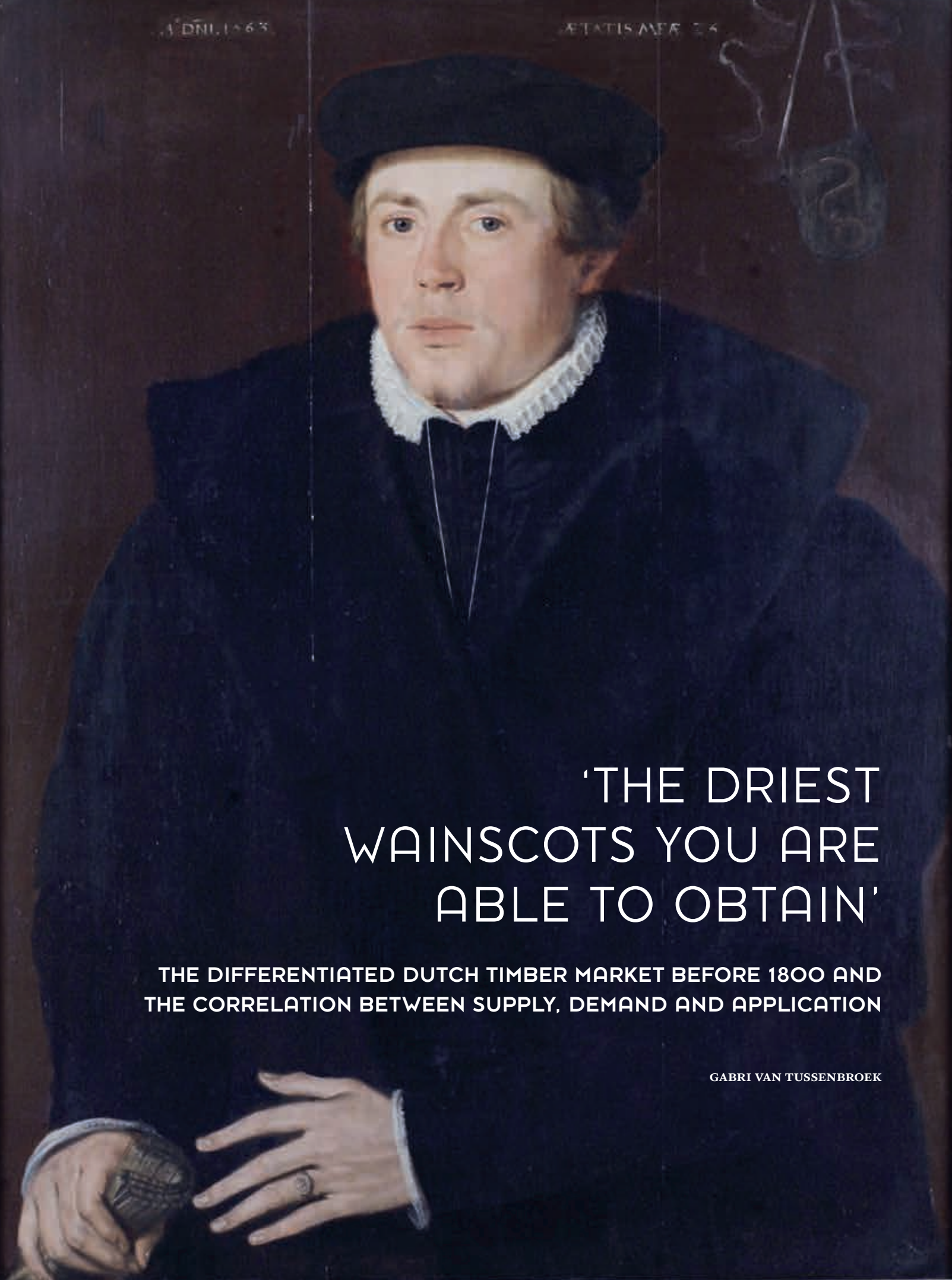


A. D. N. I. 1563

ÆTATIS AÆR 34



'THE DRIEST
WAINSCOTS YOU ARE
ABLE TO OBTAIN'

THE DIFFERENTIATED DUTCH TIMBER MARKET BEFORE 1800 AND
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SUPPLY, DEMAND AND APPLICATION

GABRI VAN TUSSENBROEK

On 26 June 1588 Adriaen Bartholomeesz Verburch wrote from Gdansk to the Delft merchant Claes Adriaensz van Adrichem (fig. 1). In his letter he gave an overview of the market in that city, also noting that blue wainscot cost 46 to 56 guilders.¹ On 10 March 1590 Van Adrichem himself ordered '12 or 15 of the driest wainscots, which you are able to obtain' from his factor Aper Jansz in Gdansk. By way of explanation he added that he had bought the house of a certain Pieter Franssen. Apparently he was intending to adapt the interior of the house.² On 6 June, almost three months later, the wood arrived in Amsterdam.³ On 3 November 1590 he placed a further order for '8 or 10 wainscots blue wood, which are dry'.⁴ This too was for his own use.⁵ It is no coincidence that Van Adrichem ordered wainscot from the Baltic Sea region. For hundreds of years, wainscot had been a specialization of Prussian and Polish timber traders.

