the progress in the field of organic chemistry in Europe. This had an enormous impact on the European textile printing and dyeing industry.

Until the later half of the 19th century all dyes except for a few mineral colours were of vegetable and animal origin. These natural dyes-with few exceptions- have no colouring properties in themselves and must be used in conjunction with a mordant, usually a metallic salt. This was a complicated process. Efforts to simplify the process led to the discovery of the coal-tar or aniline dye, mauveine by Perkin in 1856 and this set in motion a continuing

¹²⁷ Ibidem 148

¹²⁸ Ibidem 201

¹²⁹ Muller Archives, export summary by James F. Hutton & Co

¹³⁰ Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de waxprint op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt 90

series of discoveries of improved synthetic dyes that by the beginning of the 20th century rendered the natural dyes obsolete in commercial practice.¹³¹

The last dye to be replaced was the natural indigo at the beginning of the 20th century.

Ultimately the traders found producers of high quality cotton prints on the Continent of Europe mainly in Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland, who produced high quality prints for the South East Asian markets. These producers were looking for other markets, as competition on the South East Asian markets had become very intense. They were smaller manufacturers than the Manchester cloth producers and served specialized and fragmented markets and their consumers were very demanding (see chapter 3).

They made therefore a lot of effort to gather information about the preferences of their customers so that they were able to adapt their products to the taste of the consumers.

This was a requirement to be able to compete on the West African textile market successfully. So they were able to compete with the British on the Gold Coast, although they operated in different segments of the textile market. The British produced Manchester cloth cheaper mass produced prints of lower quality and the producers from the continent served the top segment of the market.¹³²

From the 1860s traders on the Gold Coast started to order high quality prints from these continental firms.

In 1874 F. &A. Swanzy described the West African market for imported textiles as follows;

*about sixty percent of our shipments to the Coast consist of cotton manufactures, chiefly of Manchester make, but including some new fabrics from Switzerland and Belgium, of finer colour and quality; and you will observe how singularly the names still used in the trade remind us of the time when India supplied us a large proportion of our cotton manufacture samples.*¹³³

A very persistent story about the preparation of the West African textile market for batiks is that a taste for the Javanese batiks and its imitations was developed by returning African mercenary soldiers, recruited on the Gold Coast by the Dutch for service in the Dutch East Indies.

The soldiers brought or sent back Java batiks as gifts for their wives, who soon developed a liking for such cloth.¹³⁴

Mansvelt was the first author to spread the story of the African soldiers in 1924.¹³⁵

Kroese was also a strong supporter of this theory of market preparation and excludes more or less any other possibility in his booklet *The origin of the Wax block prints on the Coast of West Africa*.¹³⁶

Van Kessel considers the story of the returning African soldiers a myth because:

- West Africans have been exposed to batik like products from Asia long before the 19th century and some indigenous textile products are similar to batiks (Adinkra);
- Hardly any soldier kept in touch with his relatives during his tour of duty and sent gifts home;
- It is unlikely that the soldiers on their return could have spent much money on expensive cloth like batiks, they had hardly any money at the time of their departure

¹³¹ Robinson S. *A history of dyed textiles* 33-36

¹³² Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de waxprint op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt 86

¹³³ Swanzy A. 482

¹³⁴ Rodenburg G.H. 47

¹³⁵ Mansvelt W.M.F., *Iets over de Haarlemsche katoenfabrieken* 238-243

¹³⁶ Dr W.T.Kroese was the CEO of the well known Dutch textile firm Nijverdal ten Cate for many years. He was also on the supervisory board of the Dutch waxprint producer PF van Vlissingen. That is why he developed a keen interest in the origin of the wax print. After his retirement he wrote *“The origin of the Wax block prints on the Coast of West Africa”* (Hengelo1976) .

from the East Indies, all their gratuities pensions were to be paid back on their return in Elmina at the Gold Coast;

- There is no evidence that they brought back batiks.¹³⁷

The costs of original hand made batiks from Java were certainly prohibitive for the first batches of soldiers going to Java in the period 1841 to 1841. These batiks could be afforded only by members of the various courts of Javanese sultans. If they brought back any batiks home it must have been the European imitations described in chapter three.

During the second period of recruitment from 1856 to 1872 the costs of local batiks had decreased considerably because of the new production method of printing by stamps (*tjaps*, see figure 23).

So this time some of them might have taken home some batiks from Java.

However since the number of recruits during this period was rather low (780, see paragraph 2.2.1) and the majority of them did not return home after their tour of duty, it is very unlikely that the small quantity of batiks brought home by them influenced the market for imitation batiks in West Africa very much.

At the time the soldiers returned imitation batiks were already pouring in from other sources, European traders who imported imitation batiks from Europe.

It appears that these traders played a far more important role in preparing the market for imitation batiks like java prints than the returning ex soldiers from the East Indies.

These traders were also important because they fed back information to the European producers how to adapt the designs to satisfy African customers.

4.3 The introduction of the wax print

By the end of the 1880s the African consumers had acquainted themselves with the various imitation batiks from the continent of Europe, but they had not been introduced to the most refined of all imitation batiks the wax print.

A Scottish merchant from Glasgow, Ebenezer Brown Fleming (1858-1912), who in the 1890s was probably attracted by the new improved trading conditions at the Gold Coast since it had become a British colony, was the first one to trade this quality product on the Gold coast.¹³⁸



Figure 27 Ebenezer Brown Fleming (1858-1912)

Source: Kroese W.T. *The origin of the Wax Block Prints on the Coast of West Africa* 53

¹³⁷ Kessel Ineke van 191

¹³⁸ Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de waxprint op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt 91

He knew that high quality printed cloth was in demand there and got in touch with Marie Prosper Theodore Prévinaire and his successor and son in law C.F. van de Poll, Esquire in the 1890s.¹³⁹



Figure 28 C.F. van de Poll, Esquire (director of HKM 1886-1918) in Cannes 1931
Source: Kroese W.T. *The origin of the Wax Block Prints on the Coast of West Africa* 19

This was not a coincidence as the HKM was the only producer of wax prints left on the continent. All the other Swiss and Dutch firms had stopped producing wax batiks at the end of the 1860s and the beginning of the 1870s (see chapter 3). It is also possible that Brown Fleming and Prévinaire had known each other already for a very long time because they were both specialists in the field of Turkey Red dyed products (yarn and cloth). The first time Ebenezer's name appeared in business records was in 1881. He was described as a salesman of Turkey Red dyed products, then as an East India merchant and finally as founder of Brown Fleming Ltd, Dyers and Printers of African and Colonial Specialities.¹⁴⁰ The result of the encounter of Ebenezer Brown Fleming and the HKM was that Brown Fleming started trading the wax prints of the HKM on the Gold Coast at the end of 19th century. They became an immediate success.

Prévinaire must have been very happy with this fruitful cooperation as he had experienced only a short period of success with his wax prints in the Dutch East Indies in the 1860s. Since then his business had gone from bad to worse and it must have been a great relief that he was rescued from his awkward predicament by Ebenezer Brown Fleming. This might have been the reason that he decided to give him the exclusive right to sell his wax prints.

What were the reasons for the success of the wax print on the Gold Coast?

The wax print had some highly regarded characteristics which contributed to its popularity. One of these was the so called *indigo crackle*. This was caused by handling the cloth subsequent to the application of wax/resin and before the indigo dipping. This caused hair cracks to appear in the resin/wax layers through which the indigo seeped during the dipping process, creating fine veins of indigo colour giving a "crackled" effect.

¹³⁹ Kroese W.T *The origin of the Wax Block Prints on the Coast of West Africa* 51

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem* 50

Picton J. *The art of African textiles* 26

Other cherished features of the wax print in Africa were the irregularity of the hand blocking of additional colours, unavoidable in the application of colour by hand blocking to an outline design in indigo and scattered resin spots which could not be removed and which resist the additional colours. In Asia these irregularities had ultimately been rejected by the customers but in Africa they were highly appreciated.

Another feature which was very much appreciated was the colour penetration, which secured most satisfactory resistance to light, washing, perspiration and rubbing under African conditions.¹⁴¹

Also the patterns printed on the wax prints became very popular. The reason for this was that Brown Fleming was able - more than any trader before him- to adapt print designs to African tastes. Most of his designs are still popular today!

So Ebenezer Brown Fleming being the sole agent of the HKM provided information to the HKM designers to adapt their designs more specifically to local tastes and concerns. The first wax prints were probably based on Indonesian motifs. But soon the Haarlem designers adapted the Indonesian batik style to incorporate design elements that would encourage Gold Coast interest. An example of this is the topic of education.

Education was the centre of interest on the Gold Coast at the end of the 19th century. Primary schools were introduced on the Gold Coast on a massive scale and literacy was established as the means to progress within the new political order.

So the Haarlem designers - probably assisted by Brown Fleming- came up with a design which represented the material culture of modern education, blackboards, the alphabet, numbers, pencils, rulers, inkpots etc.

This design became known as ABC and has been popular ever since.

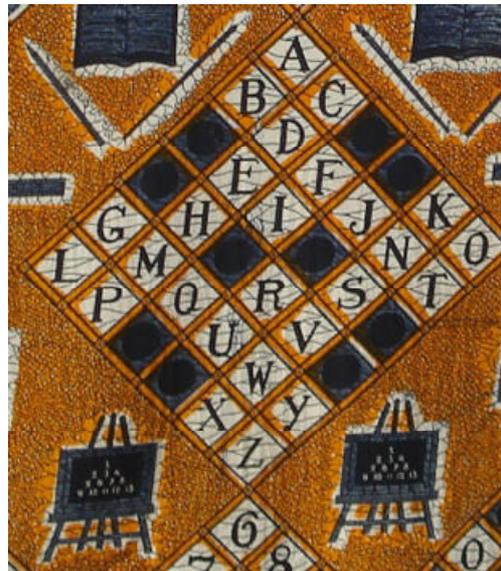


Figure 29 ABC design

Source: Photo Marianne Ankersmit Zijlmans Apollonia Ghana 2008

The following picture from the early 1920s shows a woman from the Gold Coast wearing a dress with the ABC pattern printed on it. She wanted to show by means of non verbal communication that she found education important.

¹⁴¹ Pedler F. 241



Figure30 Woman from the Gold Coast in the 1920s wearing cloth with ABC design¹⁴²
Source: Photo Wilhelm Kaufmann, Bern History Museum Dpt of Ethnography (1921-1924)

This is probably the earliest picture of someone, who wears a cloth with the famous ABC pattern.

The earliest documented record of this design is the in *HKM Stalenboek I 1904-1906* (pattern book), which documents orders for particular designs that were coming from Glasgow.

¹⁴² The child is wearing a Madras cloth, very popular in the 19th and early 20th century in West Africa.

