

Technika polskiego krawiectwa od XIV do pierwszej połowy XIX wieku

The technology of clothes-making in Poland from the 14th to the first half of the 19th century

SUMMARY

Most writings on clothes-making deal with organization, i.e. the economic aspect, of the trade. The majority of authors of the various written sources have taken the technology of clothes-making for granted. The present article deals with tendencies concerning the structure and cut of the new elaborate fashions that kept arriving in Poland from southern and western Europe. Most of those required advanced clothes-making skills, and hence there was much demand for hand-written and printed books of patterns. Such patterns were also transmitted in correspondence between clothes makers (e.g. in letters of clothes-making masters from Wrocław to Bytom, in the year 1567). The patterns were also disseminated from Wielkopolska (Great Poland) to provincial clothes-makers; the patterns were accompanied by information on the measures of clothes sewn from different fabrics, thus allowing the clothes-makers to avoid customers' complaints, which sometimes even led to court cases.

The tools used by clothes-makers are mentioned only in inventories of movables made after their death. Until the 19th century no gauges with scales were used; instead clothes-makers used strips of paper or string in measuring fabrics by means of wooden yardsticks. Standard sizes were adopted only in mass production aimed at unknown purchasers. The most important tools used by clothes-makers included scissors, irons for pressing the final product, metal tools for hole-making, piercers, thimbles, and needles; such tools, and also the containers used to hold them, were well accounted for in the inventories. Less attention was paid to yarn, hooks and eyes, buttons etc. As for elements used in haberdashery or whalebones for corsets, these had to be supplied by the customers themselves. Cotton wool was used for shoulder padding or for insulation, while lining was made of silk and fustian as well as ordinary kinds of cloth. On the whole, the fabrics were much more expensive than labour, and hence garments were repeatedly mended and altered, until they wore out.