

2009

Dutch New York between East and West the World of Margrieta Van Varick

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Recommended Citation

Excerpt from Dutch New York Between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick, ed. Deborah L. Krohn, Peter Miller, and Marybeth de Philippis, 219-221 New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Purchase: <http://yalebooks.com/search/node/dutch%20new%20york%20between%20east%20and%20west>

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politically and culturally.⁹ Though much remains a mystery about how and why this small group of New York silver came to exist, it provides a unique and fascinating glimpse into the commissioning, design, and fabrication of late-seventeenth and early eighteenth-century American silver.—EEE

1. Quimby and Johnson 1995, 191.
2. Historic Deerfield 75.450. The cup is marked "G B/• O" in a trefoil on the bottom of the cup.
3. The Winterthur example by Blanck Jr. (1959.2298) is dated to ca. 1690 and bears the Philipse coat of arms and the initials of Jacobus and Eva (Philipse) van Cortlandt, who married in 1691; see Quimby and Johnson 1995, 191. Eva's father, Frederick Philipse, was one of the wealthiest men in New York, and the Van Cortlandt family were prominent landowners, merchants, and colonial officials. The Kierstede cup (dated 1698–1720; Art Institute of Chicago, 1984.1132)

bears the Van Cortlandt coat of arms and an inscription indicating it once belonged to Petrus Stuyvesant and his wife Margaret Livingston Stuyvesant who married in 1764, although the cup is inscribed with the erroneous date of 1730 for their marriage; Naeve 1987, 43–44. The cup likely passed into the Livingston family through Margaret's sister, Johanna, who married Pierre van Cortlandt in 1748; Blackburn and Piwonka 1988, 286. The Deerfield cup by Onckelbag is dated 1691–1713 and engraved with an unidentified coat of arms, but it has been associated in prior scholarship with the New York English Catholic Brocklehurst family; see Flynt and Fales 1968, 88–89. It has also been linked with the Twyford family; see H. B. Smith n.d. For further examination of the attribution of these arms see Naeve 1987, 53, n.18.

4. Phillips 1937, 6–7, quoted in Naeve 1987, 48. If this cup was given to Judith Bayard as a christening gift, it considerably narrows down the

timeframe in which it was made: either around 1696 for the christening or refashioned from an earlier piece of family silver for the occasion. It could thus probably date no earlier than 1691, which was the year Onckelbag reached his majority and was legally permitted to set up his own silversmithing shop. See Naeve 1987, 46–48.

5. Charles Carroll to William Anderson February 2, 1767 in Carroll 1942, 60, quoted in Belden 1983, 136.
6. Belden 1983, 135–36.
7. Naeve 1987, 50–51. The cup is now in the collection of the Kunsthindustrimuseum, Copenhagen.
8. Ibid., 51. Naeve further discusses the construction and design similarities of the four cups, including the fact that several of the cast elements of the cups (handles and feet) could have been cast from the same molds.
9. Ibid., 52.

63. *Unus Americanus ex Virginia*

1645

Wenceslaus Hollar, 1607–1677

Etching

4 1/16 x 3 3/16 in. (10.3 x 8.1 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Harry G. Friedman, 1956 (56.507.9)

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Long Island was entirely inhabited by indigenous people. By the time of Margrieta van Varick's death in 1695, they were vastly diminished in numbers through disease, war, and migration; their cultural patterns had profoundly changed; and their lands were mostly controlled or occupied by Europeans. Their cultural imprint had not been lost, however, and their legacy lived on in Long Island.

The peoples at the western end of Long Island, in the Van Varicks' Flatbush area, spoke the Munsee dialect of Algonquian and shared the broad cultural patterns of Munsee speakers on Manhattan Island and the New York and New Jersey mainland. They first encountered Europeans through trade in the 1610s and 1620s. By the 1630s, western Long Island began to be populated by



Europeans. Native people parted with their land piece by piece, probably intending only to make it temporarily available to Europeans while they continued to hunt upon it and secure its natural bounty. Temporarily parting with land had been a normal strategy of native people to deal with population fluctuations. When their numbers dipped, they consolidated into smaller and fewer villages. With population contraction and the growing demand for European goods came pressure to sell their temporarily unused lands. The permanent nature of the transactions only became clear to the Munsees in the long run.

Contact with Europeans exposed indigenous populations to new kinds of health risks. The first recorded epidemic on Long Island (smallpox) occurred in 1659–64. Unfortunately population numbers for Long Island in those years do not exist. Contemporary observations, however, often cited death rates upwards of 90 percent of the population. Even if the rates were closer to 30 percent, such as Europe experienced during the Black Death of the fourteenth century, the effects of disease were devastating. While every native person was potentially subject to the ravages of these epidemics, the old and the young were particularly susceptible. With the loss of the elders came the loss of oral histories and cultural traditions. The loss of the young meant a loss of hope for the future.

In the 1640s, the Indians of Long Island became embroiled in the First Dutch-Munsee War, commonly referred to as Kieft's War. Although exact numbers are not known, at least one thousand Indians lost their lives during this war. It was during this conflict that a young Munsee named Jaques, aged twenty-three, who is depicted in the Hollar etching (cat. no. 63), was captured and placed in the stewardship of two enterprising soldiers of the Dutch West India Company. He may not have been from Long Island, but he shared the language and cultural practices of his fellow Munsee speakers there ("Virginia," in the portrait title, was often used generically to apply to North America). The soldiers agreed to provide him with food and clothing, teach him the Dutch language, and instruct him in Christianity. They would also place him on display on the carnival circuit in the Dutch Republic. Apart from one document describing him and the portrait here, nothing is known of him or what became of him. But this virtual snapshot places a face on the Munsees and helps us to picture Long Island's native inhabitants.