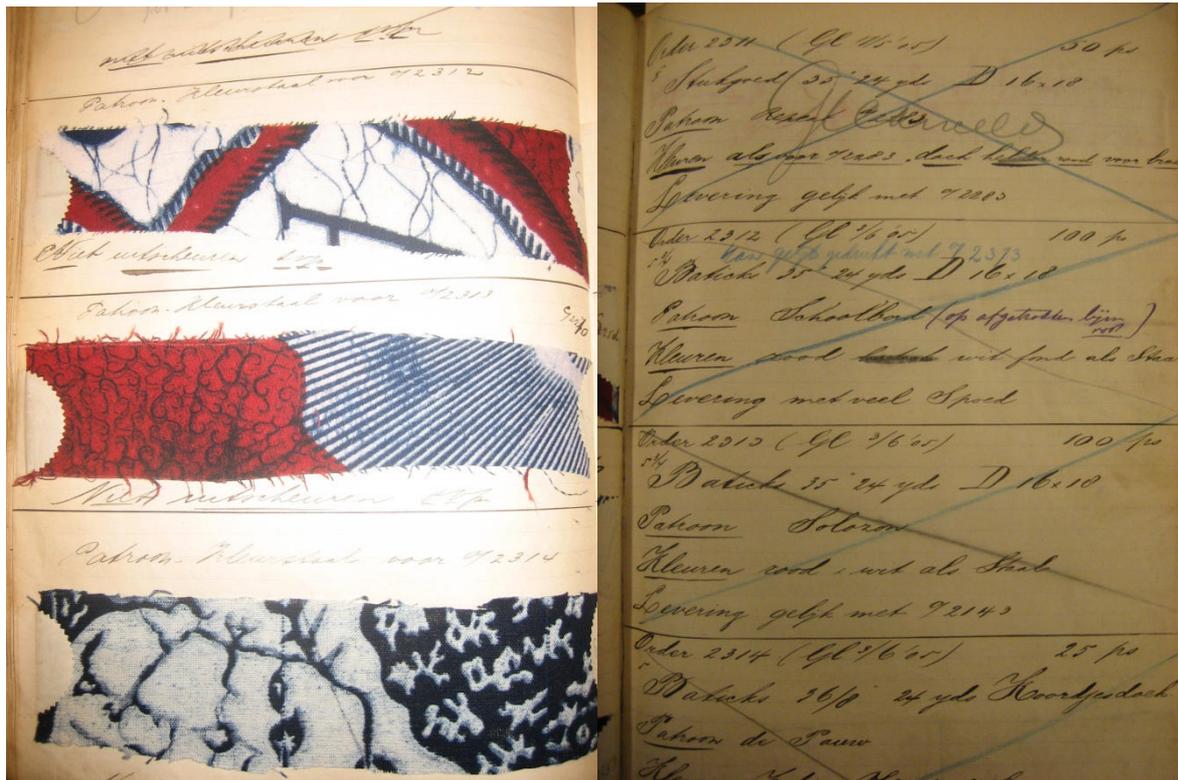


Figure 31 Haarlem Cotton Company pattern Book 1904 -1906 order for ABC (schoolbord) design, ordernr 2312 dated 03-06-1905 pp 51,52
 Source: Vlisco Museum Helmond

Order number 2312, dated 3 June 1905 is for the ABC pattern (*schoolbord* (blackboard) as the HKM printers called it in those days).

Other important wax print motifs were emblems of chiefly authority. The oldest design in this category was known as ‘Sword of Kingship’ or ‘Corkscrew’. This design was based upon a wrought Asante ceremonial sword, which entered the British Museum after the deposed king Prempeh I went into exile.



Figure 32" Sword of Kingship "or" Corkscrew" design on Vlisco waxprint
 Source: Photo W. Ankersmit in: Leiden African Studies Centre 2010

The popularity of this design could have been because it allowed people to flaunt an allegiance to an authority (temporarily) subverted by colonial rule.¹⁴³

Very important were also designs based upon the visualization of local proverbs. The earliest dated sample of a HKM African print cloth is 1895 and has a pattern based on a proverb from the Gold Coast. The cloth is located in the archives of the ABC (Arnold Brunnschweiler & Co) Wax Ltd office at Hyde in Cheshire.¹⁴⁴



Figure 33 Hands and Fingers design

Source: Photo W. Ankersmit, Textildruckmuseum, Näfels, Glarus (CH), 2008

The *Hand and Fingers* design shows the palm of the hand with the twelve pennies of the English shilling. The proverb it refers to is: *The palm of the hand is sweeter than the back of the hand* (because the palm holds the money, so we hope to receive good fortune).¹⁴⁵

Important elements of the *Hand and Fingers*' design were already used on patterns on Manchester cloth before the introduction of the wax print on the Gold Coast as the following picture shows. It concerns a handkerchief produced by Moir & Co intended for the African market. The design was registered in July 1884.¹⁴⁶

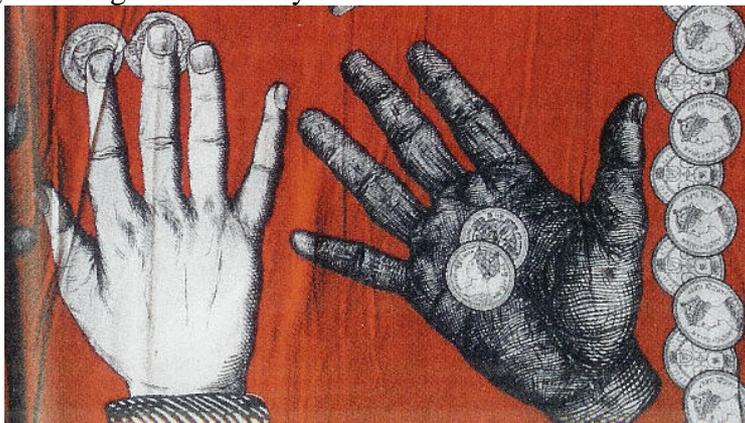


Figure 34 Hand and Fingers motif on handkerchief by Moir & Co, registered in 1884

Source Philip Anthony Sykas, *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England* (Bolton 2005) 147

¹⁴³ Picton J. Laughing at ourselves, in: *Yinka Shonibare Double Dutch* 53

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem

¹⁴⁵ ibidem

¹⁴⁶ Sykas Philip Anthony, 147

The following picture shows a Manchester cloth design from the 1870s which incorporates the corkscrew and the hand and fingers motif.

So popular designs of Manchester cloth and Java prints served as a model for some of the first wax prints adapted to African tastes.¹⁴⁷

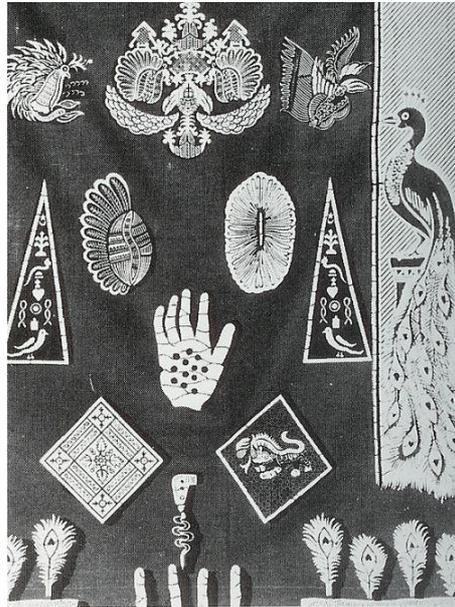


Figure 35 Manchester cloth with corkscrew and hand and fingers motif designed in the 1870s

Source: Robinson Stuart *A history of dyed textiles* Cambridge 1969 picture 33

Above described designs are some examples of several patterns that mark the Africanisation of the European imitation batiks exported to West Africa, their transformation from an exotic textile (in West African terms) to a fabric of immediate relevance to the developing modernity of the Gold Coast.¹⁴⁸

The Haarlem designers who had never been in Africa therefore did not need any specific knowledge of Africa, but probably used samples of Manchester cloth designs already popular on the Gold Coast like the above examples. These samples must have been provided to them by Brown Fleming.

He was responsible for marketing the wax prints of HKM and, one imagines (but cannot prove), for feeding back information about their success or otherwise. Unfortunately no evidence has yet come to light that enables specific events to be dated precisely (even assuming that we knew what the specific events were).¹⁴⁹

Brown Fleming did not have an office at the Gold Coast. He ran his business from Glasgow and had several wholesale customers at the Gold Coast, who gave him feedback on the success of the different wax print designs.

One of them was a French or Swiss trader called Dumas who had established his business at Ada at the estuary of the Volta River.

Ada had become an important trading centre in the 1860s. It was located in the middle of a palmoil producing region. African traders came to Ada in their barges to deliver palm oil and take European merchandise in return to market places upstream for sale.

¹⁴⁷ Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de wax print op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt *Textielhistorische bijdragen* 39 (1998) 92

¹⁴⁸ Picton J. Laughing at ourselves, in: *Yinka Shonibare Double Dutch* 53

¹⁴⁹ Picton J *The art of African Textiles*.27

Dumas died between 1906 and 1910. His daughter continued his business until the 1930s.¹⁵⁰ The name Dumas somehow lives on as it is under the name *Domaas* that the waxprint is known in Southern Ghana today.¹⁵¹

These local agents on the Gold Coast had hundreds of local traders as their customers nearly all of them were women. They were an essential shackle in the supply chain very close to the consumer selling the prints to the local markets, supplying information on desired cloth patterns and giving the prints a symbolic name in cooperation with the consumers which contributed to its prestige.

The search for the symbolic meaning of the wax print designs is complicated by the fact that the consumers often perceive the motif differently from what was intended by the producers and that the consumers often name the pattern according to certain circumstances in connection with the purchase or use of the cloth.¹⁵²

It appears that the traders and particularly the local women traders (called *mammie traders*) played the most important role in introducing the wax prints to the consumers on the Gold Coast. They provided the necessary information on required patterns, motifs and colours to the European traders and producers in order to make the wax prints acceptable to the African consumers.

The wax print would not have become a success story without the mediating influence of these local traders.



Figure 36 Mammie traders from Nigeria with Ankersmit management in Deventer 1949.¹⁵³

Source: Photo J.H. Rutgers Deventer 1949

It appears that around 1900 Brown Fleming was registering the Haarlem designs in Britain in his own name.¹⁵⁴

According to Kroese, Ebenezer Brown Fleming could also have learnt about market conditions from his shipping agency John Holt.¹⁵⁵

This seems unlikely, because Holt had a strong presence in Fernando Po and Nigeria since the 1860s but the company did not enter the Gold Coast until 1935, although it had a factory at Keta near the Togoland border, from the early 1920s.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de wax print op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt 91

¹⁵¹ Boelman W.J. Holthoorn F.I. 238

¹⁵² Nielsen R. 485

¹⁵³ Standing from left to right: G.J. Meeles, A. Ankersmit, W. Wienbelt. Seated from left to right: R. Ankersmit, Priscilla Nzimiro, Mary Nzimiro, D.L. Ankersmit

¹⁵⁴ Picton J. *The art of African Textiles* 27

¹⁵⁵ Kroese W.T. *The origin of the Wax Block Prints* 51

4.3.1 The influence of missionaries on clothing

Several relatives of Ebenezer Brown Fleming were Presbyterian ministers and through them he had connections with the Scottish Missionaries on the Gold Coast.

These connections could have been useful to him for understanding the cloth market on the Gold Coast. The conscientiousness of the importance of education, which the missionaries were able to transfer to the local population, may have contributed to the already mentioned ABC cloth design and Brown Fleming may have picked up the ideas for this design via his mission friends. The missionaries were not only concerned with the spiritual needs of the native population there, but they cared for their physical wellbeing as well. Particularly clothing had their attention. According to Ross the missionary movement has been one of the major ways in which European styles of dress have spread around the world.¹⁵⁷

The missionaries were concerned to inculcate a particular view of civilisation.

This entailed prescribing specific forms of dress with the aim to free the converts -particularly the women- from sin.¹⁵⁸

They demanded that women would wear more than a cloth around the hips –above all the breasts had to be shielded from view- and the men were encouraged to abandon their loincloths and wear Western style suits.

The outer clothes of men were imported from the great emporia of ready- to-wear clothes while women's clothes and men's shirts and undergarments were produced locally.

The usual traditional dress for women on the Gold Coast at that time was a skirt and a second cloth. The second cloth was piece of cloth which was used to tie a baby on the back and was therefore a prerogative of married women. But the second cloth also became a fashionable adornment worn like a stole round the neck or wrapped around the shoulder (see figure 30). The missionaries imposed the Victorian ideals of dress and bodily cover on the local women by promoting a third garment, a European styled blouse (see also figure 31).¹⁵⁹

This three piece costume is in Ghana nowadays called the *kaba*, which in various forms and under different names, is widespread in West Africa. By the mid 20th century this type of clothing is perceived as an icon of national identity in Ghana.¹⁶⁰

The production of these local clothes was stimulated by the sewing classes of the various mission societies. Particularly the Basel Mission Society (BMS) was active in this field. The BMS organized sewing classes often under the tutelage of the missionaries' wives and made sewing and dress making a part of girl's education at its schools.

