



Reik Felag Norse Culture Recreation Society

Authenticity and Norse Clothing Kit Standards

(adapted from Vikings UK and Regia Anglorum kit guides with RF additions)

Authenticity and Norse Clothing Kit Standards

This guide gives the general style and materials that are to be used for a depiction of known Western European peoples of Anglo-Dane/Norse regions. The guide focuses on the Western Isles, England, Iceland, Norse Ireland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden of the 9th – 11th centuries, that being 800-1000 A.D. The majority of portrayals fall in and around the year 1000 A.D., though those who only portray the Viking Age tend to dress more for 850-900, others have a more 1000-1066 focus. We have included some eastern European Rus variants for our members who portray the Viking Rus.

Norse dress will vary to greater or lesser degrees from one geographic location, era, social rank, religion (Christian or pagan), to another. The kit should be consistent with your appropriate class and character. I.e. if you are a thrall you should not be wearing a new, tablet-woven trimmed, wool tunic. We expect our members to be able to explain their clothing choices in relation to their chosen character, date and most frequent dwelling place.

All clothing, accessories and embellishments should pass the ten foot rule which holds that from ten feet away everything looks authentic. The kit is a sign of commitment and a physical representation of your knowledge of Norse culture.

MINIMUM CLOTHING REQUIREMENTS FOR REIK FELAG MEMBERS

Men: tunic, pants, belt, shoes, *under tunic is optional according to your character*

Women: dress, belt, shoes, appropriate head covering for character, *under dress and apron are optional according to your character*

Here is a quick guide to social rank and clothing:

Thrall: Un-dyed coarsely woven tunic of linen or wool. **Optional for women:** Head-cloth or shawl. **Optional for men:** Belt, trousers, leg wraps. **Optional for both sexes:** Shoes, hood, or rectangular cloak.

Leysingi: all of the above as normal attire with the added options of an under tunic or dress, pouch, leather belt and a few beads

Karl or Bondi: Better quality wool and linen garments, all of the items above plus the following options: Pewter or bronze jewellery, simple woven and embroidered decoration, brighter more colorful cloth dyed with local dye stuffs. For women the apron or hangeroc, keys, needle case, decoration at the wrists of overdress and across the top of the hangeroc.

Odalsbondi or Hauldr: as above but more richly decorated. Richer colours, silver jewellery and gold finger ring. Fur as trim.

Landsmean or Jarl : all of the above with silk decoration, headcoverings and fur lined cloaks

Materials Linen and wool are the two main fabrics to be used for Viking period clothing. Blends are permitted, but the material should be no less than a 50-50 blend and should be virtually indistinguishable from 100% linen and 100% wool fabrics. 50/50 wool/viscose is cheap and available year round and in many colours. Do not use wool gabardine or men's smooth finish suiting wools. 60-40 linen/cotton blends tend to fray less and look very close to 100% linen. Suede leather should not be used.

Trim: all outer pieces may have tablet-woven trim on the hems or solid trim of contrasting colour for higher status characters. Suitable ready-made trim that approximates the look of tablet-woven trim may be used. Period-styled embroideries may also be used as trim and decoration on higher status clothing.

Some Notes on Colour

Linen: Linen comes in lots of natural colours from grayish tans to gray greens, golden-grayed tans and of course the urine and sun-bleached creams to warm whites. Never use ultra-white linen. The finer the weave of the linen, the whiter it should be or the more pungently dyed either blue or red. In the Viking period linen comes in only two dyed colours: woad blue and madder red. The blues range from pale to a nice deep Indigo of some brilliance. Madder reds are rusty in hue.

Wool: Natural wool comes in several colours: creamy whites, ivories, grays, browns, oatmeals, and a rusty over-toned black. Wool takes dye readily and very bright colours were obtainable in the Dark Ages. Educate your eye to recognize the more intense and saturated modern hues and eliminate them from your palette. Ultramarine blues, phthlo greens and blues are not appropriate. It is always better to err on the side of a grayed or earthy rich colour than the more brilliant hues. Stay away from bright white and deep blue or black.

BASIC CLOTHING

Men's Trousers: LINEN or WOOL

Loose fitting trousers with or without a gusset crotch

They should be pulled tight with a drawstring and not a belt.

May be worn with or without leg wraps (Winingas / puttees)

The poor or slaves might sometimes have gone without breeches

Men's Kirtle/Tunic: LINEN or WOOL

Standard long sleeve, T-style tunic with arm gussets and four gussets from the waist to the hem, OR side-split, with or without front and back gussets. Could be lined with linen.

