

# Heraldic Cuffs, Hlad, and Cloak

by Isabel Ulfsdottir

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HERALDIC DISPLAY: Viking Cuffs, Hlad and Cloak

BY LADY ISABEL ULFSDOTTIR



## SUMMARY

The more research I do on the Viking culture the more I find to support the fact that Viking women were avid tablet weavers. Tablet woven pieces made from all types of material to include silk, wool, flax and linen have been found in numerous sites throughout Denmark, England, Ireland, Finland and other areas where Vikings were known to have traveled.

I have reproduced a matching Hlad and cuffs in the Viking style in my lord's device. I have also produced a cloak in the Viking style with my lord's device appliqued on the front and back and then trimmed the piece with tablet weaving.

The cuffs are reproduced based on two archeological finds. The first find was from a 10th century male grave in Denmark and the second was from a male's grave in Evebo. In the first find the cuffs were a continuous circle and in the second find they were secured with bronze clasps. The difference between the two leaves room for interpretation and speculation.

The Hlad has been found in multiple graves throughout the Scandinavian world. The sagas reference the Hlad as being worn by both men and women. Almost all of the Hlads found or mentioned in the sagas were constructed from highly decorated tablet woven pieces. Like all tablet woven pieces found, the Hlads were highly decorated and made from expensive material such as silk and gold threads.

I wanted to make these pieces to depict my lord's device. I had two choices, either brocaded tablet weaving or double face tablet weaving. I enjoy using the double face technique to produce designs and motifs in my tablet weaving and decided to split the dark colors to achieve the green and black ivy leaf in the device. The most challenging part of the weaving was to graph out the leaf so it would not look elongated on the band without making the band so wide that it would not function as a Hlad.

The cloak was modeled after the cloak that was found at Mammen. The Mammen find is most often cited find for Viking men's clothes. There is also a drawing of King Knut from the 11th century that also depicts the cloak of this style. I used rayon and taffeta fabrics to replicate the look of silk during the 10th Century. I also added tablet woven trim to the cloak to finish the piece.

## MATERIALS AND PROCESS

### Cuffs and Hlad

Materials:

1. White, Green and Black Pearl Cotton String
2. 24 wooden tablet weaving cards
3. Inkle Loom
4. 1 yard white cotton fabric

5. White sewing thread
6. Sewing needle
7. Dryer lint

#### Process

1. Double Faced tablet weaving method
2. All materials hand sewn.

### Cloak

#### Materials:

1. Silver on White, Green, and Black Pearl Cotton String (Trim)
2. Tablet Weaving cards (Trim)
3. Inkle Loom (Trim)
4. 3 yards polyester fabric, White (Cloak)
5. 3 yards taffeta fabric, green (Cloak lining)
6. 1/2 yard each green and black velvet (Applique design)

#### Process

1. See the attached pattern for the tablet weaving trim.
2. The cloak was sewn by machine and the applique was done on a machine.
3. The tablet weaving was done by hand.

### TABLET WEAVING DOCUMENTATION

Tablet weaving is an art form that can be traced back to the Egyptian, Asian, Norse, Celtic and medieval European cultures. The very first tablet woven bands found in the Norse culture date back to the second century A.D. and were used to bind and space the warp threads on the larger vertical warp weighted loom. The bands have been found consistently in Norse finds as part of the larger pieces of fabric and later as trim that was woven separately and attached to a finished garment. Tablet woven pieces are very strong and durable and would have been suitable for straps, belts and handles.

A well-preserved loom was found in the Oseberg ship find that dates to A.D. 850. There are 52 tablet-weaving cards, still attached to the original loom. The loom is very simply constructed, of two cross pieces to wrap the finished and unfinished ends and two vertical pieces to provide the frame. A short stick is found on the unfinished end of the loom, which was probably used to help untwist the un-woven warp. Tablet weaving cards have also been found in Denmark made from antler. The tablet woven pieces found have been constructed from wool, silk, metal threads, and plant fibers, or combinations of any of these materials. The resulting pieces range from very thick and strong to very fine delicate pieces. Cuffs, cloaks and other garments of all types have been found with tablet woven borders, accents, and trim.



