Medieval Garments
Reconstructed
Medieval Garments Reconstructed

Norse Clothing Patterns

By Lilli Fransen, Anna Nørgaard and Else Østergård
Preface

The ‘cut’ and ‘fit’ of a garment are terms that we use today in connection with the cutting and sewing of clothes. We know what size we use and we expect that a garment is cut and formed so that it fits our body.

In the Early Middle Ages the cutting and production of a piece of clothing was associated with a great deal of mystery, and how the Norse, who lived on the edge of the world’s society, so to speak, could carry out this profession under such primitive conditions is just as mysterious.

As the photographs and measurements in this book illustrate, several of the Norse garments are sewn to fit closely to the body, but with a large fullness at the bottom of the garment and sleeves with ‘set-in’ sleeve seams that are formed to give ease of movement. The practical liripipe hoods with shoulder cape, and stockings (either with or without feet) resembled the prevailing fashion further south in Europe. In the Patterns Section of the book, the seven-hundred-year-old garments are spread out side by side with the more recently sewn reproductions.

NORSE PATTERNS – GARMENT CUTS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES is the result of a cooperation between three textile experts: Pattern Constructor, Lilli Fransen, MSc Clothing Product Development; Weaver, Anna Nørgaard; and Conservator, Else Østergård. Because of our different backgrounds, each of us has of course taken a different approach to the Herjolfsnes garments, but common to us all is the joy of working with these garments.

Our gratitude goes to the National Museum’s Department of Conservation in Brede, which, among other things, has contributed economically to the photography in the book. Our thanks must also go to photographer Robert Fortuna from the Department of Conservation for an inspiring cooperation and for taking splendid photographs of both the old and the new garments. Also, museum conservator Irene Skals deserves much thanks for her illustrative material. We are indebted to TEKO Design and Business School in Herning for their generosity in sponsoring the fabric to be used for the sewing of the many new garments, hoods and stockings; and to specialist-teacher Ingrid Andersen, who has sewn the named garment parts. We wish also to thank photographer Werner Karrasch from the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde. And, last but not least, we are extremely thankful to Chief Curator and the Clinical Faculty, Shelly Nordtorp-Madson, from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, who has had the rather awesome task of translating the text from Danish to English.

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Kalaallit nunaat is the Greenlandic name for Greenland. It means our land, the land that belongs to the people who call themselves kalaallit.