Historical sources and the literature often mention individual products that were available on the timber market, such as rafters, curved beams, planks or otherwise. The fact that these products were eventually assembled on the building site and thus are a combination of components from different corners of the world, has not received much attention in building history research into the use of timber. Nevertheless, it is important for the understanding of historical timber use to take note of the nature of individual products and the commercial context from which they originated. Historical building specifications usually give some indication of the quality of wood required, but its provenance is only occasionally mentioned.⁶ Historiography generally does not take into account timber from different source areas that was used side by side within a single context. By doing so, an answer can be sought to the question whether changes in origin may have led to changes in structural solutions and applications or other modifications in the 'building tradition', 'fashion' or craft products.

By way of example, this article deals with the (semi-finished) product wainscot. Wainscot, which was mainly used for finishes, was generally used untreated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so that the special wood structure was clearly visible. The decrease in the use of wainscot in the second half of the seventeenth century, for example in head-height panelling of interior walls, is generally attributed to changing fashions.⁷ During this period, panelling, doors and shutters were increasingly finished in a colourful manner, which has never been linked to the question whether this change might be related to changes in the supply of wainscot on the Dutch timber market.



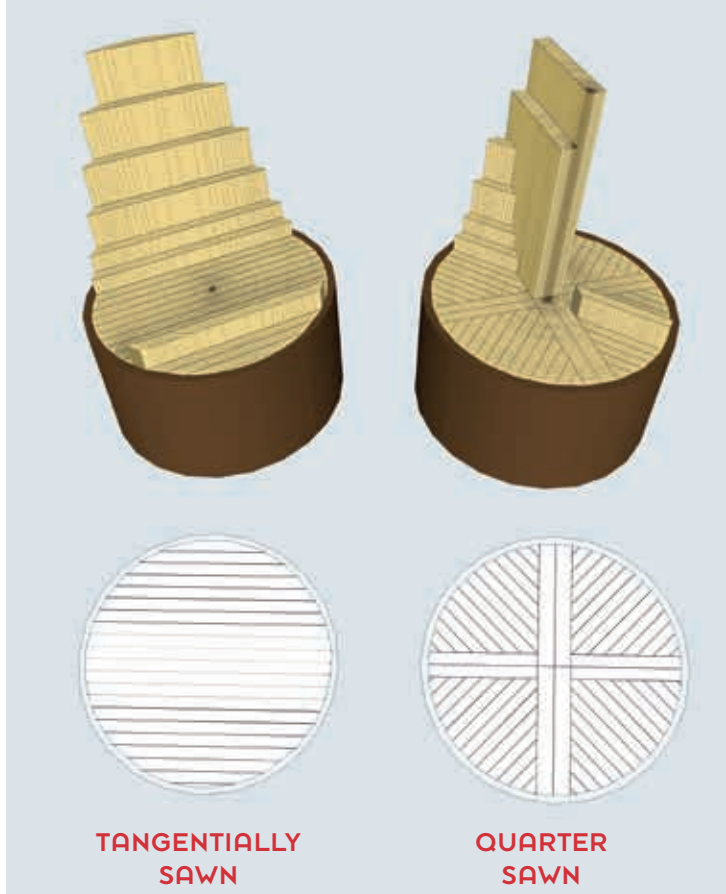
2. The distinctive appearance of quarter-sawn wood, with reflective flecks on the surface. Part of the Amsterdam Charterkast from c. 1450 (photo by Jochem Kamps, Amsterdam City Archives)

Below, I discuss the nature of the product, the terminology, the application, the processing and the trade, in order to test the extent to which changes in the trade and supply of wainscot can be linked to existing knowledge about changes in applications. My aim with this article, is to try to show that research into the correlation between availability of material and changes in construction and finishing can provide new insights.⁸

TERMINOLOGY

According to the current definition, the term wainscot refers to thin oak planks approximately one centimetre thick, radially or quarter sawn so that the medullary rays of the wood lie on the surface like 'reflective flecks' (fig. 2).⁹ The quarter-sawing of a tree was more labour-intensive than the straight sawing and resulted

◀ Portrait of Claes Adriaensz van Adrichem. Anonymous painting, 1563 (collection Museum Meermanno Huis van het Boek, The Hague)



3. Schematic representation of tangentially- and quarter-sawn wood (drawing Dik de Roon, Monumenten en Archeologie, Amsterdam)

4. Wall panelling (wainscoting) from Warmoesstraat 96, Amsterdam, demolished in the 1960s (collection Amsterdam Museum, photo and processing Gabri van Tussenbroek)



in more waste (fig. 3). The advantage of this treatment, however, is that the wood is much less susceptible to warping, because it only shrinks across the thickness. That is why quarter-sawn timber was used to line walls and wooden vaults, as roof boarding and for shutters and doors.¹⁰

Many dictionaries and descriptions state that wainscot is riven wood, and while a few state that it is not necessarily oak, there is a general consensus that the timber used for wainscot is oak. However, wainscot timber was not a uniform product. Although thinner wainscots also occur, historical sources regularly mention wainscots several centimetres thick. So the term wainscot seems to have more to do with the quality and pre-processing of wood than with the thickness of the material itself.