CROCKETT, PAGE 13; LOOM AND TABLETS CA. 850

## CUFFS DOCUMENTATION

Most men's attire has been found with elaborate tablet weaving trim around the neck of the outer tunic, on the sleeves of the tunic, on undertunics and on the overcoats and cloaks. Tablet weaving decorated every piece of a well-dressed Viking man's attire. A set of silk wrist bands or cuffs were found in a 10th century mall grave and were made of padded wool rings that were decorated with silk and wool tablet weaving. The migration Era jarl at Evenbo was found to be wearing cuffs that were secured with bronze wrist clasps. Both finds indicate that the Viking cuffs were most likely made separately and then worn over or under the undertunic or overtunic. The construction of the cuffs indicated that they were made to keep the wrist and arm warm.



WORLD OF THE VIKINGS. EXHIBIT 2313. SILK AND WOOL WRIST BAND

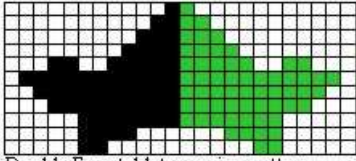
When I started making these cuffs I studied the construction of the 10th century cuffs for ideas on how to copy their design. The cuffs found in the 10th century grave are a continuous circle. How were they put on and removed? If they were slipped over the hand and onto the wrists they would be too large to serve any useful function. This is definitely not Viking... Everything the Vikings did or decorated had a useful function. I can not imagine the Viking warrior going off "viking" wearing cuffs that were there for decoration only. The cuffs had to provide some useful function. The design, padded wool, would indicate that they were probably designed to keep the wrists warm and prevent cold air from traveling up the sleeve of the tunics. If this was their function then the cuffs had to fit rather closely around the wrist. They would have had to be attached with either a drawstring or some type of hooks. In the Evenbo find, the cuffs were secured with bronze wrist clasps.



WORLD OF THE VIKINGS; EXHIBIT 4933, SILK WRIST BAND  
DECORATED WITH TABLET WEAVING

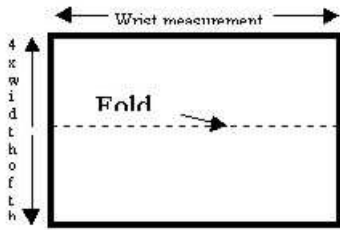
I chose to use a light cotton fabric instead of the wool found in the 10th century grave. The cotton is light and comfortable. My lord will be wearing these, and I didn't think that we would be spending long periods out in snow driven fields to warrant making the cuffs out of a coarse wool that would have been uncomfortable.

The tablet weaving was done with the double face technique in pearl cotton that depicts my lord's device. The difficult part of the tablet weaving was graphing out the pattern so the ivy leaf did not turn out elongated. I made several attempts at the pattern before I finally decided on the final ivy leaf pattern. The resulting pattern was 24 cards wide and 11 turns long. The cuffs are secured to the wrist with modern hook and eyes to simulate the bronze wrist clasps found in Evenbo.



Double Face tablet weaving pattern  
for the ivy leaf

The first thing I did was find a light cotton fabric that would be durable. I then measured my lord's wrist and the width of the tablet weaving. Off of these two measurements I was able to cut the piece of fabric for the cuffs. Since I created the pockets by folding the material in half, less sewing involved I made sure to double the width. The length of the fabric is the wrist measurement plus ½ inch for seams. The width of the fabric is four times the width of the tablet woven piece plus ½ inch for seams.



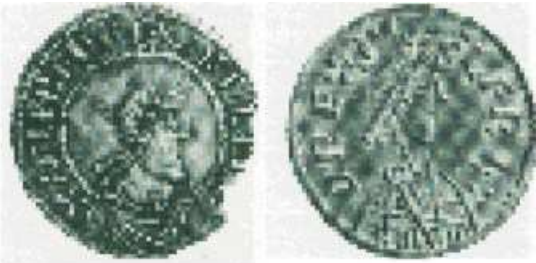
I then folded the fabric in half and hand sewed the length and one end of the cuff. Once this was done I then turned the cuff inside out. Next I measured in from the seam end of the cuff the width of the tablet woven piece. The next step is to sew in the casings for the padding. The first casing seam was sewn in the center of the cuff. The second casing seam was sewn ½ way between the first casing seam and the folded end of the cuff.