Many girls were taught to sew- the stitching of the traditional cloth stripes had been a male occupation - and to cut stuff from which the clothes were made.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Howard, Rhoda 100
John Holt & Co 48

¹⁵⁷ Ross R. 84

¹⁵⁸ Ibidem 88

¹⁵⁹ Boelman W.J. Holthoorn F.I. 237

¹⁶⁰ Sill Ulrike 287

¹⁶¹ Ibidem 98



Figure 37 Basel Mission Sewing class of Ms Spahn in Odumase 1888

Source: Basel Mission Archive, www.bmpix.org, D-30_06_044

Many became professional seamstresses in the tailor shops, which were created in the beginning of the colonial era.

According to Ulrike Sill it was through the above developments that clothing became a new domain of women on the Gold Coast at the end of the 19th century.¹⁶²

This might also explain the demand for more refined textiles and the important role women traders were going to play in the textile trade from now on.

The source of material for these locally made clothes consisted of imported cloths produced by European manufacturers especially for the African markets, like Manchester cloth, Java prints and ultimately the wax print. The market for imported European cloth was enlarged by the availability of many seamstresses trained by missionaries.

4.3.2 The Basel Mission Trading Company

The trading branch of the BMS the Basel Mission Trading Company (BMTC) promoted imitation batiks on the Gold Coast. Initially they traded only Manchester cloth and woven loom patterned textiles from Switzerland but they started trading imitation batiks from Swiss cotton printers from the canton Glarus in the last quarter of the 19th century. Swiss sources claim that Swiss missionaries prepared the market in West Africa for the wax prints by this trade.¹⁶³

This is true, but they were not the only ones as other European merchants on the coast like Swanzy were also importing imitation batiks during that period.

For the BMTC the textile trade was very important as they did not trade weapons, ammunition and liquor because of their religious conviction. They were often ridiculed by their competitors because of their high moral standards as they went to the extreme in their abstinence. In 1913 the agent of Swanzy, Mr Grey called the BMTC a very funny company, because the DMTC manager on the gold Coast Mr Wilhelm refused to share transport facilities with Swanzy, because he did not want to transport his merchandise with a lorry partly loaded with *Schnapps*.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Sill Ulrike 287

¹⁶³ Wanner G.A. 575
Nielsen R. 470

¹⁶⁴ Franc A. 77

The BMTC on the Gold Coast grew considerably during the 1890s, because of the expanding cocoa trade. The BMTC had abandoned their sailing ships in the 1880s and shipped its merchandise now with the Woermann Line who became their agent on the Gold Coast. In the 1890s, the BMTC started buying HKM wax prints from Brown Fleming through their cocoa agent in London I.P. Werner.¹⁶⁵ They could not buy wax prints from Swiss manufacturers, because they had ceased producing them in the 1870s (see chapter 3). It is obvious that the BMTC was not very pleased with monopoly of Brown Fleming in selling the wax prints of the HKM, who was at the turn of the century the sole producer of this coveted product.

This monopoly had driven up the prices so much that the BMTC was seriously looking for other manufacturers who would be able to produce wax prints and with whom they could deal directly. In the beginning of the 20th century some manufacturers in Britain and the Netherlands were about to master the technique of producing wax prints of more or less the same quality and the monopoly of Brown Fleming and the HKM was to come to an end. This is the subject of the next paragraph.

4.3.3 Other Dutch producers of wax prints

Until 1910 the HKM was the sole producer of wax prints for West Africa. The success of this product began to draw the attention of other manufacturers in the first decade of the 20th century. Several companies in the Netherlands and Great Britain made attempts to imitate the wax prints from Haarlem. Through a process of experimentation and/or industrial espionage some of them were ultimately able to manufacture wax prints.

The Dutch companies which were the most successful in the production of waxprints for West Africa were the *Deventer Katoen Maatschappij voorheen Ankersmit & Co* (DKM) from Deventer and *P.F. van Vlissingen & Co* from Helmond.

Deventer Katoen Maatschappij voorheen Ankersmit en Co

The firm of Ankersmit opened in Deventer in 1798 as indigo dyers. Hendrik Jan Ankersmit I supplied yarn to handloom weavers in their farms and collected the cloth from them for dyeing. His son Hendrik Jan II built a steam driven cotton mill in the 1860s. It became operational in 1865. Its products included *blue baft*, *sucretons* and *Guinee Holy Shandora*, which were exported to the Dutch East Indies and West Africa.

The Blue Baft is white cotton dyed solid blue and was exported mainly to Senegal and became particularly popular with the Touaregs. These famous 'Blue Men' from the desert dressed themselves in indigo dyed cloth from Deventer. Special care was taken to dye in such a way that the colours would rub off on the wearer, which gave the desired copper sheen to the skin.¹⁶⁶

In 1899 the fourth generation entered the firm, among them Hendrik Jan IV (1866-1923). He became a specialist in synthetic dyes by taking his doctoral degree in organic chemistry at the University of Bern in 1891.¹⁶⁷ Dr H.J. Ankersmit was a dynamic and ambitious man. He wanted to upgrade the family firm from a weaving and indigo dyeing mill to a firm with cotton printing as its main business.

¹⁶⁵ Basel Misson Archive 4005 UTC : M.Binnhammer Korrespondenz 1907-1908 letter I.P.Werner to M.Binhammer 24-07-1908

¹⁶⁶ Pedler F. 243

¹⁶⁷ Ankersmit H.J. *Ueber das Phenanthridin Inaugural- Dissertation* (Zürich 1891)



Figure 38 Dr H.J. Ankersmit (1866-1923)
Source : Foto J.H. Rutgers Deventer 1920

An earlier attempt in the 1890s to achieve this had failed. After the turn of the century Dr H.J. Ankersmit was looking for possibilities to have a second more successful try.

A new opportunity to start a printing business arose when the DKM got an assignment from the HKM to dye their resin printed cloth, as the dyeing capacity could not cope with the skyrocketing demand for wax prints on the Gold Coast.

From November 1907 to November 1908 the DKM dyed some 450 000 yards of cloth for the HKM.¹⁶⁸

The resin printed cloth was transported by train from Haarlem to Deventer and when dyed returned to Haarlem -also by train- for finishing.

In November 1908 the HKM suddenly cancelled the agreement. The managing director of the HKM, C.F. van de Poll, Esquire, gave as a reason for this cancellation a strike in England from where their unprinted white cloth was imported.

The truth however was that van de Poll suspected Ankersmit from pinching samples of the resin printed cloth to obtain the secret of the trade.

Dr H.J. Ankersmit denied this and declared later that he got samples of the HKM wax prints from his agent in Hamburg.¹⁶⁹

What ever happened, the HKM assignment provided Dr H.J. Ankersmit with useful information about the process of manufacturing wax prints and increased his confidence to start producing wax prints himself.

In April 1910 the shareholders of the DKM agreed to a proposal to invest in a wax print department. It involved a considerable amount of money in those days. From 1910 to 1912 an amount of 250 000 guilders was invested.¹⁷⁰ It took a lot of effort during the test phase before the first wax prints of satisfactory quality were produced.¹⁷¹

Another problem Dr H.J. Ankersmit had to solve was the absence of a suitable colourist. A cotton printing factory could not become successful without such an expert.

In the end the DKM found one in the person of Jean Jacques, the son of the chief colourist of the HKM. Jean Jacques junior could dispose of the colourists' archives of his father. The Jacques family came from Alsace, a region famous for its cotton printing and dyeing industry. Although Jean Jacques was useful to the DKM in developing the wax prints, he proved to a difficult character with a bad temper. An encounter with one of the DKM directors Albert

¹⁶⁸ Verbong *Technische Innovaties* 229

¹⁶⁹ Meeles G.J. 10

¹⁷⁰ Verbong *Technische Innovaties* 229

¹⁷¹ Meeles G.J 40-48

Ankersmit in 1915 sent him into an uncontrollable rage. This confrontation resulted in Jacques being sacked on the spot.¹⁷²

After this incident the DKM relied for colouristic advice on the *Badische Anilin und Soda Fabrik* (BASF) via its Dutch agent Mr Leiberich from Utrecht. He put problems the DKM had with synthetic dyes forward to BASF headquarters in Ludwigshafen. It was through Leiberich that DKM got a new colourist in 1918, Mr Jean Dish, another Alsatian who had been employed by the HKM. He would stay with the DKM until 1930.¹⁷³

The last problem concerned the designs; what designs should be used and who was to market them. It was essential that the wax prints were marketed with skill and discretion.

As the majority of the wax prints were exported to the Gold Coast at that time, the DKM management was looking for an experienced trading house there.

It was not a coincidence that the DKM approached the Basel Mission Trading Company (BMTC) to this effect. As already explained earlier the BMTC was well established at the Gold Coast and a very experienced trader of European textiles there. The DKM had already a business relation with the BMTC via the DKM agent in Basel Mr. W. Humitzsch. The DKM sold its famous “Blue Baft” to the BMTC on the Gold Coast via Humitzsch.¹⁷⁴ The BMTC traded, among others, the HKM wax prints on the Gold Coast through Brown Fleming and they were looking for a cheaper alternative bypassing Brown Fleming and dealing direct with a wax print producer. On July the 11th 1910 Dr H.J. Ankersmit visited the BMTC head office in Basel to inform them of the DKM plans to produce wax prints. The BMTC showed immediately great interest in the DKM project and negotiations on conditions of a delivery contract started. The DKM came to an agreement with the BMTC shortly after that visit. The BMTC agreed to assist the DKM to produce marketable designs. In exchange the BMTC got the sole right to sell DKM wax prints on the Gold Coast.¹⁷⁵ On advice of the BMTC, the DKM started with some of the successful designs of the Brown Fleming collection. Later the DKM developed its own designs with the help of the BMTC.

On June the 9th 1911, Mr Opferkuch and Mr M. Binhammer, who had been promoted from BMTC manager on the Gold Coast to Manager for Africa in the head office in Basel, came to Deventer to see what progress had been made with the wax print production of the DKM.¹⁷⁶



Figure 39 Messrs Roesle, Opferkuch and Binhammer at Accra BMTC

Source:www. bmpix.org QU-30_30_003_293

¹⁷²Meeles G.J 52

¹⁷³ Ibidem 54,55

¹⁷⁴ Meeles G.J 20

¹⁷⁵ Ibidem 21,22

¹⁷⁶ Ibidem 22

The first trials with the adapted Voss & Delius duplex roller printing machine had started. On July the fifth 1911 the first successful test print of the *Leidsche Ruit* design was produced.¹⁷⁷ It took three months before the first samples could be sent to Basel.

Dr H.J. Ankersmit travelled to Basel in December 1911, where he received the first orders for the *Leidsche Ruit* (2400 pieces,12 yards x 36")¹⁷⁸ and *Pelican* design on December the 7th 1911 (1000 pieces,12yards x 36 inches).¹⁷⁹

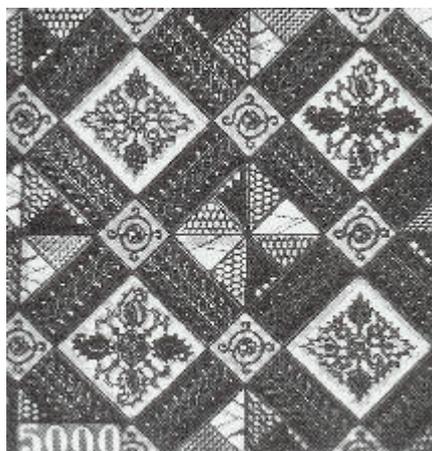


Figure 40 First DKM wax print design no 5000 Leidsche Ruit

Source: Janszen H.,Visser, S. de, *Ankersmit Honderd jaar katoen in Deventer* (Deventer 2006) 189

After this trip he went to Accra to familiarize himself with the market there. He boarded the *SS Henny Woermann* in Boulogne in mid-January 1912 to arrive in Accra on January the 26th 1912.¹⁸⁰ He was the first wax print producer to undertake such a trip.