It has long been assumed in the Netherlands that the term wainscot ('wagenscot') has nothing to do with wagons (*wagen*), but is instead derived from 'weeg', the wooden outer wall of a house.¹¹ In 1346, Den Briel's inspection register book states that ovens and stoves must stand one and a half feet from the 'weech'.¹² There is a mention in 1398 of a wooden wall ('den houtinen weech') from the town hall of Sluis.¹³ However, the word 'weeg' or 'weegh' rarely appears in specifications.¹⁴ Although the *Middelnerlands Dictionary* also mentions 'weeg' and explains the term as 'Wall, inner wall; wooden or clay wall',¹⁵ nowhere is there any indication that the word wainscot is derived from this 'weeg'.¹⁶ The *Dictionary of the Dutch Language* (WNT) provides a number of historical references, noting that the etymology of the first morpheme of the word is not certain, but that it is 'tempting' to consider 'wainscot' as a compound with 'weeg' (wall), because wainscots are often used when constructing walls (fig. 4).

The foregoing is based on a particular application of the material. Based on the material itself, a different hypothesis could be posited. The Grimm Brothers' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* already points to one difficulty in that the oldest references do not refer to the thin boards, but rather to the wood before processing and application: thick, split trunks. Low German, for example, also recognized 'beukenschot', which is the best beech wood without knots, leading them to interpret 'schot' as 'Ausschusz' or 'rejects' (cf. the Dutch 'overschot' or 'remnant'). From a linguistic perspective, the development of 'wagen' from 'waan' is not obvious.¹⁷ 'Waan' is probably related to 'wan', as in 'wankant', which is the 'wane', the unbevelled outer edge of the timber.

If we look at the definition of 'wankant' in Van Dale's *Etymologische woordenboek (Etymological Dictionary)* we find: 'rough, non-straightened side', with examples from High German (Wahnkante, Wahnholz) and English (wane), 'so named because one edge, which has been straightened, is narrower than the rough edge'.



5. Wainscot from the so-called Copper wreck (photo Thomasz Wazny)

The suggestion that the, semantically speaking, ‘inferior wood edge’ was used for a high-quality product, need not be an insurmountable problem, if we think in terms of the semi-finished product delivered under the name wainscot, rather than the eventual application which involved removing the wavy edge.

THE MATERIAL

After examining a number of historical references – sometimes including information about sizes – it turns out that the modern definition of wainscot as thinly sawn oak planks is not tenable. Apart from the fact that, for example, a timber processing guild from Antwerp is known to have processed oak into ‘wainscot’, we have a number of references to this wood in a wide variety of thicknesses. We must therefore assume that many historical references to imported wainscot relate to semi-finished products.

In 1969, a shipwreck was discovered off the coast of Gdansk containing 79 pieces of wood identified as wainscot (fig. 5). The ship dates from 1398, the wainscot cargo from the period 1405–1408. Apart from the remarkable fact that the export cargo of wood was not from a single year, the find provided information about the dimensions of wainscot from Gdansk. These

were pieces of wood 236–252 centimetres long, tapering from 30 to 24 centimetres, 1.5–3 centimetres on the thin edge and 4–6 centimetres thick on the thick edge.¹⁸ This unique find makes it clear that wainscot exported from Poland at the beginning of the fifteenth century consisted of semi-finished products, which required further processing before they could be used for finishing woodwork or other applications (fig. 6).

The variation in form can also be found in other sources. An entry in Amsterdam’s Inspection Book [Register] B from 1494 to 1512 notes that among the dues paid by skippers who unloaded their goods in Amsterdam, was a levy on wainscot, with a distinction being made between ‘wainscots of less and of more than four pounds’.¹⁹ In 1541, the staircases of the Oude Kerk in Delft were required to be made from wainscot that was no less than three inches – 7.83 centimetres – thick. And in 1697, Cornelis van Yk wrote of wainscot that ‘One finds it in every Width, and Thickness, yea up to a quarter of a inch, and even less sawn.’²⁰

Johann Georg Krünitz’s economic encyclopaedia, published from 1772 onwards, defines wainscot as split oak blocks, which were transported over the Rhine to Holland and cut into planks of between 1.75 and 1.5 inches thick. Finally, J.A. van der Kloes also