The cuffs are then stuffed. I stuffed the padded cuffs with dryer lint because it was cheap, readily available and is historically accurate. The Vikings stuffed things with scraps of cloth, yarn and any other soft scraps that were around the home. Once the cuffs were stuffed the open end was folded under and sewn shut.

## HLAD DOCUMENTATION

I found a well-documented article on Viking Men's Clothing, which described in detail three basic styles of men's hats. The type C hat described in the article is based off of grave finds in both Denmark and Sweden. The author's source for the grave finds were all found in books written by Ms. Inga Hagg. Unfortunately all of the books are written in Danish and have no English translation. The type C headwear consisted of metal-brocaded tablet woven headband and was the only type of headwear found in graves without an accompanying overcoat. This makes sense in that a headband is cooler headgear for summer when a coat was not worn.



SAWYER, PAGE 57; SILVER PENNIES SHOWING ALFRED THE GREAT  
(871-899) WEARING A HEADBAND OR HLAD

The coins appear to show Alfred the Great of England (871-899) wearing a textile headband rather than a crown. I also found that many of the Viking Sagas refer to headbands or Hlads. This gave me the hard documentation needed to verify that Viking men and women wore the Hlad. Bolli Bollason in the Laxdaela Saga wore " a gold embroidered band about his head." and Harald Gormsson from the same saga gave Gunnar " a headband studded with gold" (Laxdaela, 203). The Laxdaela Saga is a very graphic and descriptive story that was passed down through oral tradition and final written in the 16th Century. I also found reference to the Hlad in the Viking Romance, Arrow-Odd. In Arrow-Odd, Odd "always wore a...gold-embroidered headband round his forehead"(Seven Romances, 27). I learned a great deal from the sagas and plan to read more to further my research

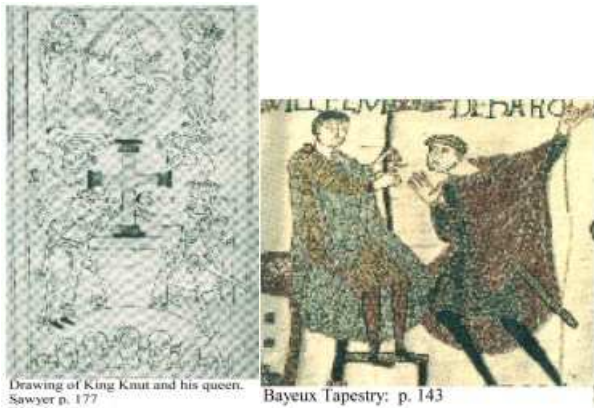
on the Viking attire and way of life. Since my lord is fond of wearing one of my tablet woven pieces as a headband anyway, I decided that this was the perfect opportunity to make him a proper headband or Hlad. Now that my lord's device passed, I decided to make him a Hlad depicting his heraldic device (Argent, an ivy leaf per pale vert and sable).

Next I had to make the Hlad fit my lord's head without being tied. Tying the Hlad would look undignified and sloppy. I measured the circumference of my lord's head and wove the band to that measurement. I then left approximately six inches of trail thread on each end of the woven piece. Next I braided the trail ends of the woven motif together in four braids to form the headband. The resulting headband is custom fit to my lord and has a neat finished appearance in the back.

I enjoyed working on this piece. I enjoyed searching out the additional documentation in the Viking sagas to back up my work on the Hlad. Now that I have discovered the Viking sagas I plan on researching more using these wonderfully detailed sources.