In 1912 production developed satisfactorily with a weekly production of 500 pieces of 12 yards. Considering the large investments made this was not enough but production was limited by the small number of available designs. In 1912 only 12 designs were available and the BMTC did not want to take delivery of more than 1800 pieces of a particular design per year.¹⁸¹ The BMTC did not want to flood the market with large quantities of a particular design. This view was expressed in a letter of December the 27th 1912 from Mr Opferkuch Generalagent of the BMTC factory in Accra to the head office in Basel as follows: *So sehr ich wünschte , wir könnten die ganze Produktion abnehmen, so muss ich davon abraten. Wir dürfen nicht vergessen dass Fleming seine Ware dadurch eingeführt hat, dass er die Küste an Ware knapp hielt. Hatte er Sie überschemmt, er hätte nie das Geschäft gemacht. So muss es auch mit der Deventer- Ware werden, sonst bekommen Sie die Leute bald über. Es ware ein grosser Fehler von Deventer wenn diese Leute darauf dringen würden, die Westküste mit Ihre Ware zu überfluten. Sie müssen langsam met der Produktion voranmachen.*¹⁸² This was indeed also the policy of Brown Fleming, who sent the following message in his letter of May the 28th 1912 to BMTC (BMTC continued its business relation with Brown Fleming): *we intend in future only to make a very small quantity of any one design at the one time so that in future*

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem 57,81

¹⁷⁸ 1 yard= 0,9114 m; 1" =1 inch=2,54 cm

¹⁷⁹ Meeles G.J. 83,84

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem 82

¹⁸¹ Meeles 94

¹⁸² Basel Misson Archive 4412 UTC: West Afrika, General Agent 1912-14

our assortments will be much more varied than formerly and there will be no chance of any design being overdone.¹⁸³

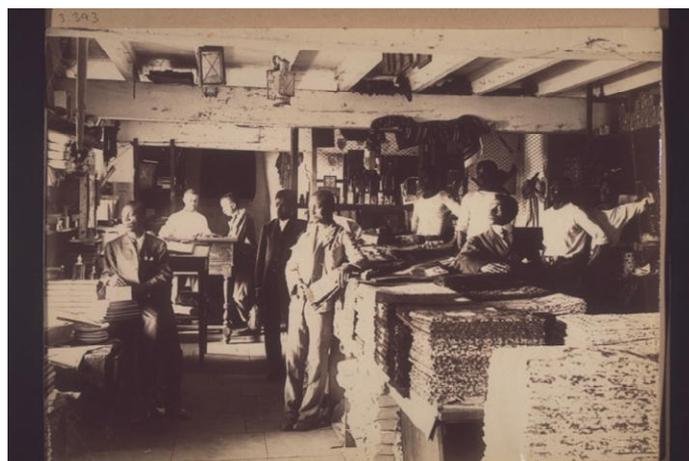


Figure 41 wholesale of BMTC in Akuse

Source: Basel Mission Archive www.bmpix.org QU-30_003_0293

Another problem was that the HKM prints were preferred to the ones from DKM. But this problem was soon solved as the quality of the DKM prints improved over time.¹⁸⁴ Although the majority of the export of the wax prints went to the Gold Coast, small quantities of wax prints were exported to other West African territories (see the following table).

Agent of DKM	destination	1911 (nr of pieces) ¹⁸⁵	1912 (nr of pieces)
Basel Mission Trading Company	Gold Coast	3400	22015
Bodecker & Meyer, Hamburg	Togoland		350
Cie Generale de L'Afrique Francais , Bordeaux	Ivory Coast		1975
I.P. Werner, London	Nigeria		491
Victor & Lohmann, Bremen	Dahomey		80
Basel Mission Trading Company	Cameroon		66
	total	3400	24977

Table 6 Waxprint sales by DKM to West Africa in 1911 and 1912

Source Meeles G.J. *Wasdruk, geschiedenis van het wasdrukartikel van Ankersmit's Textielfabrieken NV* (Helmond 1972) 97

The DKM export data to the Gold Coast show that most of the trade is already directed to the new capital Accra, Akuse being second.

¹⁸³ Meeles G.J. 95

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem 92-95

¹⁸⁵ 1 piece = 12 yards x 36 inches

Gold Coast destination	1911 (nr of pieces)	1912 (nr of pieces)
Accra	1350	7370
Akuse	1025	6980
Addah		660
Kumasi	345	3405
Winnebah	680	2460
Saltpond		1140

Table 7 Gold Coast destinations for DKM wax prints in 1911 and 1912

Source: Meeles G.J. *Wasdruk, geschiedenis van het wasdrukartikel van Ankersmit's Textielfabrieken NV* (Helmond 1972) 97

Up to the start of the First World War the DKM sold 106512 pieces of 12 yards.¹⁸⁶

The outbreak of this war caused serious problems for the wax print trade of the DKM and the BMTC. Not only were German ports blockaded, but BMTC employees of German nationality were interned. The management of the BMTC contracted other shipping companies and filled the vacancies by Swiss personnel. They were able to get the export going again by these measures in 1915, but from 1916 onwards business deteriorated again, because the British still considered the BMTC a pro-German institution.¹⁸⁷ The assets of the BMTC were confiscated in 1918, but after a long legal battle the company, now under the new name of the Union Trading Company (UTC), was awarded £ 250 000 remuneration and allowed to re-enter the Gold Coast in 1928.¹⁸⁸

The DKM had to stop the production of wax prints and was able to survive by switching from export to production for the domestic market.¹⁸⁹

After the war the DKM wanted to revive the wax print production. Although the DKM owed much of its initial success with their wax prints to the BMTC, Dr H.J. Ankersmit had- to his regret- to terminate his relation with the BMTC as this company was sequestered.

The BMTC had been very useful for the DKM in preparing the wax print market for the company on the Gold Coast, but under the present circumstances it was impossible to do any business with this firm.¹⁹⁰

The total deliveries of the DKM to BMTC between 1911 and 1918 amounted to 1 655 829, 12 Swiss francs.

A breakdown of this total amount over the years 1911 to 1918 is shown in the following graph.

¹⁸⁶ Verbong G.J Technische innovaties 232

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem

¹⁸⁸ Howard, Rhoda 101

¹⁸⁹ Meeles G.J. 129

¹⁹⁰ Ibidem 148

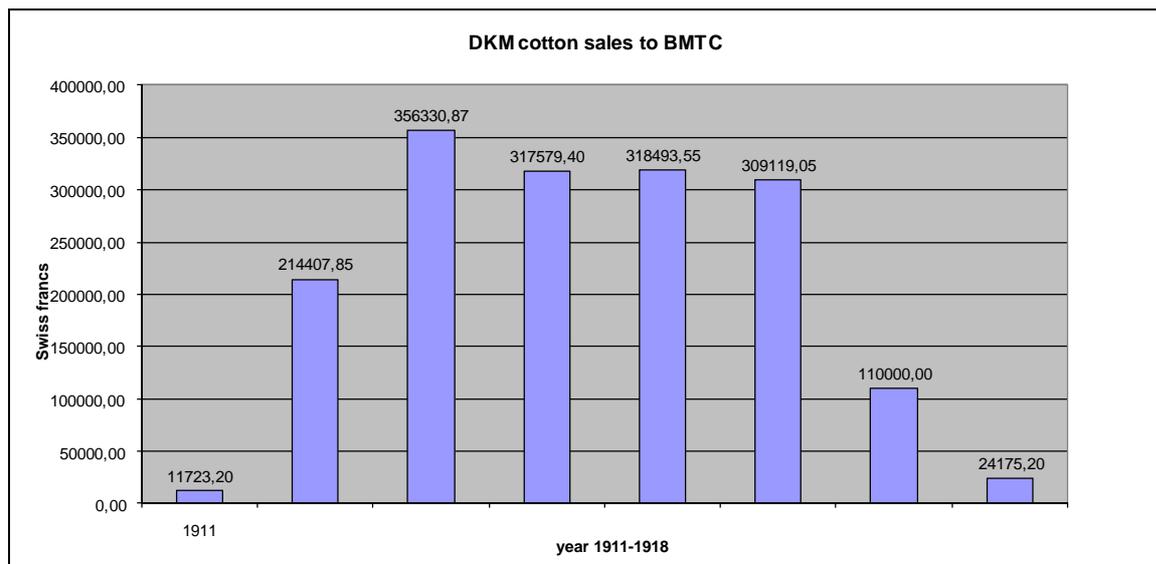


Figure 42 Deliveries of DKM to BMTC 1911-1918 (Swiss Francs)

Source: Basel Misson Archive 4646 UTC: Warenlieferanten, Zahlungsbuch 1911-1925

In the process of finding another trading house, the DKM got in touch with F. & A. Swanzy Ltd, who handled already the wax print production of Van Vlissingen for West Africa. On March, the 27th, 1919, Dr H.J. Ankersmit wrote to Swanzy: *Knowing that you are one of the most important firms, who also have many dealings in wax prints, we would suggest to you to enter into relation with our firm as makers of this article.*¹⁹¹ It was not long before Mr Cottrill of Swanzy was in Deventer and an agreement was reached on June, the 24th, 1919 under which Swanzy acquired the exclusive right to market Ankersmit wax prints for the whole of West Africa with the exception of Ivory Coast and Portuguese Guinea for five years.¹⁹²

With its long-time experience with indigo dyeing, the knowledge of professional colourists, the dynamic entrepreneurship of Dr H.J. Ankersmit and the assistance of the BMTC in preparing the market for its wax prints, the DKM, had become a successful producer of wax prints in a couple of years. Other competitors needed more time to achieve the same results or were not successful at all.

P.F. van Vlissingen & Co

At the end of the 19th century the African market was becoming important for Van Vlissingen. The firm started the production of *Kanga's* for East Africa. These were wrap-around skirts with large scale motifs in bright colours. They were printed to the orders of German traders working in Mombasa, Dar Es Salaam and Zanzibar.¹⁹³ Java and other prints were also exported to West Africa. The first known order from West Africa dates from 1876.¹⁹⁴

At the turn of the century Van Vlissingen decided to take advantage of the developing trade in wax prints by the HKM and they started to develop this article themselves.

To this effect Van Vlissingen employed Charles M. Jacques as a colourist from 1900 to 1910.

¹⁹¹ Ibidem 87

¹⁹² Ibidem 144-146

¹⁹³ Picton J. 28

¹⁹⁴ L.P. Bienfait *Aanteekeningen gemaakt bij de Heeren P.F. van Vlissingen & Co* 1876

Charles M. Jacques was the son of Jean Jacques the colourist of the HKM and a brother of Jean Jacques junior, who was later employed by the DKM. Charles had also worked with his father as a colourist with the HKM.

By this experience he was therefore very well equipped to transfer the knowledge of the production of wax prints to Van Vlissingen.