6. Some pieces of wainscot. Clearly visible is the wide edge (bottom) and the narrow edge (top) (photo Karl-Uwe Heußner)

Table 1. Overview of wainscot sizes given in various sources

PLACE/SOURCE	PROCESSING	LENGTH	WIDTH	THICKNESS
Gdansk 1408	—	236-252 cm	24-30 cm	1,5-3 to 4-6 cm
Delft 1541	—	—	—	7,83 cm (three inches)
Van Yk 1697	Sawn	12 to 13 Rhenish feet	'all sorts of width'	1 inch, ¾ inch, ½ inch ¼ inch
Bommenee approx. 1750	Sawn	13 to 14 feet	—	—
Krünitz 1772	Split (rough), sawn	—	—	¾, 1, ½ inch
Grimm 1797*	Split	14 'Rhenish <i>schuh</i> ' (1 'schuh' is 31,39 cm)	2 'schuh'	14 'zoll'
Riga, early 19th C, according to Grimm	Split	14 feet	13 inches	11 inches
Hirsch** 1858 : early 15th C.	—	10 to 18 feet	—	10 inches

* Grimm, Volume 27 refers to handb. f. forst- u. jagdk. 3 (1797), 392.

** T. Hirsch, Handels- und Gewerbegeschichte Danzigs unter der Herrschaft des Deutschen Ordens, Leipzig 1858.

spoke of regular oak trunks riven along the full length. He also mentions the length of 14 feet.²¹ As far as thickness is concerned, it varies. Van der Kloes's 'Holland-sche kroonwagenschot' measures no less than 11 inches (28.3 cm) in the middle and 7 to 8 inches (18.0-20.6 cm) along the edges. It is again clear that these are semi-finished products; such irregular pieces of wood could not be used as is.

Some general conclusions can be drawn about the nature of the product wainscot (cf. table 1). As a *commercial product* it consists of split oak wood, usually about 14 feet long, of varying widths, ranging from 25 to 40 centimetres and 1.5 to 8.0 centimetres thick. However, Dutch sources often refer to wainscots that have been further processed for specific purposes, by sawing, as will be shown below.

APPLICATIONS

There are numerous references to wainscot in historical sources indicating that the material was used for finishes. The specifications for the wooden vault installed in the Leiden Cloth Hall in 1641 stipulated regular, straight wainscot three-quarters of an inch thick. Further instructions for planing and evening the ends indicate that the specifier was far from satisfied with the skewed condition of the semi-finished product.²² Detailed descriptions such as these are, however, rare in historical specifications. Even in bills the entry is often brief. Yet it is clear that wainscot was used for doors,²³ windows,²⁴ panelling,²⁵ roof boarding,²⁶ as well as stonemasonry templates,²⁷ panels for paintings and furniture.²⁸ Wainscot was also widely used in shipbuilding.²⁹

In the course of the seventeenth century, wainscot sometimes faced competition from other types of wood. In the seventeenth century alternative wood products – sometimes of exotic origin – emerged as a material for panelling.³⁰ For example, the contract for the leasing and construction of a house with cake and pastry shop in Amsterdam, dated 19 November 1619, a 'door [...] with two ebony plates was mentioned.³¹ During the seventeenth century, the use of untreated wood in finishes started to wane and structural elements were also increasingly eliminated.³² Head-height panelling, which was still used in the first half of the seventeenth century (fig. 7), was increasingly replaced in the second half of the century by pine, which did not lend itself to fine panelling with carving. The two feet-high panelling that was increasingly used in houses from around 1680 onwards was not left untreated, but painted. In the first half of the eighteenth century, painted, low wainscoting with panels and mouldings began to dominate.³³

Does this mean that the demand for wainscot declined sharply in the second half of the seventeenth century? At the end of the seventeenth century, the

price of wainscot rose steeply, which can be attributed not so much to a growing demand, but to a decrease in supply. At the Zaan auctions the price doubled compared to the middle of the seventeenth century. Although the number of wainscot auctions in the Zaan region lagged far behind the trade in beams, the proceeds were much higher.³⁴ It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that a change set in. We can see a clear correlation between an ever-diminishing supply of wainscot and changes in its application.

