

VIKING WOMAN'S APRON DRESS

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SUMMARY

Evidence for the Viking women wearing a pinafore dress or apron dress is found from many different sources. Each source in itself can not prove the exact cut and wear of the dress but when these source are taken together as a whole, a reasonable reconstruction can be produced for a distinct time period. I used archeological evidence from several books as well as the Valkyrie figures and carving from the time period to reconstruct the Viking apron dress.

My reconstruction is a hand woven wool dress with a decorative weaving woven into the base of the front of the dress. The dress was woven on a 24-inch wide rigid heddle loom in tabby weave. Tabby weave is a very common weave found in 10th and 11th century in the Viking world. Over 100 hours of weaving went into the cloth that is used in the apron dress. The dress is sewn together from four pieces of cloth, a rectangular front and back and two gores sewn into the sides. The front of the dress has three rows of decorative weave, "Danish Medallions", woven in the cloth.

A tablet woven border is woven directly onto the garment after the dress is assembled using a method developed by Anna Norgard. Norgard's method is a much simpler and faster method of attaching tablet weaving directly to a garment. I made modifications to her method to weave the tablet woven border onto the base of the apron dress. I chose a style of tablet weaving that is found in the maniple of St Ulrich from the 10th Century. I used the basic spiral technique depicted in the maniple to weave a border for the apron dress.

The entire garment is woven from 2-ply wool and was a joy to create. The hardest part of the project was cutting the cloth prior to sewing the apron dress together. I particularly enjoyed attaching the tablet woven border. In a previous project I wove the tablet

weaving first and then wove the cloth from the weft of the tablet weaving. This method is very difficult and takes a great deal of time. The new method developed by Norgard is much simpler and faster. Norgard's method also allows the weaver to attach the tablet woven border to any edge of the garment. This garment is a true composite of the skills that I have learned in the Society. Three methods of weaving and skills in sewing were combined to create this wonderful apron dress. It is by far my favorite project to date.

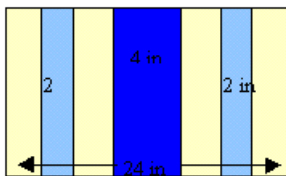
MATERIALS AND PROCESS

HAND WOVEN APRON DRESS:

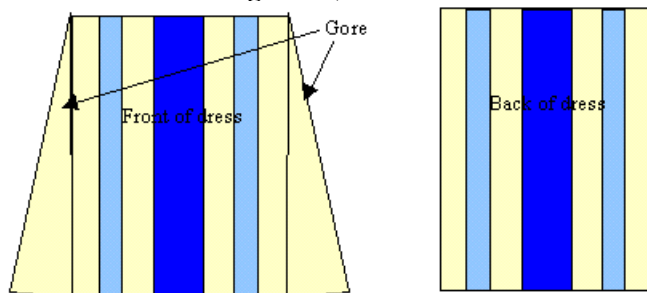
MATERIALS

1. Wilde Yarns Straw 2ply wool
2. Wilde Yarns Marine Blue 2 ply wool
3. Wilde Yarns Juniper 2 ply wool
4. 24 inch Rigid Heddle Loom
5. Warping board
6. One 20 inch flat shuttle

PROCESS



1. Draw out a pattern for the finished cloth.
2. Calculate the amount of yarn required. (See the attached chart titled " Cloth with Stripes")
3. Measure out the yarn on the warping board.
4. Warp the loom according to the pattern. (See the attached chart titled " Cloth with Stripes")
5. Weave the cloth in tabby weave. Including three rows of the decorative weaving called the "Danish Medallion" spaced six inches apart. The Danish medallion is worked in two steps. First open a new shed and cut a length of heavy yarn that is three times the width of the weaving and lay it into the shed loosely. Then weave 1/2 inch of plain weave. Second, open a new shed and insert the heavy yarn for one inch then bring it out of the shed to the surface. Poke a crochet hook through the fabric below the first heavy weft pick and catch a loop of the heavy weft. Then pull the weft through to the top. Take the end of the heavy weft through the loop to make a knot and pull it tight. Repeat the second step across the cloth.
6. Remove the cloth from the loom and finish the ends with overhand knots or square knots.
7. Wash the cloth in warm water. This felts the cloth making the wool expand to fill in the spaces in the weaving.
8. Repeat the steps 1-4 and 6 and 7 for the cloth used in the gores. (See the attached chart titled " Gores, Straw Cloth")