However, it took almost ten years however before Van Vlissingen had mastered the art of producing wax prints of satisfactory quality.¹⁹⁵

The first duplex roller resin printing machine was installed in 1906.¹⁹⁶

In the beginning Van Vlissingen sold their wax prints for the West African market in part through a merchant in Amsterdam, Haykens and in part through their agent in Manchester.¹⁹⁷

By 1914 Van Vlissingen had established a connection with F. & A. Swanzy.¹⁹⁸

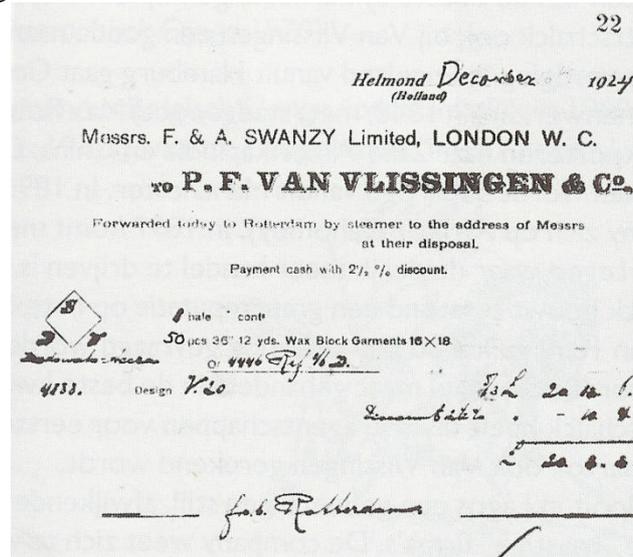


Figure 43 Invoice of Van Vlissingen to Swanzy for wax prints
Source: Vlisco Museum

In 1904 Millers Ltd had taken control of F. & A. Swanzy, which as a result of over-investment in goldmines was then in financial difficulties. Thereafter the two firms remained nominally distinct but they cooperated very closely both in Britain and on the Gold Coast.¹⁹⁹ Export data of van Vlissingen to the Gold Coast in 1914 - like those of the DKM- show that most of the trade was already directed to the new capital Accra, Akuse being second.²⁰⁰

The First World War had an adverse effect on international trade and consequently on an open economy as that of the Gold Coast. Van Vlissingen experienced these negative effects. The Netherlands was not directly involved in the war, but it was involved in international trade. Any Dutch company which was involved in this trade ran into problems. The production of Van Vlissingen was hampered by the lack of raw materials. Export came to a halt for some time. Like the DKM Van Vlissingen was able to survive by switching from export to production for the domestic market.

After the war Van Vlissingen resumed the wax print and Java print production.

¹⁹⁵ Verbong G.J. 227

¹⁹⁶ Ingenbleek P een overzeese afzetmarkt 49

¹⁹⁷ Peddler F 242

¹⁹⁸ Ingenbleek P een overzeese afzetmarkt 49

¹⁹⁹ Howard, Rhoda 95

²⁰⁰ Ingenbleek P een overzeese afzetmarkt 52

The fact that the most important competitor the HKM had to close its doors in 1918 offered Van Vlissingen (and also the DKM for that matter) excellent prospects to take over its leading position as wax print producer for West Africa in general and the Gold Coast in particular. How the HKM ran out of business is the subject of the next paragraph.

4.3.4 The demise of the HKM, Roessingh and the LKM.

The HKM was hit hardest by the First World War. The company was completely dependant on the export of wax prints to West Africa and was not able to switch to the domestic market in time. Production was halted in October 1917 and ultimately the company was liquidated. The property of the HKM, which included five duplex roller resin printing machines, was put for auction on November the 11th 1918.



Figure 44 Announcement of the auction of plant of the HKM
Source: De Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant, October the 26th 1918

The *Leidsche Katoen Maatschappij* (The Leiden Cotton Company), the DKM and Van Vlissingen were able to purchase plant from the HKM estate. The entire proceeds of the sale of plant amounted to 387 599 guilders.²⁰¹

Some former employees of the HKM could not reconcile themselves with the demise of their beloved company. In an attempt to continue the glorious past they founded the NV *Haarlemsche Katoendrukkerij* in 1919. It was not a success. On December, the 11th, 1922 the new company went bankrupt. According to Verbong their printing machines and engraved rollers were bought by Van Vlissingen.²⁰²

But according to Meeles most of the printing equipment was bought by the *Maatschappij voor Textiel Industrie voorheen C. Roessingh & Zoon* in Veenendaal.²⁰³

Roessingh had started in Enschede in Twente in 1841 but had gradually moved operations to Veenendaal, where a completely new factory became operational in 1912. It had an extensive

²⁰¹ Verbong G.P.J. *Technische Innovaties* 181, 182

²⁰² Ibidem 238

²⁰³ Meeles 177

printing department and over the years it became an important competitor to the DKM and Van Vlissingen.²⁰⁴

However the world wide crisis of 1929 hit the company hard. It went into receivership in the 1930s and its assets were liquidated in 1935.

At the auction Van Vlissingen and de *NV Tot Exploitatie van Ankersmit's Katoenfabrieken* (as the former DKM was called since 1925) bought the duplex roller resin printing machines and the engraved cylinders. They were made dysfunctional and then sold for scrap. Mr Roessingh was given a yearly allowance of 1200 guilders for his promise to abstain from the wax print business.²⁰⁵

Some of the Roessingh prints (printed on machines purchased from the HKM) are kept in the collection of ABC Wax in Hyde, Cheshire, England.²⁰⁶

The *Leidsche Katoen Maatschappij* (LKM), although it exported a lot of fancy and Java prints to West Africa, did not manage to benefit from wax print boom before the First World War. And after this war it failed to produce wax prints of satisfactory quality even after it had purchased a duplex roller printing machine from the HKM. History seemed to repeat itself. In the 1860s the LKM had not been able to take advantage of the very favourable market conditions for the wax batik in the Dutch East Indies.

Now after the First World War it was not able to compete successfully on the wax print market in West Africa. The LKM did not survive the world economic crisis of 1929. In 1936 it had to close its doors.²⁰⁷ Another sad end of a once renowned firm.

The disappearance of the HKM was the start of the restructuring of the wax print sector in the Netherlands. The leading position of the HKM was taken over by the DKM and Van Vlissingen during the interbellum. The LKM and Roessingh had tried in vain to compete successfully on the wax print market.

4.3.5 Wax print producers in Great Britain

The success of the HKM with their wax prints also drew the attention of some British Manchester cloth manufacturers in the first decade of the 20th century, but it was not until the 1920s that they mastered the art of manufacturing wax prints and could start serious production.

The most important company was the *Newton Bank Print Works* (NBPW) in Hyde, Cheshire. In common with much of the textile industry around Hyde, NBPW owed its existence to the Ashton family. They established a cottage textile industry in Hyde, sourcing linen warps from Northern Ireland and cotton wefts from Lancashire, distributing them to local hand-loom weavers and selling the finished piece goods in Manchester. At the end of the 18th century at the onset of the industrial revolution, the Ashton family switched to factory based production. They established several factories. All but one of them was engaged in cotton spinning and weaving, the exception being a print works built at Newton bank in 1816. In 1899, NBPW which had 15 roller printing machines, merged with 45 other printing companies forming the Calico Printers Association (CPA). CPA represented 85% of the British textile printing industry at that time.²⁰⁸

It was around 1903 that Frank Ashton started experimenting with wax prints.

Another important company, which was experimenting with wax prints was *F.W. Grafton and Company*. Fredrick William Grafton (1816 - 1890) established his calico printing

²⁰⁴ Verbong G.P.J. *Technische Innovaties* 235

²⁰⁵ Meeles 177

²⁰⁶ Picton J. *The art of African textiles* 26

²⁰⁷ Verbong *Katoendruk* 68

²⁰⁸ ABC Wax 3

business, F.W. Grafton and Company, with premises at the *Broad Oak Works* in Accrington. This works was also a CPA company.

Although initially at Broad Oak the wax was applied by hand block, there is a record in the Grafton engraving book of the first duplex wax printing rollers produced in 1909/1910.²⁰⁹

To obtain knowledge how to produce wax prints Broad Oak made use of the services of an ex colourist of the LKM, Carlos Casanovas, who visited Broad Oak on January the 26th 1907 for the first time.²¹⁰ Casanovas was employed in Leiden from 1889 till the end of the 19th century. He had studied at the *Ecole de Chimie* in Mulhouse, at that time an important centre of knowledge on textile dyes.²¹¹ The knowledge Casanovas provided to the management and technical staff of the Broad Oak Works appeared to be useful to them.²¹²

Another former employee of a Dutch wax print producer, who offered his services to a British printing firm, was Jean Jacques, the colourist who was sacked by the DKM in 1915. After this event he tried his luck with the LKM for a short period but eventually he ended up with the *United Turkey Red Company Ltd* in Glasgow.²¹³

In the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of this company held in Alexandria, Glasgow on October the 15th 1919, the decision to invite Jacques for an interview is mentioned.²¹⁴ He must have been useful there, because –like the DKM- the *United Turkey Red Company* was producing marketable wax prints within a couple of years after his employment. The above examples show how important the services of skilled colourists were for a successful production of wax prints.

The wax prints of the *United Turkey Red Company* were marketed by the Dutch businessman and adventurer Haykens, who had the exclusive rights to sell their wax prints up to 1925. Ultimately Haykens would turn to Van Vlissingen as supplier of wax prints. Haykens, who was already a customer of Van Vlissingen for java prints since 1905, became now the second customer for wax prints of Van Vlissingen after the *African and Eastern Trade Association*.²¹⁵ The latter trading company was the result of a merger between the trading companies, the African Association, Miller and Swanzy in 1919.²¹⁶

What remains a mystery is what happened to Brown Fleming Ltd after its main supplier the HKM stopped producing in 1917. The company seemed to have sunk into oblivion after this event.

In 1912 Ebenezer Brown Fleming had died. The business was continued under the name Brown Fleming Ltd under the management of William Elphinston and Ronald R. Herbertson. In 1920 William Elphinston retired. Ronald R. Herbertson continued together with F.R.K. Herbertson. In 1939 the firm became part of the CPA, as it was taken over by W.F. Grafton.²¹⁷

John Picton claims that the Brown Fleming designs were not available to British (CPA) printers until Brown Fleming Ltd became part of CPA in 1939.²¹⁸

This seems unlikely. How could Brown Fleming Ltd have survived since 1917 when their main supplier collapsed without making their designs available to others? They must have turned their attention to British producers eager to enter the lucrative West African wax print market.

²⁰⁹ ABC Wax, 4,5

²¹⁰ Lightfoot T.E. *The history of Broad Oak* 59,60

²¹¹ Verbong G.P.J. *Innovaties* 250-252

²¹² Lightfoot T.E. *The history of Broad Oak* 60

²¹³ Verbong G.P.J. *Innovaties* 237

²¹⁴ Manchester Archives M75 *Calico Printers Association*

²¹⁵ Vollaard G. 33

²¹⁶ Rhoda Howard 97

²¹⁷ Kroese W.T 54

²¹⁸ Picton J. 29

Since Brown Fleming registered his designs in Britain around 1900, his successors must at least have sold copy rights to other British printers in order to secure an income.

But so far no there is no evidence that this has happened.

Nielsen claims that Grafton took over Brown Fleming in the 1920s.²¹⁹ This seems more likely than 1939.

This is an interesting subject for further investigation.

4.3.6 The Swiss cotton printers and The Basel Mission Trading Company after 1920

All Swiss manufacturers had abandoned the production of wax batiks for the Dutch East Indies in the 1870s as their product could no longer compete with local industries, which had introduced a cheaper production technique.

They did not resume production of wax prints when this article became popular on the Gold Coast and in the whole of West Africa in the first decade of the 20th century.

Swiss manufacturers did produce other textiles for the West African market, however, like damask from the firm *Azmoos* in St Gallen²²⁰, loom patterned Madras cloth (mentioned in chapter 2) from *Fröhlich, Brunnschweiler & Cie* in Ennenda (Glarus)²²¹, cheaper imitation batiks (java prints) from various printers from the canton Glarus like, *Gebr. Blumer & Cie* in Wyden and *Trümpy, Schächli & Cie* in Mitlödi.²²²

But for trading wax prints the BMTC had no option than to go to Brown Fleming (via their agent I.P. Werner in London) and buy the HKM wax prints. When the BMTC was looking for an alternative, they did not engage a Swiss producer, but a Dutch manufacturer, the DKM from Deventer.

In the years before the outbreak of the First World War, the DKM became a very important textile supplier to the BMTC. The majority of the goods delivered were wax prints. The volume of the BMTC trade with Swiss suppliers of textiles was almost negligible compared to that of the DKM.²²³

Before the First World War the BMTC was one of the leading trading houses on the Gold Coast. They were the first to venture into the interior and pioneered in the cocoa trade and helped to extend the market for wax prints. They marketed this product with skill and discretion. However with their assets confiscated and prohibited to trade by the British, the BMTC found itself in an awkward predicament after the war.

Although the company was ultimately allowed to trade again on the Gold Coast (from now on under the name United Trading Company) and although its assets were returned and it was partially compensated, it had lost its main supplier of wax prints because of its absence on the Gold Coast for ten years. The DKM could not wait that long and had to turn to another trading house (Swanzy).