## CLOAK DOCUMENTATION

In the 11th Century King Knut ruled all of Denmark and most of Norway. It is King Knut's cloak that this cloak is modeled after. A contemporary drawing done in the 11th Century depicts Knut and his queen donating a golden cross to the monastery. An artist that actually saw the King did the drawing. The King is wearing a rectangular Viking cloak that has trim down the front of the cloak and seems to be clasped with a tablet woven piece. A similar cloak has been found in the richly furnished grave at Mammen near Viborg in Jutland. This find was dated at 970 A.D. The cloak found in the grave was reconstructed. The reconstruction of that cloak is a rectangular cloak clasped at the shoulder with heavy trim. A 9th century fresco in the Oratory of St Benedict at Malles in Italy shows a bearded Frankish nobleman holding his sword. The cloak that the Frankish nobleman is wearing is also a rectangular cloak pinned at the shoulder. Finally, several scenes in the Bayeux Tapestry clearly depict the Normans wearing the rectangular cloak secured at the shoulder.



Drawing of King Knut and his queen.  
Sawyer p. 177

Bayeux Tapestry: p. 143

I took these references to design the cloak for my lord. I wanted to make a cloak, rich enough to be worn in court, that depicted his device (Argent, an Ivy Leaf per pale Vert and Sable). The Vikings had access to large amounts of silk and rich cloth. Wealthy Vikings did not wear rough-spun or poorly woven materials. They began the silk trade in Europe and had access to all the finer fabrics known to Europe at the time. For this reason, I decided to make the cloak resemble the type of silk used during the 10th and 11th century. I choose two fabrics, green taffeta for the lining and whit rayon for the cloak. Both fabrics are very beautiful and resemble a silk fabric. I then chose velvet for the applique because it makes a beautiful contrast to the lighter fabrics.

I first measured the fabric, 50 inches by 46 inches. The 50 inches is the width of the cloak and will have a front and back when it is worn properly secured at the shoulder. The length was measured to fall at my lord's knees. Since the material was not 60 inches wide I had to piece the fabric together. I measured to make sure the seam fell at the shoulder in the center of the cloak. This made it easier to appliqué the device to the front and back pieces.

Once the fabric was cut and sewn together into two rectangular pieces I turned my attention to the device. First I took the two pieces of velvet and sewed them together along the field division line. Then I laid out the velvet wrong side up and ironed on the "Wonder Under" adhesive so I could later applique them on the white fabric. Once the adhesive was on the velvet I traced out the pattern right onto the adhesive, being careful to match the center of the leaf to the seam of the velvet. Once this was done the device was cut out and ironed onto the white fabric. I had great difficulty getting the device on the fabric because of materials used in the cloak. The rayon and the velvet could not handle high temperatures, and the velvet did not conduct heat well, so ironing on the Wonder Under was a challenge and took patience. The first device did not attach well to the fabric and slipped while I was sewing it onto the white fabric. I had to carefully pick out over half the stitches and start again because the adhesive did not hold the first time. I solved the problem by ironing the fabric onto the velvet from the back side and using a piece of muslin to protect the rayon fabric.

Now that the device was ironed onto the front and back pieces of fabric, I had to sew the edges. I applied the leaf onto the fabric using the zig zag stitch on the sewing machine. This was the time consuming part of the project because the velvet lint mixed with the adhesive to gum up my sewing machine. I had to stop several times on each device to clean the needle and the machine.

The next step was to tablet weave the trim. I choose a pattern from the Card Weaving book by Russell E. Groff page 23. (see pattern below.) The pattern required a different turning sequence to accomplish the double and single diamonds found in the pattern. I choose pearl cotton for the tablet weaving because of its availability and strength. The pearl cotton produces a very nice trim that is uniform and delicate in appearance.



Now that all of the pieces are completed, the lining, the cloak with applique and the trim, I had to assemble the cloak. This step was by far the easiest and quickest step in the entire process. I sewed the lining to the cloak, right sides together, leaving a space to turn the cloak inside out. Then I turned the cloak inside and blind stitched the opening closed by hand. Next I attached the trim using the sewing machine and a straight stitch to the front edges of the cloak. At this point I had my lord try on the cloak and determine where he would fasten the cloak with his cloak pin. From this measurement I added buttonholes in the cloak for the pin. The fabric is too fine and delicate to allow the pin to make new holes each time he wore the cloak so I added the buttonholes to help protect the cloak.

This project was very enjoyable to make. I enjoyed working with the rich fabrics even though they caused some frustration during the process. The end result is a beautiful heraldic cloak that is based on historical evidence.



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