7. Head-height panelling of wainscot was used in houses and other buildings well into the seventeenth century. Example of reused panelling in Keizersgracht 123 in Amsterdam (photo Han van Gool, Monumenten en Archeologie, Amsterdam)





8. The Deventer Houtmarkt (timber market) near the Muidergracht in Amsterdam, the current Jonas Daniël Meijerplein. In the foreground a beam is hoisted out of the water, on the right two men busy with a small raft. Drawing of J. Cats, 1785 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam)

ORIGIN AND TRADE

As noted above, the term ‘wainscot’ seems, way back in the 14th century, to refer to a product with a certain property and characteristics rather than to a provenance, although in the Middle Ages and early modern times that was usually the Baltic region.³⁵ From the late thirteenth century onwards, Baltic wainscots were imported into England.³⁶ In his standard work on building in England before 1540, Salzman mentions ‘bord de Alemain’ in relation to work in Westminster in 1275, the usual designation being ‘Estonia’ or, more often, ‘Estreche boards’. A reference to ‘hesterysbord’ has been handed down from 1346. There are also references to ‘boards of Estrysch’, while in 1375 ‘Estrichbord called waynescot’ is recorded. Salzman distin-

guishes two types: wainscot originally made ‘for making wains, or waggons’ and Righolts, which came from the vicinity of Riga. Other names given by Salzman: ‘tables Destland’, ‘ringoldbottes’, ‘waynescotbord’ in 1351, ‘ryngoldbord’ (1348), the term referring to the mythological Grand Duke Ryngold of Lithuania.³⁷

There was already international trade in wainscot in the fourteenth century. Between 1389 and 1415, the German Order purchased no fewer than 1,005,388 wainscots in Masovia (duchy of Poland with Warsaw as capital).³⁸ Early Dutch entries are known from the Accounts of the Counts of Holland and from the Utrecht Dom Accounts, in 1395.³⁹ Northern Dutch imports concentrated on the Baltic Sea region. The paucity of

wainscots were transported over the rivers to the Northern Netherlands is evidenced by a timber transport that took place from Amsterdam to Dordrecht in 1551, where wainscot made up a very tiny part of the inventory.⁴⁰ This was overseas timber that was distributed upstream. Also interesting are the timber purchases of 1550 for the town hall of Hasselt in Overijssel, in the east of the Netherlands. The rough construction timber was sourced from Deventer, even further to the east, but for wainscots and planks they went to Amsterdam.⁴¹ Even in Deventer itself – which was known as an important timber market – the wainscot was imported from the west (fig. 8).⁴²

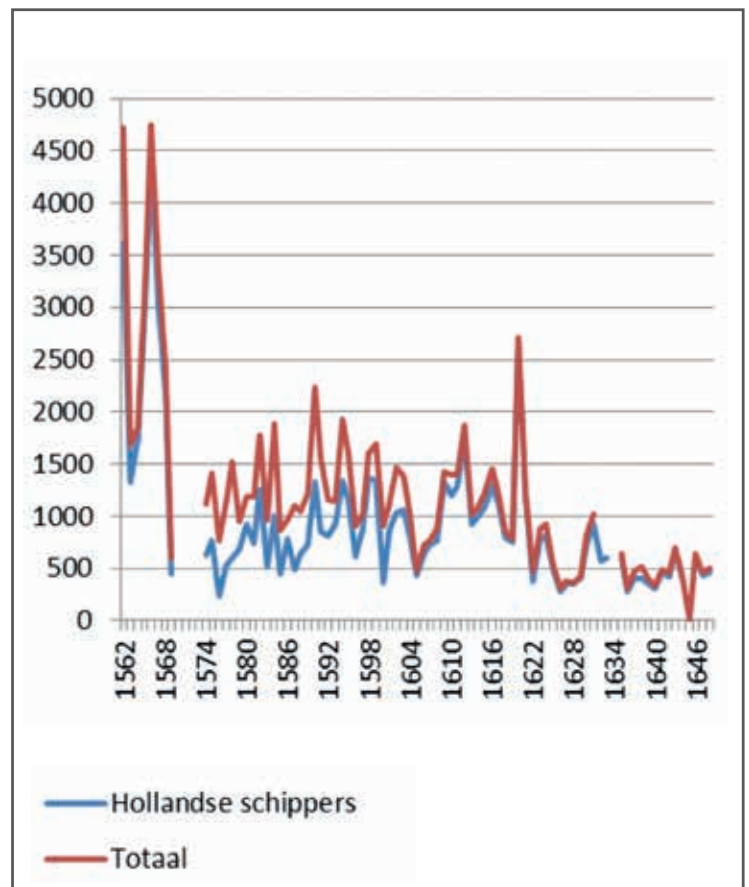
The church wardens of the Michaëlschurch in Zwolle sent skipper Lambert to Amsterdam in 1561 to collect and buy timber there. Two hundred Bohemian ‘kaprauens’ (rafters) and two hundred conifer rafters for 21 and 10 guilders respectively had been purchased from timber merchant Jan Meuss. He also supplied fifty Nordic planks for 26 guilders, two hundred Magdeburg planks for 21 guilders and eighteen masts. Peter Neck supplied 21 beams to skipper Lambert, who had a wide choice of ‘wainscots, meiborsche planks, bohemian and other rafters and masts’.⁴³ This again concerned overseas timber, from areas that specialized in this type of product and that was not sourced via Deventer.