To revive the trade in wax prints the BMTC bought in an act of reverse integration the *AG Baumwolldruckerei Hohlenstein, vormals R. Leuzinger* in Glarus in 1924.²²⁴ By 1928 when the BMTC was allowed to re-enter the Gold Coast (now as UTC) Hohlenstein was able to produce marketable wax prints for West Africa. They had

²¹⁹ Nielsen Ruth 477

²²⁰ Gardi B. 160

²²¹ Oehler F. 24-27

²²² Basel Misson Archive 4646 UTC: Warenlieferanten ,Zahlungsbuch 1911-25

²²³ Basel Misson Archive 4646 UTC: Warenlieferanten ,Zahlungsbuch 1911-25

²²⁴ Wanner G.A.436

bought copy right of some designs in Britain (from Brown Fleming?). Later also *Trümpy, Schaeppi & Cie* from Mitlödi started producing wax prints.²²⁵



Figure 45 Entrance to the former Hohlenstein factory in Glarus (now a training centre)
Source: photo W. Ankersmit 2008

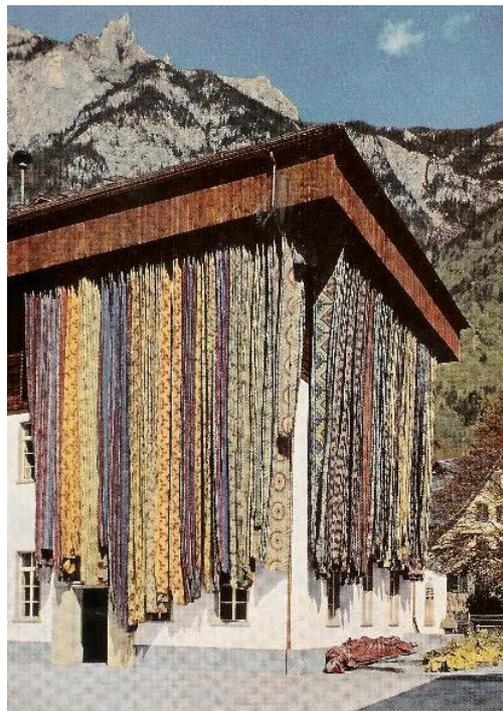


Figure 46 Prints for West Africa hanged to dry after dyeing from *Hangiturm* in Glarus
Source “Wanner G.A. *Die Basler Handels Gesellschaft A.G 1859-1959* (Basel 1959) 176

²²⁵ Ingenbleek P. *Een overzeese afzetmarkt* 53

4.4 Summary

The last quarter of the 19th century the British extended their authority on the Gold Coast by moving from the coast into the hinterland and the Gold Coast colony came into existence. They introduced a British way of administration and a British legal system, and they invested in infrastructure and education needed for the economy to expand beyond the limits of 19th century export production.

The volume of trade rose in relation with the growth of tropical produce of the colony.

A positive effect of this was that more Africans entered the export market and got involved in the global economy, which led to a rise in the standard of living.

The higher standard of living created a market for luxury textile products like lace, damask embroidery and high quality cotton prints.

Concerning printed cotton the traders were therefore looking for other textile products than the usual Manchester cloth, which did no longer satisfy the needs of wealthier customers.

The traders found producers of high quality prints on the continent of Europe mainly in Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland, who produced high quality imitation batiks for the South East Asian markets, called Java prints because the motifs were mainly of Asian origin. By the end of the 1880s the African consumers on the Gold Coast had acquainted themselves with the various imitation batiks from the continent of Europe, but they had not been introduced to the most refined of all imitation batiks, the wax print.

A Scottish merchant from Glasgow, Ebenezer Brown Fleming was the first one to trade this quality product on the Gold coast. He started trading the wax prints of the HKM on the Gold Coast at the end of 19th century. The HKM was the only producer of wax prints left in Europe at that time. They became an immediate success. Brown Fleming was the sole agent of the HKM and provided information to the HKM designers to adapt their designs more specifically to local tastes and concerns.

He ran his business from Glasgow and had several wholesale customers at the Gold Coast, who gave him feedback on the success of the different wax print designs.

The Haarlem designers probably used samples of Manchester cloth designs already popular on the Gold Coast, provided to them by Brown Fleming

It appears that around 1900 Brown Fleming was registering the Haarlem designs in Britain in his own name. Several other trading houses on the Gold Coast started buying HKM wax prints from Brown Fleming. The monopoly of Brown Fleming had driven up the prices so much that the trading houses on the Gold Coast were seriously looking for other manufacturers, who would be able to produce wax prints and with whom they could deal directly.

In the beginning of the 20th century some manufacturers in Britain and the Netherlands made attempts to imitate the wax prints from Haarlem. Through a process of experimentation and/or industrial espionage, some of them were ultimately able to manufacture wax prints and the monopoly of Brown Fleming and the HKM was to come to an end.

The Dutch companies which were the most successful in the production of wax prints for West Africa were the *Deventer Katoen Maatschappij voorheen Ankersmit & Co* (DKM) from Deventer and *P.F. van Vlissingen & Co* from Helmond.

Both these companies were looking for an experienced trading house with presence on the Gold Coast.

The DKM came to an agreement with the BMTC. The BMTC agreed to assist the DKM to produce marketable designs. In exchange the BMTC got the sole right to sell DKM wax prints on the Gold Coast. With its long time experience with indigo dyeing, the knowledge of professional colourists and the dynamic entrepreneurship of Dr H.J. Ankersmit

the DKM had become a successful producer of wax prints in a couple of years. Also the assistance of the BMTC in preparing the market for wax prints has been essential.

The First World War caused serious problems for the wax print trade of DKM and the BMTC. The assets of the BMTC were confiscated in 1918 because the British considered the BMTC a pro-German institution and trade came to a halt.

Dr H.J. Ankersmit had- to his regret- to terminate his relation with the BMTC and turned to F. & A. Swanzy to market Ankersmit wax prints.

It took almost ten years from 1900 to 1909 before Van Vlissingen had mastered the art of producing wax prints of satisfactory quality. Van Vlissingen had established a connection with the trading company F. & A. Swanzy.

Although van Vlissingen also suffered during the First World War the company hardest hit was the HKM. The company was completely dependent on the export of wax prints to West Africa and was not able to switch to the domestic market in time. Production was halted in October 1917 and ultimately the company was liquidated. An attempt to restart the company failed.

The disappearance of the HKM was the start of the restructuring of the wax print sector in the Netherlands. The leading position of the HKM was taken over by the DKM and Van Vlissingen during the interbellum. During that that period minor competitors like the LKM and Roessingh had tried in vain to enter the wax print market and went bankrupt in the 1930s.

The success of the HKM with their wax prints also drew the attention of some British Manchester cloth manufacturers in the first decade of the 20th century, but it was not until the 1920s that they mastered the art of manufacturing wax prints and could start serious production. The most important companies were the *Newton Bank Print Works* in Hyde, Cheshire and *F.W. Grafton and Company*. This company was the commercial outlet of the *Broad Oak Print Works* in Accrington. Both companies were members of the Calico Printers Association (CPA).

Swiss manufacturers also started producing wax prints after the First World War. The BMTC had lost its main supplier of wax prints because of its absence on the Gold Coast for ten years. To get a new supplier of wax prints the BMTC bought the *AG Baumwolldruckerei Hohlenstein*, in Glarus in 1924.

By 1928 when the BMTC was allowed to re-enter the Gold Coast (now as UTC) Hohlenstein was able to produce marketable wax prints for West Africa.

Later also *Trimpy, Schäppi & Cie* from Mitlödi started producing wax prints.

So Swiss and British manufacturers became competitors to the two Dutch firms producing wax prints, after the First World War but they never reached the quality of the Dutch wax prints. The Dutch employed skilled craftsmen and the process involved some operations which were secrets, jealously guarded by both manufacturers. Of all the cloths that have gone into West Africa, none has caused greater excitement in the markets, and none has earned larger profits for the merchants and the market traders than the Dutch wax prints.

5 CONCLUSIONS

From the moment of its introduction on the Gold Coast, the wax print became an instant success. One of the reasons for its success was that it was introduced at a time when a growing market for luxury textiles was created by the rise of the standard of living due to favourable economic conditions at the end of the 19th century.

This changing market for textile products on the Gold Coast coincided with important innovations in the textile printing industry in Europe, like the mechanisation of the printing process and the application of synthetic dyes. These innovations and the fact the European cotton printing firms were looking for other export markets than the Asian ones where they had been successful for many decades but now faced stiff competition from local industries, made a successful introduction of the wax print on the Gold Coast possible.

The wax print had some highly regarded characteristics connected with its production process. The application of resin paste by means of duplex rollers inadvertently produced irregular cracking and bubbling effects. It proved difficult to control the application of additional colours causing irregularities also. These were however highly appreciated by the West African customers.

Another feature which was very much appreciated was the colour penetration, which secured most satisfactory resistance to light, washing, perspiration and rubbing under African conditions. The designs of the wax prints contributed also to their success. The patterns printed on the wax prints became extremely popular. The reason for this was that the Scottish merchant Brown Fleming, who introduced the wax print on the Gold Coast was able - more than any trader before him- to adapt print designs to African tastes. Most of the designs, realized under his guidance, are still popular today!

As with earlier successful imported textile products on the Gold Coast, traders played an important and active role in preparing the market for the wax print. The Portuguese traders -and the other European traders, who came after them- found out that although Africa was a ready market for almost all forms of cloth but that the African customers rejected any novel imports which did not suit their taste. This became a recurrent theme in the history of African textile trade with Europe.

So traders on the coast began to feed back to trading houses and manufacturers in Europe information on which designs to print for a profitable trade. By the 19th century when Britain dominated the textile trade on the Gold Coast, trading firms provided their Manchester mills information on how to adapt their prints to African tastes. Any cloth pattern, which became popular, was jealously guarded by the firm, who owned its patent. This system remained in place when traders in the last quarter of the 19th century switched for the top segment of the market from Indian cotton prints to imitation batiks made by manufacturers on the continent of Europe. The wax print would ultimately become the top product of the range of imitation batiks, when Brown Fleming decided to market this product on the Gold Coast. The European traders and their agents on the Gold Coast had hundreds of local traders as their customers nearly all of them were women.

They were an essential shackle in the supply chain very close to the consumer selling the prints to the local markets, giving the prints a symbolic name in cooperation with the consumers. This contributed to its prestige.

It appears that the traders and particularly the local women traders (called “mammie traders”) played the most important role in introducing the wax prints to the consumers on the Gold Coast. They provided the necessary information on required patterns, motifs and colours to the European traders and producers in order to make the wax prints acceptable to the African consumers.

The wax print would not have become a success story without the mediating influence of these local traders.

Although the wax print was produced in Europe during the colonial era African traders and consumers determined the development of this product, European production was determined by African patronage. The wax print –because of its origin- at first of European and Asian design became increasingly African in appearance by a process of cultural appropriation.

The European trading houses were important in mediating the concerns of the local traders and consumers to the producers in Europe and in assisting them with the development of print designs and in marketing them with skill and discretion.

Without the European trading houses like Brown Fleming, the Basel Mission Trading Company and the local market traders, the European producers would have been nowhere.

There is not a shred of evidence to confirm the persistent story that returning African mercenary soldiers, recruited on the Gold Coast by the Dutch for service in the Dutch East Indies, prepared the market on the Gold Coast for wax prints by bringing batiks from Java for their relatives.

Brown Fleming started trading the wax prints of the *Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij* (HKM) on the Gold Coast at the end of 19th century. He secured the exclusive right to sell all the HKM wax prints destined for the Gold Coast. At that time the HKM was the only producer of wax prints in the world and thanks to the perseverance of the HKM director Marie Prosper Theodore Prévinaire, the wax batik or wax print had become a unique product of high quality. Some credit for this remarkable Dutch industrial achievement must also be given to King Willem I, who persuaded the father of Marie Prosper Theodore, J.B.T. Prévinaire to set up a printing and dyeing industry in The Netherlands after the secession of Belgium. Without his powers of persuasion the wax print industry would probably not have been developed successfully in The Netherlands, but in Belgium.