9. Create a pattern for the apron dress.
10. Cut the cloth for the pattern. The front and back pieces were woven as one piece. This piece of cloth was cut in half to create the front and back of the dress. The gores were cut out of a piece of fabric one yard long and 24 inches wide. Before cutting the fabric I sewed a zigzag stitch one both sides of the cutting line to ensure that the fabric did not unravel during sewing. (Cutting the fabric was the hardest part of this project. I have over 100 hours in weaving the fabric for the apron dress. I looked at the fabric for several days before I could get the courage to cut the fabric according to the pattern.)
11. Sew the pieces together making sure all of the fringes are at the bottom of the dress. The fringes later become the weft of the tablet woven border.
12. Hem the top edge of the dress.

FINGERLOOP BRAID APRON LOOPS

MATERIALS

1. Wilde Yarns Straw 2ply wool
2. Wilde Yarns Juniper 2 ply wool

PROCESS

1. Determine the length of the straps. The loops for my dress are 11 inches long. This means that the finger woven piece must be at least 22 inches long.
2. Choose a fingerloop braid pattern.
3. Cut the length of the yarn to three times the length of the loops.
4. Follow the fingerloop pattern chosen. (The fingerloop pattern is from Lady Azza al Shirazi's class on Fingerloop Braids.)

Directions: 1. Place 1 bow each on BCR and ABCL.

2. AR through BR take CL REV.

1. Walk down L bows.
2. AL through BL take CR REV.
3. Walk down R Bows.
4. Repeat from step 2.

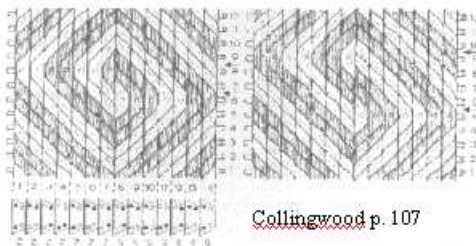
1. Finish the two ends of the braid.
2. Fold the braid in half to make a loop and sew the loop onto the apron dress.

TABLET WOVEN BORDER (Woven directly on the dress.)**MATERIALS**

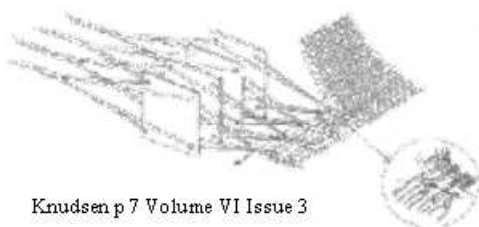
1. 16 tablet weaving cards.
2. Inkle loom
3. Wilde Yarns Straw 2ply wool
4. Wilde Yarns Juniper 2 ply wool

PROCESS

1. Set up the cards to weave chevrons adding one border card on each side of the tablet weaving.



2. Using the fringes as the weft of the weaving, weave the border directly onto the dress. The fringe will pass through the tablet weaving two times. Lise Raeder Knudsen published an article in Twist's fall newsletter that describes the method I used in this apron dress.

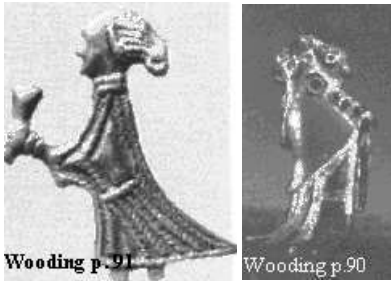


3. The chevron pattern with the spirals is woven into the trim. This is woven by weaving away from you until the two straw yarns in cards eight and nine are in the top two positions. At this point half of the cards are woven forward for two turns and the other half of the cards are woven backwards for two turns. Next, the entire pack is woven backwards until the chevron pattern is complete.
4. The tablet woven border is woven around the base of the dress. The spiral pattern is alternated from a left spiral to a right spiral periodically in the weaving to reduce the amount of the twisting. Changing which half of the pack is turned backwards or forward when the spiral center is woven changes the spiral direction.