In 1562, Gdansk, Königsberg and the Courland were responsible for 90 percent of total wainscot exports from the Baltic region.⁴⁴ Gdansk was by far the most important export port. The trade was partly in the hands of the Dutch.⁴⁵ In the period between 1588 and 1602, there were 517 reports of wainscot exports to the Netherlands from Königsberg.⁴⁶ This number is based on the surviving toll registers for only seven years. The average number of wainscots per cargo was 367; it increased over time.⁴⁷ Such transports did not always go well. On 20 October 1593, two stated that after leaving Gdansk they had been overtaken by a storm in the Baltic Sea, and that they had been forced to throw the wainscot overboard.⁴⁸ Similar cases of ships from Gdansk are known from 1589 and 1596.⁴⁹ In 1598 a ship from Königsberg that was loaded with ‘planks, wainscot, barrel staves and suchlike’ sank off Schiermonnikoog.⁵⁰

In the 1680s, the Duchy of Courland (to the south and west of Riga) replaced Königsberg as the second most important port as far as the trade in wainscot was concerned.⁵¹ At the end of the sixteenth century, oak forests in the Baltic Sea region began to be depleted, whereas demand did not decline.⁵² In the first decade of the seventeenth century, Riga became increasingly important in the wainscot trade, while Gdansk’s share declined. In the southern part of the Baltic region there was a shortage of heavier timber products. Finland and Sweden then began to meet this demand.⁵³

The Baltic Sea trade was negatively affected by the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), but even before the war there had been a certain decline in trade with the West. After a hesitant start, Dutch trade increased considerably again during the Twelve Years Truce (1609-1621).⁵⁴ The enormous increase in Dutch shipbuilding had led to a high demand for wainscots.

In the second half of the 1620s, the number of Dutch ships passing through the Øresund each year halved as a result of the Thirty Years War. Between 1622 and 1648, the export of timber from Gdansk fell to a fraction of the volume in the preceding period.⁵⁵ Blockades, poor forest management and the increasing demand from growing Polish cities in the hinterland led to a dramatic decline in the supply of oak to Gdansk.⁵⁶ In the seventeenth century, the role of Dutch traders in the Baltic trade steadily declined, with the Nine Years’ War (1689-1697) further reducing trade.⁵⁷



Grafiek 1. Transport of wainscots through the Øresund by Dutch skippers and the total number of skippers. The revival during the Twelve Years Truce is clearly visible.⁵⁸



9. Wood sawmills outside the Amsterdam Raampoort. Wash drawing by Philips Koninck (1619-1688) (Amsterdam City Archives)



There was no lack of a reaction to this development. In contrast to the decreasing supply from the Baltic Sea region, there was a growing supply of wainscot from the Rhine region, Bremen/Weser and Lippe from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards. The wainscot imported via Bremen fetched the highest prices at the Zaan auctions.⁵⁹ And from 1665 onwards, Dutch ships increasingly took on complete shiploads of wainscot from Harburg.⁶⁰

Dutch entrepreneurs formed companies that focused on the import of German timber along the rivers Rhine, Moselle and Main. In 1685, there are mentions of wainscot from Colmar, the Saar, 'Reebroek and Brittemerwalt', 'Bergerwalt', 'Hinderwalt near Braubach', the environs of Koblenz and other places.⁶¹ Specifications for the gallery in the 's-Hertogenbosch town hall, dating from 1693, mention wainscot from Wesel.⁶² This shift from imports from the Baltic Sea region to imports via Bremen and the Rhine is clear evidence of the reaction from sellers in the latter areas and buyers in Holland looking for other supply channels. The fragmentation visible in the search for wainscot in the second half of the seventeenth century shows that it had become difficult to meet the demand. This explains the steep price increase at the Zaanse auctions.

TRANSIT

Not all the wainscot exported to Holland was intended for the local market: Amsterdam and later the Zaan region played a major role as transit ports for wainscots. Both areas hosted a flourishing timber industry, concentrated on the processing of imported raw timber so that it acquired added value.⁶³ In 1454, wainscot intended for the Sint-Catharinagasthuis in Leiden was purchased in Amsterdam.⁶⁴ In 1474 a merchant from Saint-Omer in France bought seven hundred pieces of wainscot and four hundred rafters, while in 1482 a skipper from Haarlem sold six hundred pieces of wainscot sourced from Amsterdam in Bergen op Zoom.⁶⁵ In 1488, skipper Jan Aertsz from Amsterdam delivered five hundred pieces of wainscot and three hundred staves to a buyer in Newcastle.⁶⁶ During the renovation of the Castle Hoogstraten in Belgium in 1525, under the direction of the architect Rombout II Keldermans and on the order of Antoon I van Lalaing and his wife Elisabeth van Culemborch, a batch of three hundred pieces of wainscot was sourced from Amsterdam.⁶⁷ In 1539 Van Lalaing's secretary received one hundred pieces of wainscot and in 1541 René van Chalons also received one hundred pieces of wainscot from Amsterdam.⁶⁸ It is known that in the years 1544 and 1545 timber accounted for about three per cent of total exports outside the Burgundian areas. Most of it went to Portugal, including planks, rafters, wainscots and beams.⁶⁹