The wax prints of the HKM were the first to arrive on the Gold Coast at the end of the 19th century and that entailed all the advantages of the being the first mover on the market there. The wax prints of the HKM became the norm which other competitors had to comply with.

Two other Dutch companies were able to reach more or less the same quality as the HKM, the *DKM, formerly Ankersmit & Co* and *P.F. Van Vlissingen & Co* during the second decade of the 20th century. When the HKM collapsed at the end of First World War, these two Dutch companies were able to take over the first mover advantages of the HKM as there were still no serious competitors in the picture. The two Dutch companies employed skilled craftsmen and the process involved some operations which were secrets, jealously guarded by both manufacturers. They always used the best dyes available to secure colourfastness. So Dutch manufacturers became the most successful producers of wax prints for the Gold Coast and later for the whole of West Africa.

Swiss and British manufacturers became competitors to the two Dutch firms only in the 1920s, when Dutch wax prints had already become a brand name and they never reached the quality of the Dutch wax prints. Of all the cloths that have gone into West Africa, none has caused greater excitement in the markets, and none has earned larger profits for the merchants and the market traders than the Dutch wax prints.

6 EPILOGUE

After the successful introduction of the wax print on the Gold Coast, the trade in this product continued to grow in the whole of West Africa in the 1920s.

The African and Eastern Trade Corporation, which traded the majority of the wax print production of Ankersmit and van Vlissingen, merged with the Niger Company in 1929 and formed the *United Africa Company* (UAC). The Niger Company had been taken over by Lever Brothers in 1920. Lever Brothers established a merger with the Dutch “Margarine Unie” of van den Bergh and Jurgens and they formed Unilever in 1929. By 1932 Unilever had 80 percent control of the UAC.²²⁶ The wax prints of Ankersmit and Van Vlissingen became a staple of the textile trade of Unilever/UAC since the 1930s.

The period after the Second World War from 1946 to 1960 represented fourteen years of uninterrupted growth for the European wax print producers.

Ankersmit had been the market leader during the interbellum, but after the Second World War, Van Vlissingen took over this position under the dynamic leadership of Jan Fentener van Vlissingen (1893-1978).

In 1959 the total world wide production of wax prints amounted to 52, 8 million yards (The Dutch companies Van Vlissingen and Ankersmit produced 27 million and 8, 3 million yards respectively).²²⁷

In the 1960s after a long boom the exports of wax prints to Africa began to decline because of the post independence economic chaos in some of the new West African countries and the increasing competition of local manufacturers.

Unilever /UAC’s aim was to continue the lucrative wax print trade and make sure that both Dutch firms continued to sell their wax prints to the UAC. To that effect Unilever/UAC forced Ankersmit and Van Vlissingen to merge in 1964 and to have a proportion of the shares in the new holding company to be called Texoprint. Unilever /UAC also wanted to assist the independent West African countries with the establishment of local wax print factories to obtain goodwill there. By participating in Texoprint, Unilever/UAC could put pressure on the Dutch wax print producers to reduce their wax print capacity and to assist in the transfer of wax print technology to West Africa.²²⁸

Through this assistance Unilever/UAC obtained enough goodwill from the African nations to safeguard their reduced imports of wax prints from the Netherlands. These imports were destined for the top segment of the West African market only.

It was decided in December 1965 to close down the Ankersmit factory in Deventer in line with the policy to reduce wax print capacity and because of the losses of its European operations. More than 1000 jobs were lost.²²⁹

The Ankersmit designs were added to the Van Vlissingen collection.

An attempt to revive the Ankersmit company in the 1980s failed.²³⁰

UAC and Texoprint acquired a share in the various African wax printing factories like the *Ghana Textile Printing Company* (GTP) in Ghana and *Uniwax* in Ivory Coast in 1965 and 1967 respectively.

The European competitors of Texoprint also adopted the policy of assisting the independent West African nations with the establishment of local wax print factories.

²²⁶ Howard Rhoda 97

²²⁷ Jacobs, M.G.P.A., Maas, W.H.G. ,111

²²⁸ Ankersmit W.,19

²²⁹ *Ibidem* 27

²³⁰ Ingenbleek P. Marketing als bedrijfshistorische invalshoek 281

The Calico Printers Association (CPA) set up wax print factories in Nigeria and Zaire and in 1960 the Swiss company *Hohlenstein Textildruckerei AG* started via the United Trading company (UTC) to operate its own factories in Ghana (*Akosombo Textiles Ltd*) and in Nigeria and in 1969 a factory was opened in Dakar, Senegal (*Sotiba Simpafrique*).

Hohlenstein closed down its production of wax prints in 1974.²³¹ The knowledge on wax prints of the company was sold to *Sotiba Simpafrique* and to the Nigerian wax print producer owned by the Hong Kong based Cha group.²³² This group had become an important player on the wax print market. The Cha group would also become the owner of *Akosombo Textiles Ltd* in Ghana.

In 1959 CPA bought *A. Brunnschweiler & Co* (ABC), the Manchester based textile trading company with subsidiaries in West Africa.²³³ It was established around 1870 by the Swiss family of textile traders and manufacturers from Glarus and its main business was the sourcing and distribution of hand woven textiles from Madras (known in Africa as *Real Madras handkerchiefs* or *Reals*) and machine woven imitations of these *Reals* from Switzerland (see chapter 2). The fabric was produced in pieces of 8 x 1 yard, but the design was based on a 1 yard square, which accounts for the erroneous term handkerchief.²³⁴

The main purpose of the acquisition of ABC was to use the distribution outlets of ABC in Africa for selling wax prints produced in Britain by *Newton Bank Printworks*.²³⁵ So the British wax prints were sold under the brand name ABC from now on.

In 1979 the CPA merged with English Sewing Cotton to form English Calico. The following year this company changed its name to Tootal.²³⁶ In 1991 the Tootal Group was taken over by Coats Vyella. In 1992 this company sold ABC to the Cha Group. From that year production was gradually transferred to *Akosombo Textiles Ltd* in Ghana.

In 2007 the management of the Cha group decided to transfer the remaining production capacity to Ghana also and the *Newton Bank Printworks* in Hyde, Cheshire was finally closed down on December the 20th 2007.²³⁷

This left *Vlisco BV* (as P.F. van Vlissingen & Co is known since 1970) in Helmond, The Netherlands as the sole European producer of wax prints. It is lonely at the top end of the wax print market now. The holding company of Vlisco is called Gamma Holding since 1972 when the name Texoprint was abandoned.

In 1987 the UAC ceased to exist.²³⁸ Ten years later Unilever transferred its last wax print interests (production and distribution) to *Vlisco* after having participated successfully for more than sixty years in the very lucrative wax print business.²³⁹

Vlisco like its competitors had gone through various ups and downs since the independence of the African colonies. After the first downturn in the 1960s the market for wax prints recovered in the 1970s and 1980s because of the Nigerian oil boom and stable prices of other African commodities.

The 1990s saw another economic downturn with the collapse of the CFA-franc in the former French territories and political upheavals in Zaire resulted in drastically reduced production levels. Also the civil war in Ivory Cost had a negative effect on wax print sales in the beginning of the 21st century.

²³¹ Nielsen Ruth. 476

²³² E-mail communication with Mr Frans van Rood, Vlisco manager Design and Development, 5 August 2008

²³³ Laan H.L van der 293

²³⁴ *Ibidem* 287,288

²³⁵ ABC Wax Ltd 7

²³⁶ *Ibidem* 14

²³⁷ *Ibidem* 17

²³⁸ Jones G. V

²³⁹ Koert Robin, van 113

The competition of the local wax print producers in Ghana, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Nigeria and Zaire (now Congo again) have put the pressure on the European manufacturers. Although the quality is generally inferior to the European product, the low selling price made customers choose for the African wax print. African production of wax prints did make wax prints affordable to a wider public. Next to African factories also Asian centres of production in China and Pakistan - primarily devoted to roller printed imitation of the popular classical wax print patterns without the use of wax/resin (so called fancy prints) - have emerged. By 1990 total production of African prints had grown to an estimated 200 million yards per annum, only ten percent of which was supplied by Europe.²⁴⁰ The fancy prints do not fulfil the conditions of the West African consumers in the high end market in which the Dutch wax prints are located. Local complex consumption patterns assign to the Chinese and Pakistani copies a lower status than the wax print.²⁴¹

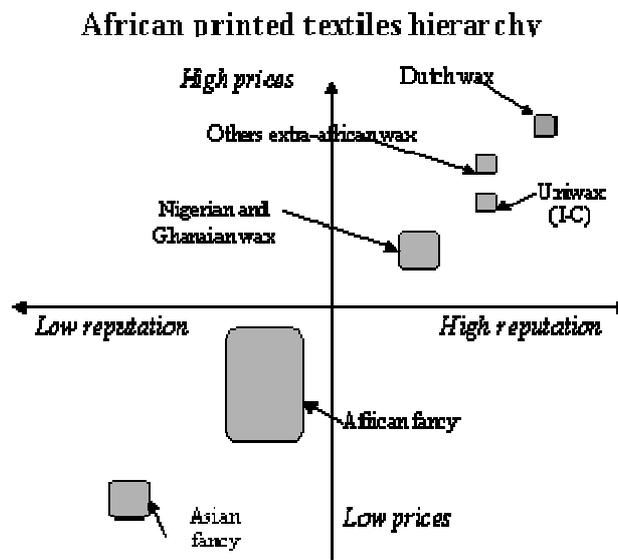


Figure 47 African print hierarchy in 1998

Source : Hermans Katrien *Import en creatieve adaptie, Analyse van de waxprint in West- Afrika als product van interculturele dynamieken* (Gent 2008) 104

The above suppliers market picture changed considerably in the beginning of the 21st century. African fancies have now almost completely been replaced by Asian fancies and African fancy print production had almost disappeared.

From the mid 1990s many wax print factories opened in China and the African wax print producers came under pressure from very low cost wax print imports which eventually resulted in many of them being forced out of business. The wax print factories in Senegal and Congo have been closed.

The only factories still operational are *Nichemtex* of the Cha group with several production units in Nigeria and *Akosombo Textiles Ltd* of the Cha group, the *Ghana Textile Printing Company Ltd* in Ghana and *Uniwax* in Ivory Coast, the last two companies owned by *Vlisco*.²⁴²

The present world wide economic crises has not affected the wax print market very much, as export commodity prices in West Africa like cocoa have been fairly stable over the

²⁴⁰ ABC Wax Ltd II 7

²⁴¹ Hermans Katrien 43

²⁴² E-mail communication with Mr Frans van Rood, Vlisco manager Design and Development, 2 May 2010

last few years. These prices always had a considerable influence on the turnover and profits in the wax print trade. The annual turnover of the Vlisco Group in 2009 was € 168.3 million. The total number of employees of the group in The Netherlands and in Africa was 2128 in the same year.²⁴³ The competition of the Chinese wax prints has not affected the market for Dutch wax prints, as they make up the top segment of the wax print market.

Whatever their country of manufacture the wax printed textiles will continue to be valued and used for a long time to come more than hundred years after their introduction on the Gold Coast.