Shifts in land use also stemmed from economic changes. Generally speaking, the Munsees followed a pattern of mixed subsistence including hunting, gathering, and horticulture. They moved between established horticultural fields and villages, winter hunting camps, and other claimed territories.

Indian dependency on European goods, a decrease in the supply of marketable furs, and European encroachment on Indian land and resources drove many of the people of Long Island to settle in one place where they engaged in year-round manufacture of wampum. They begrudgingly accepted the alienation of their traditional lands as a necessary strategy to survive in the new world created by the permanent presence of Europeans.

Reports in the 1670s and 1680s, just on the eve of Van Varick's arrival, indicated the presence of Indians on Long Island. They may have been reduced to just two villages and small parcels of land, but their existence could not be denied. They paid rent to the English, or tribute, for the privilege of remaining on the land.¹ They lived in long-houses, engaged in traditional Indian horticultural practices, and celebrated harvest festivals. While they showed signs of adapting some European beliefs, practices, and goods, their identity seemed to be fundamentally Indian. They maintained a traditional cosmology, buried their dead with personal adornments and goods of native manufacture, followed marriage practices of the past, and continued indigenous hospitality and social reciprocity.—PO

1. Otto 2006, 169–70.

64. Wampum String

Probably 19th century

Northeast coast, probably Delaware culture group

Shell, string

L. 16½ in. (42 cm)

The Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, 1910-41 (Catalogue no. 50.1/1580 a)

65. Wampum String

Probably 19th century

Eastern Woodlands

Shell, string

L. 6¼ (16 cm)

The Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History (Catalogue no. 50.2/4001)

Wampum was ubiquitous in northeastern North America during the seventeenth century, but while it is mentioned in Margrieta van Varick's book of debts as recorded in her inventory (see cat. no. 66), its use as currency represented only one of its functions

in colonial America. Throughout the region, native people made, traded, and used strings of light- and dark-colored, marine-shell beads which were commonly known as wampum among English speakers and *zeewant* or *sewant* among the Dutch. These beads were spiritually charged; that is, native people believed them to have power to enhance social interactions and to empower words. In councils the white shell beads expressed positive feelings of life and well-being, while the dark purple or "black" beads often represented the darkness of mourning and death. Native people used them for personal ornamentation, and strings and belts of wampum were incorporated into social and political



Cat. no. 64

exchanges such as condolence rituals, marriage agreements, and treaties between groups. Among the Iroquois wampum strings and belts figured prominently in their League of the Longhouse in ceremonies designed to air and redress grievances.

The manufacture of wampum began among Indians on Long Island Sound, and from there the beads were distributed into the interior. Beads of various shapes and sizes had been made from seashells for thousands of years. One form of white bead was fashioned from the inner whorl of the whelk. With the advent of European colonization, more refined, short tubular beads began to be made. These were further refined with the application of European awls and drills, tools that contributed to the emergence of dark beads manufactured from the purple portions of the quahog clam's shell which is much harder than that of the whelk.

Europeans quickly learned the value of wampum to native people, especially the Iroquois, and the Dutch and English used it to secure huge supplies of furs from the interior. Noting its importance among native people in their diplomatic dealings with one another, Europeans also adopted its use in their dealings with the Indians, and by the

mid-seventeenth century, wampum, usually woven into broad belts, figured prominently in these exchanges. This frontier diplomacy continued through the eighteenth century, and the treaty belts eventually featured pictographs often reflecting the metaphors of Indian alliances, such as friends holding hands and open roads, or other messages such as war invitations indicated by images of tomahawks.¹

Because of wampum's value in the American environment and its relative portability, the cash-poor colonists of New Netherland and New England adopted it as a viable currency substitute. Along with beaver furs, wampum was accepted in payment for government-levied fines, debt payments, and charges for various goods. Wampum could change hands in strings about six feet long (a fathom) or as individual beads. Because of the increased labor required to produce the dark beads, those generally traded at a ratio of one-to-two with the white beads. But wampum did not maintain its value. Native people started manufacturing it as a year-round occupation wherever the raw material could be obtained, as did Euro-Americans who were to become the primary makers of wampum by the early eighteenth century and possibly earlier.² The resulting increase



Cat. no. 65

in supply led to diminishing wampum values throughout the seventeenth century, causing a currency crisis in both New England and New Netherland. Wampum manufactured by Europeans was first undertaken as a cottage industry. The dark beads pictured here were likely manufactured under such conditions. Later, small factories emerged which produced wampum in large quantities and more uniform shape and size such as these white beads.

By the 1670s, wampum's use as currency had waned, but as evidenced by Margrieta van Varick's account books, it still served as a money of account. During Van Varick's time on Long Island, in the 1680s and 1690s, wampum continued to be manufactured and used by her native neighbors. A European observer noted in 1679 the reluctance of one such inhabitant to serve as a guide because he would "lose so much time in making *zeewant*."³—PO

1. Merrell 1999, 189.

2. Williams and Flinn 1990, 21.

3. Otto 2006, 169