On 4 January 1610, the Amsterdam merchant Volkert

Overlander signed a contract with skipper Jacob Janes on behalf of Manuel Xemenes of Antwerp, in which it was decided that Overlander would take on board one hundred planks and one hundred pieces of wainscot 'or about that', after which the skipper would leave for Setubal near Lisbon, to load salt. So the timber was unloaded in Portugal.⁷⁰ On 7 July the same Overlander and Willem Hooft signed a freight contract with skipper Cornelis Michielsen from Amsterdam, who was to sail to Setubal with wainscot.⁷¹ In 1616, the merchant Hillebrant den Otter from Amsterdam agreed with skipper Dirck Jansen from de Rijk that he would load 100 wainscots and staves, and carry them to Setubal.⁷² It seems that even England imported all its wainscot directly from Holland in the late seventeenth century, although this trade decreased over time.⁷³ Around 1600 the trade in wainscot also made an important contribution to the tax revenues of the States of Holland.⁷⁴

QUALITY AND PROCESSING

The fact that not all wainscot was of the same quality can be gleaned from the previously quoted letter from Claes Adriaensz van Adrichem in 1590. The difference in quality found expression in a conflict about the delivery of wainscot. On 3 March 1599 the Amsterdammer Hendrick Jansz Bremer declared, at the request of Claes Claesz Rotterdam, that the quality of the Courland wainscot Claes had received, did not match the quality of the wainscot presented at the auction where Claes had purchased it.⁷⁵ In this case, the quality of the Courland wainscot left much to be desired; it may have been poorly split wood or wood with knots. Later, too, we also see indications of variations in quality.⁷⁶

We have seen above that the imported wainscot was usually a semi-finished product. The decision to process the wood in the Netherlands was probably influenced by several factors: the toll rates for semi-finished products were lower than those for finished products, processing required specific techniques and/or skills and the Amsterdam sawmills managed to more or less monopolize this specialist work.⁷⁷

A large part of the processing of wainscot took place in Amsterdam. The sawing was done by hand until the emergence in the first quarter of the seventeenth century of sawmills capable of sawing wood in different thicknesses.⁷⁸ Of the first wainscot mill it was said: 'The first inventor was Krelis Lootjes tot Uytgeest./ He built the Mill on a raft/ And first sawed the wainscot'.⁷⁹ In Amsterdam in particular, the hand sawing industry resisted the mechanical sawing of wainscot. In 1620, an agreement was reached between the hand sawing guild and the owners of a wood sawmill, in which it was laid down that the latter would confine their activities to the processing of pine wood.⁸⁰ And on 16 November 1621, the import of sawn wainscots and

otherwood from Waterland and elsewhere was banned in Amsterdam.⁸¹ However, around 1630 oak was also mechanically sawn in so-called wainscot saws.⁸² These are post mills, equipped with two sawing frames (fig. 9).⁸³

In 1631, two mill builders took over the construction of two wainscot mills in Amsterdam.⁸⁴ In another mill construction contract in 1638, whereby the Amsterdam company of sawmills was dissolved, there is talk of a 'wainscot mill'.⁸⁵ From the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, a lot of wainscots were also sawn along the Zaan. Until 1669, the Zaan timber auctions, which had started in 1655, even traded exclusively in wainscot.⁸⁶ In 1694, Amsterdam's import ban on sawn timber, first promulgated in 1621, was tightened up, restricting the import of sawn pine and spruce from the Zaan region. In 1696, the Zaan timber merchants decided not to sell wainscot anymore to Amsterdam, whereupon the Amsterdam city council lifted the ban on the import of sawn wainscot in May 1697.⁸⁷ The number of wainscot mills in the Zaanstreek region increased markedly in the first decades of the eighteenth century, largely due to the export to England, but the growth peaked around 1740, after which the number of mills decreased.⁸⁸ This export trade with England seems to have been more lucrative than producing wainscot for the home market and will have accelerated the declining use of wainscot in Dutch interiors.

CONCLUSION

Wainscot was one of the many products available on the Dutch timber market. Sources of various kinds show that these were not primarily quarter-sawn thin oak planks of about one centimetre thick, but much thicker, quarter-split semi-finished products, which were only later sawn into much thinner planks. An important reason for the quarter splitting or sawing was to prevent the wood from warping. This was especially important for finishings that required wood with low rates of splitting and shrinking, which was why wainscot was often used for this purpose.