²⁴³ Gamma Holding *Jaarverslag 2009* 50

7 SOURCES

7.1 Archives

7.1.1 Basel Mission Society Archives

4646 UTC: *Warenlieferanten, Zahlungsbuch 1911-25*
4005 UTC: *M. Binnhammer Korrespondenz 1907-1908*
4412 UTC: *West Afrika, Generalagent 1912-14.*

7.1.2 Manchester Archives

M75 Calico Printers Association

7.1.3 Municipal Archive of Rotterdam

Muller Archives *list of imports and exports on the Coast of Guinea 1846-1857*
Muller Archives, *British exports summary by James F. Hutton & Co, (Dale Street Manchester 188?)*

7.1.4 Dutch National Archives The Hague

Nederlandsche bezittingen op de Kust van Guinee 1658-1872 1.05.14
Consulaat Elmina 1872-1880 2.05.14.11

7.1.5 Museum P.F. van Vlissingen, Helmond

Haarlemsche Katoen Maatschappij Stalenboek I, 1904-1906 (pattern book).
L.P. Bienfait *Aanteekeningen gemaakt bij de Heeren P.F.van Vlissingen & Co* (Helmond 1876)

7.2 Unpublished documents

ABC Wax Ltd , *Newton Bank Print Works, Hyde 1812-2007 and European Involvement in Batik/ Wax Block Prints* (Hyde, Cheshire 2008)
Ankersmit J , *Bij een afscheid Ankerpost 2* (1957)
Lightfoot T.E. *The history of Broad Oak* (Accrington 1926) unpublished typescript in the Accrington Library
Meeles G.J. *Geschiedenis van het wasdrukartikel van Ankersmit's Textielfabrieken NV* (Helmond 1972)
Vollaard G. *Geschiedenis van de export- handel tot 1960* (Helmond 1974) unpublished typescript in the Vlisco museum

7.3 Digital sources

Danish trading posts in Africa

<http://www.zum.de/whkmla/region/westafrica/xgcdan.html>

Calico printing

<http://www.lancashirepioneers.com/thomson/calico.asp>

Basel Mission Image Archive

<http://bmpix.org/bmpix/controller/index.htm>

Textile Trade of the VOC

http://www.tanap.net/content/voc/organization/organization_central.htm#top

<http://www.voc-kenniscentrum.nl/prod-kledendecor.html>

<http://www.voc-kenniscentrum.nl/prod-kledeneffen.html>

History of P.F. van Vlissingen & Co

<http://www.vlisco.com/depuis-1846/en/page/311/>

History of Ankersmit's Textielfabriken NV

<http://ankersmit.info/Geschiedenis.htm>

History of ABC Wax

<http://www.abcwax.co.uk/history.htm>

History of the textile printing industry in Glarus Switzerland

<http://www.freulerpalast.ch/Textilmuseum.84.0.html>

7.4 Literature

Aa van der R, *Afrikaansche studiën, Koloniaal bezit en particuliere handel op Afrika's Westkust* (Den Haag 1871)

Agbodeka F. *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast 1868-1900* (Illinois 1971)

Ankersmit H.J. *Über das Phenanthridin Inaugural- Dissertation* (Zürich 1891)

Ankersmit W., Het ontstaan van Texoprint, een bedrijfshistorische analyse *Textielhistorische bijdragen* 49 (2009) 7-32

Bernstein William *A splendid exchange How trade shaped the world* (London 2008)

Boelman W.J. Holthoorn F.I. African dress in Ghana. *Kroniek van Afrika* 3 (1975) 236-258

Bosman W. *A new and accurate descriptopn of the coast of Guinea* (London 1967, reprint of 1705 English edition)

Bowle J. *The imperial achievement* (Aylesbury 1974)

Brommer B. *Bontjes voor de tropen: de export van imitatieweefsels naar de tropen* (Helmond 1991)

Brommer B. (ed.) *Katoendruk in Nederland* (Helmond/Tilburg 1989)

Brommer B. Handel is Handel, Imitatie en innovatie bij de productie van exporttextiel *Textielhistorische bijdragen* 34 (1994) 120-135

Clarke D. *The art of African textiles* (London 2002)

Davatz J. *Das Glarner Textildruckmuseum im Freulerpalast Näfels* (Näfels 1989)

Doortmont M.R., *Sources for the Mutual History of Ghana and the Netherlands* (Leiden 2007)

Fage J.D., *Introduction to the History of West Africa* (Cambridge 1959)

Franc A. *Wie die Schweiz zu Schokolade kam. Der Kakaohandel der Basler Handels gesellschaft mit der Kolonie Goldküste (1893-1960)* (Basel 2008)

Gaastra Femme S. De textielhandel van de VOC *Textielhistorische bijdragen* 34 (1994) 50-69

Gaastra, Femme.S., 'The textile trade of the VOC. The Dutch response to the English challenge', in: *South Asia* 19 (1996) 85-95

Gamma Holding *Jaarverslag 2009* (Helmond 2010)

Gann L.H. Duignan P. *The Rulers of British Africa 1870-1944* (Stanford 1977)

Gardi B. *Boubou-c'est chic. Gewänder aus Mali und anderen Landern Westafrikas* (Basel 2000)

- Gerlich G. *Waxprints im soziokulturellen Kontext Ghanas* (Mainz 2005)
- Gillow, John *Printed and dyed textiles from Africa* (London 2002)
- Griffith R T *Industrial retardation in the Netherlands 1830-1850* (Den Haag 1979)
- Heijer H.J. den *De geschiedenis van de WIC* (Zutphen 2002)
- Heringa R. Javaanse katoentjes in: Brommer B. (ed.) *Katoendruk in Nederland* (Helmond/Tilburg 1989) 131-156
- Hermans Katrien *Import en creatieve adaptie, Analyse van de waxprint in West- Afrika als product van interculturele dynamieken* (Gent 2008)
- Herwaarden, Jan, Rijkevorsel, Huibert van, in: Visser Joop (ed.) *Rotterdamse ondernemers (1850-1950)* (Rotterdam 2002) 202-207
- John Holt & Co *Merchant adventure* (Liverpool 1953?)
- Hopkins A.G. *An economic history of West Africa* (London 1974)
- Howard, Rhoda *Colonialism and underdevelopment in Ghana* (London 1978)
- Iiffe J. *Africans: the history of a continent* (New York 2005) 84
- Ingenbleek P. *Een overzeese afzetmarkt. De marketing van Vlisco in Ghana 1900-1996* (Rotterdam 1996)
- Ingenbleek P. De introductie van de wax print op de West Afrikaanse textielmarkt *Textielhistorische bijdragen* 39 (1998) 74-99
- Ingenbleek P. Marketing als bedrijfshistorische invalshoek: de case van Vlisco in West Afrika, 1900-1996, *NEHA jaarboek 1997*, 258-284
- Ingenbleek P., Muller, Hendrik, in: Visser Joop (ed.) *Rotterdamse ondernemers (1850-1950)* (Rotterdam 2002) 161-163
- Janszen H., Visser, S. de, *Ankersmit Honderd jaar katoen in Deventer* (Deventer 2006)
- Jacobs, M.G.P.A., Maas, W.H.G. *Een leven in kleur, Textieldrukkerij Vlisco 1846-1996* (Den Bosch 1996)
- Jenny-Trümpy A. Handel und Industrie des Kanton Glarus Part2, *Jahrbuch des historischen Vereins des Kanton Glarus* 34 (1902 Glarus)
- Jones G. *Unilever verandering en traditie* (Den Haag 2005)
- Jonker J., Sluyterman K. *At home on the World markets* (Utrecht 2000)
- Kaplow S.B. *African merchants of the nineteenth century Gold Coast* (Columbia 1971)
- Kessel, Ineke van *Zwarte Hollanders Afrikaanse soldaten in Nederlands Indië* (Amsterdam 2005)
- Koert Robin, van *African Dutch Wax* (Eindhoven 2005)
- Kruger Colleen E *Cloth in West African History* (Oxford 2006)
- Kruger Colleen E. *Production and Consumption of Cotton textiles in West Africa before and during the Atlantic Slave Trade in: proceedings of the GEHN Conference* (Padua 2005)
- Kuitenbrouwer M. *Nederland en de opkomst van het moderne imperialisme. Koloniën en buitenlandse politiek. 1870-1902* (Amsterdam 1985)
- Kramer Malika, A textile to wear: Kente Cloth in Ghana in; Gardi B (ed) *Woven Beauty The Art of West African Textiles* (Basel 2009)
- Kroese W.T *The origin of the Wax Block Prints on the Coast of West Africa* (Hengelo 1976)
- Kroese W.T., Haarlem textielstad in de 19e eeuw in: *Textielhistorische bijdragen* 20 (1979) 53-85
- Laan H. L. van der, «A Swiss Family Firm in West Africa: A. Brunnschweiler & Co, 1929-1959», in: *African Economic History*, no 12, (University of Wisconsin, 1983), pp. 287-297.
- Lintsen H.W., *Geschiedenis van de techniek in Nederland, Deel III*, (Zutphen 1993)
- Mansvelt W.M.F., Iets over de Haarlemsche katoenfabrieken” *Eigen haard* (Haarlem 1924) 238-243
- Mansvelt W.M.F. *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappi II* (Haarlem 1924)

- Meij I., Shimmering Fabrics for Ghana in: Meij I. ed. *Fashion and Ghana* (Den Haag 2001) 8-27
- Muller H. *De Nederlandse Katoen- Nijverheid en Het Stelsel van Bescherming in Nederlands Indië* (Rotterdam 1857)
- Muller H, Muller *Een Rotterdams zeehandelaar, Hendrik Muller Szv (1819-1898)* (Schiedam 1977)
- Nielsen Ruth, The history and development of wax-printed textiles intended for West Africa and Zaire, in: Cordwell J.M. *The fabrics of culture The antropology of clothing and adornment* (The Hague 1979) 467-497
- Oehler F. *Kreuz und quer der Farben, Karo- und Treibstoffe der Schweiz fuer Afrika, Indonesien und die Turkei* (Zürich 1997)
- Oosterwijk B. *Koning van de koopvaart* (Amsterdam 1996)
- Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant, October the 26th 1918
- Pakenham Thomas *The Scramble for Africa* (New York 1991)
- Parker John *Making the Town Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Oxford 2000)
- Pedler F *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa* (London 1974)
- Picton J. Laughing at ourselves, in: *Yinka Shonibare Double Dutch* (Rotterdam 2004) 46-58
- Picton J., *The art of African Textiles, Technology, Tradition and Lurex* (London 1995)
- Reynolds E. *Trade and economic change on the Gold Coast 1807-1874* (London 1974)
- Robinson S. *A history of dyed textiles* (Cambridge 1969)
- Robinson S. *A history of printed textiles* (Londen 1969)
- Rodenburg G.H., Dutch Wax Block garments, *Textielhistorische bijdragen* 8 (1967) 18-51
- Ross R. *Clothing: A Global History* (Cambridge 2008)
- Sandick van O.Z. *Herinneringen van de Zuid West kust van Afrika* (Deventer 1881)
- Schweizer P.A. *Mission an der Goldküste, Geschichte und Fotografie der Basler Mission im kolonialen Ghana* (Basel 2002)
- Schramm R. *Waxprints und Fancyprints - Zeichen eines kulturellen und kreativen Aneignungsprozesses ?* (Dortmund 2007)
- Sill Ulrike *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood: the Basel Mission in Pre- and Early Colonial Ghana.* (Basel 2007)
- Sorber Frieda ,Vlaanderen – Nederland Een wisselwerking in katoendruk in : Brommer B. (ed.) *Katoendruk in Nederland* (Helmond/Tilburg 1989) 31-46
- Stussi Heinrich “ Lockender Orient Conrad Blumers grosse Reise” in: *Neujahrsboten* (Schwanden 1989)
- Swanzy A., On trade in West Africa with and without British protection *Journal of Society of Arts* 22 (1874)
- Sykas, Philip Anthony *The Secret Life of Textiles: Six Pattern Book Archives in North West England* (Bolton 2005)
- Verbong G.P.J. *Technische innovaties in de katoendrukkerij en ververij in Nederland 1835-1920*, dissertation, (Amsterdam 1988)
- Verbong G.P.J Katoendrukken in Nederland vanaf 1800 in: Brommer B. (ed.) *Katoendruk in Nederland* (Helmond/Tilburg 1989) 47-84
- Wanner G.A. *Die Basler Handels Gesellschaft A.G 1859-1959* (Basel 1959)
- Yafa S. *Big Cotton. How a humble fiber created fortunes, wrecked civilizations and put America on the map* (New York 2005)