Men's Under-tunic or shirt: LINEN or WOOL

Should be the same size and style as the outer wool tunic and made with a fine weave of linen.

The length of this garment could vary from 34 inches to below the knees, like the shirt found in Bernuthford Germany. More common however is upper to mid thigh.

Women's Dress: LINEN or WOOL Made same as for male Kirtle/Tunic but with length carried down to the ankles. Could be lined with linen.

Apron dress: *optional* LINEN OR WOOL The apron dress was not a universal garment for all Norse women by any means. Tubular apron dress, with or without gussets, held in place with turtle brooches or similar effects. These are usually ornamented with a band of tablet weaving at the top of the apron. Could be lined with linen.

Women's under dress: *optional* LINEN, could be long sleeved or a sleeveless version could have been worn like underwear.

ACCESSORIES

Belts: LEATHER or tablet-woven, no synthetics. They may be decorated but not obviously modern or stamped with Celtic knotwork designs. Whenever possible the buckles and strap ends should conform to known period examples or be very close facsimiles. Tablet-woven belts are preferable for female kit.

Shoes: LEATHER They may have modern insoles for foot issues or personal comfort. Turn-shoe style, or center-ridge styles. Fastened with toggles of wood/leather/antler or laced. See Coppergate or Haithabu style shoes, or Hedeby style shoes and ankle boot as examples. Close enough: a leather shoe without heels. Eg. Leather moccasin with no fringe. NO Oxfords, work boots, running shoes or fashion boots.

HATS OR HEAD GEAR AND HAIR:

For men and women, Hood and mantle lined with linen, wool or fur, or a card woven fillet of wool, silk or gilt or braided bands.

For men: Viking four or six panel wool caps. Fur trimmed hats, but not in the Hunnish fashion, i.e. hard pointed leather cap trimmed in fur.

For Women: Sprang hair nets, head rails of varying lengths and Dublin style caps. We confess, we do what many other re-enactment groups of this era do- many of our women wear a rectangle or triangle scarf of linen cloth simply tied about the head in a becoming fashion. It is a conceit used to hide their modern hair or the joins of false hair. Hair of an unnatural color, purples, blue green and the like must be hidden from view at all times. There is some evidence that higher ranking women, especially those living in the Danelaw of England, wore a wimple edged with decorated braid. The Irish Norse can also wear a long fringed scarf draped over their heads and held in place by a metal fillet or braid.

Other Possible Additions to your Norse Wardrobe

Hose for both men and women: We recommend leg winingas, woolen bands and or cut and sewn woolen or silk hose which can be worn with or without leg bands (winigas) . They would have been gartered at the knee. Or nålbinded socks which again could have been worn with or without leg wraps or sewn hose

Women's Shawl: A triangular piece of wool worn broached center front. Length hanging to mid thigh at the longest point. Or a square of wool folded and broached in front which would hang shorter than mid thigh at the back

Women's Coat: Linen or wool or silk, more often lined than not, brooch closed cut nearly identically to a kirtle with the opening running straight up the front, Could be lined with linen. An eastern variant can also be worn. It could be quilted, felted or twill woven wool. Trimmed at the edges with fur, silk. Could also have embroidery at the wrists. Women's coats are always broached not buttoned.

Cloaks: WOOL Square or half-round style cloaks with or without fur trim. The cloaks may be lined with fur for winter or linen for comfort. The edges may be embroidered as found on the Mammen cloak ca. 970-971. This cloak of a high class individual, was made of wool, finely embroidered on the edges and then lined entirely with fur.

Men's Caftan or Coat: This is not a common western European Men's garment. Made of wool, linen or silk, or patterned silk, with or without linings of wool or linen, trimmed with card weaving of silk or wool, embroidery or gilt embroideries such as found in Birka or Byzantium. Buttons of horn, bone, leather, fabric, bronze, or silver, or cloth ties. May be cut in the style of the caftan from Moschhevaya, Balka, Caucasus . The remains of Caftans have been found in Ireland, Hedby, and Birka. Depictions of the caftan are also found on western European sculpture. Thor Ewing, in his book, Viking Clothing, postulates that the caftan was not completely naturalized as a garment in western Scandinavia but was clearly known and represents links of trade, gift and travel with the east which is why we have included it as an option.