There are several views on the etymology of the word 'wainscot'. On the basis of the commercial product rather than the finished product that was used, the explanation that we are dealing with 'schot' (compare 'surplus', with the prefix 'waan'), wane, the side of the wood that still contains sapwood, seems worth investigating. As far as we can tell from the available sources, the product exported from the areas of origin was rarely ready to use. The wood was usually split and about 14 feet long. The thickness could vary considerably, as can be seen from Dutch sources, which speak of wainscot up to a few inches thick.

Already in the fourteenth century, the European trade in wainscots was enormous. Most of this was transported to Holland via the North Sea. The proportion of wainscot rafted west along the major rivers was much smaller. This trade seems only to have emerged around the middle of the seventeenth century, when the Baltic trade had passed its peak. It is not yet possible to quantify the available data. When ports in the Baltic Sea could no longer meet the demand from Holland, trade in this particular product shifted to Bremen, the Elbe and Rhine regions. Probably because of the higher profitability, the export of wainscot to England remained at a high level until the eighteenth century, while the prices paid at the Zaan auctions more than doubled in the second half of the seventeenth century. The use of wainscot in the Dutch interior decreased, possibly also because traders preferred to export their products to other markets, where it commanded a higher price.

It would be interesting to carry out a similar study for crucks, floor boards, beams and other products. By considering the various historical wooden elements primarily as market products rather than as craft products that are the result of local circumstances, it is possible to explain why wood from different regions of origin can be found within one building-historical context, and why its use could change not only in response to changing tastes and fashions, but also due to fluctuations in supply from the forests or in far-off market conditions.

NOTES

- 1 I would like to thank David Derksen, Maarten Jan Hoekstra, Edwin Orsel, Dirk de Vries and the anonymous peer reviewer for their help whilst writing this article. P.H. Winkelman, *Bronnen voor de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Oostzeehandel in de zeventiende eeuw. Deel III. Acten uit de notariële archieven van Amsterdam en het noorderkwartier van Holland 1585-1600. Het koopmans-archief van Claes van Adrichem* (Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën, 178), 's-Gravenhage 1981, 482, no. 791.
- 2 Winkelman 1981 (ref. 1), 496, no. 813. Cf. Winkelman 1981 (ref. 1), 496-497, no. 814, 498, no. 817 and 499, no. 818.
- 3 Winkelman 1981 (ref. 1), 500, no. 820.
- 4 Winkelman 1981 (ref. 1), 505-506, no. 830. Cf. Winkelman 1981 (ref. 1), 508-509, no. 833.
- 5 Winkelman 1981 (ref. 1), 509, no. 834.
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'THE DRIEST WAINSCOTS YOU ARE ABLE TO OBTAIN'

THE DIFFERENTIATED TIMBER MARKET BEFORE 1800 AND THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SUPPLY, DEMAND AND APPLICATION

GABRI VAN TUSSENBROEK

Wainscot was one of the many products available on the Dutch timber market. Sources of various kinds show that these were not primarily quarter-sawn thin oak planks of about one centimetre thick, but much thicker, quarter-split semi-finished products, which were only later sawn into much thinner planks. An important reason for the quarter splitting or sawing was to prevent the wood from warping. This was especially important for finishings that required wood with low rates of splitting and shrinking, which was why wainscot was often used for this purpose.

There are several views on the etymology of the word 'wainscot'. On the basis of the commercial product rather than the finished product that was used, the explanation that we are dealing with 'schot' (compare 'surplus', with the prefix 'waan'), wane, the side of the wood that still contains sapwood, seems worth investigating. As far as we can tell from the available sources, the product exported from the areas of origin was rarely ready to use. The wood was usually split and about 14 feet long. The thickness could vary considerably, as can be seen from Dutch sources, which speak of wainscot up to a few inches thick.

Already in the fourteenth century, the European trade in wainscots was enormous. Most of this was transported to Holland via the North Sea. The proportion of wainscot rafted west along the major rivers was

much smaller. This trade seems only to have emerged around the middle of the seventeenth century, when the Baltic trade had passed its peak. It is not yet possible to quantify the available data. When ports in the Baltic Sea could no longer meet the demand from Holland, trade in this particular product shifted to Bremen, the Elbe and Rhine regions. Probably because of the higher profitability, the export of wainscot to England remained at a high level until the eighteenth century, while the prices paid at the Zaan auctions more than doubled in the second half of the seventeenth century. The use of wainscot in the Dutch interior decreased, possibly also because traders preferred to export their products to other markets, where it commanded a higher price.

It would be interesting to carry out a similar study for crucks, floor boards, beams and other products. By considering the various historical wooden elements primarily as market products rather than as craft products that are the result of local circumstances, it is possible to explain why wood from different regions of origin can be found within one building-historical context, and why its use could change not only in response to changing tastes and fashions, but also due to fluctuations in supply from the forests or in far-off market conditions.