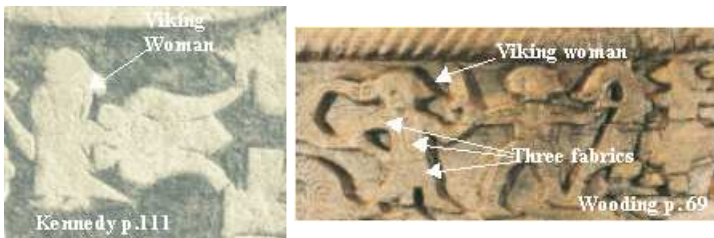
APRON DRESS DOCUMENTATION

The 10th and 11th century apron dress can be documented fairly well from archeological sites in Hedeby, Dublin, York and Birka. Birka and the harbor at Hedeby produced fragments of women's clothing. Both *The Viking* by Roesahl and the *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* agree that the Viking woman wore an under dress that was sometimes pleated. Over the under dress was worn a pinafore dress that was made from wool or linen which might be decorated with borders and bands. In later graves and finds the pinafore dress was often constructed from separate pieces and sewn together. The dress was also tailored to fit the individual through tucks and pleats.

The Valkyrie figures found in archeological finds provide us an insight to the dress of Viking women. The two most common figures show the women in side view. The figure with the Viking woman wear a shawl implies that the woman is wearing a flowing under dress and a closely fitted over dress that is decorated at both the hem and part way up the front of the over dress. (Wooding p.90) The figure with the woman carrying the drinking horn does not clearly indicate the type of dress. The figure clearly shows two types of fabric with the decorative details. An additional layer may be indicated with the smooth surface on the figure. (Wooding p.91) These two figures show that Viking woman wore at least two layers, an overdress and a flowing under dress.



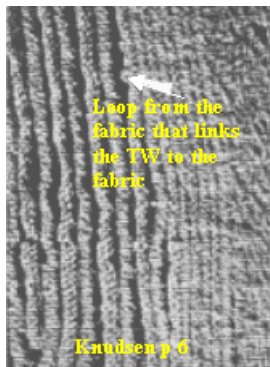
Further insight into Viking Women's attire can also be found in the numerous wood and stone carvings found throughout the Viking world. One very clear stone carving is found in Wayland. This carving illustrates an incident from the tale of Volound. This carving is of particular interest because a woman is clearly depicted next to the forge. A wood carving found on the wooden cart found in the Oseberg ship burial depicts a woman with long flowing hair restraining a man from killing another man. She is wearing a large necklace and at least three different types of materials. The carver depicted three patterns on her attire that could indicate different types of cloth. Finally, the Oseberg ship burial contains a tapestry that illustrates many Viking women. The tapestry clearly shows women wearing two to three layers of clothing.



TABLET WEAVING BORDER DOCUMENTATION

Tablet weaving is a well-documented and universally accepted method of decorating Viking age garments. Bands have been found throughout the Viking world to include Hedeby, York, Dublin, Birka and other large archeological sites. Several bands found in Mammen, Denmark include a woolen band needing 17 tablets woven in 3/1 broken twill. Brocaded bands attached to long fillets have also been found in Mammen. Other finds include the Oseberg ship burial with produced a band half completed still on the loom with 52 tablets. Part of the maniple of St Ulrich from the 10th century is a diagonal stripe motif with spirals and "s" shapes. (Collingwood p.107, 8)

Tablet weaving in the Viking world was often woven into the garment. Previously it was believed that the tablet weaving was woven in prior to the production of the fabric. Recent research conducted by Anna Norgard in the construction of tablet woven borders disputed the earlier theory. Mrs. Norgard was asked to produce a reconstruction of the Vrangstrup cloak. She argued that it was far too time-consuming to use the weaving method suggested through earlier research. Instead, she concluded that the twill fabric was produced first. Then the borders were woven into the fabric using the loops from the twill weft to link the twill to the tablet-weaving weft. Lise Raeder Knudsen wrote a very good article "An Iron Age Cloak with Tablet woven Borders: a New Interpretation of the Method of Production" which explains in great detail the method used to weave a tablet woven border onto a completed piece of fabric. I used this article as basis for weaving the tablet woven border onto the apron dress. I altered the method described in the article by using the fringes at the base of the dress instead of using the loops in the salvage and a separate weft.



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