

An Overview of Anglo Saxon Dress in the Regia Focus Period by Sid Simpson, 2/19/2005, revised 4/6/2005

When the Anglo- Saxons, and other Germanic, peoples, migrated to the British Isles in the 5th century, they brought with them a highly developed textile tradition. The Sutton Hoo Royal burial exemplifies the range of fabrics available in the migration period- this 7th century grave included 4 shed twills, broken chevron twills, diagonal twills, in wool and tabby weave and broken diamond twills in flax (Bruce- Mitford, 1983 pp. 417). Indigo and madder have been positively identified as color agents (Bruce Mitford, pp. 414). This textile tradition included a variety of technologies- upright loom weaving, tablet weaving, etc. These technologies blended with the extant traditions of the isles to form a new, distinctive fiber culture. This fiber culture flourished and eventually became famous and lucrative.

Migration period fashion was based on simple forms. Men wore long sleeved tunics with straight sides and simple trousers (Owen-Crocker, pp. 111, 112, 116). Women wore long tunic dresses as a base layer and a peplos style tube dress (Owen-Crocker, pp. 42, 54). Jewelry, such as brooches, served functional purposes in attaching garments together (Crowfoot/Hirst, pp.53-54). Arrangements of beads in festoons between shoulder brooches for the ladies and daily use equipment suspended from belts for everyone (Hirst, pp. 62, 85-90) completed stylish dress.

By the 8th century, English wool products were being shipped to the continent (Loyn, pp.86). The skills of English embroidering nuns were valuable trade skills (Owen-Crocker, pp. 134). The nuns' work reached across the channel in the form of ecclesiastical garments like the delicate gold threaded Maaseik Embroideries (Owen Crocker, pp. 137). Frankish kingdoms sought quality fabric goods from the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Charlemagne was trading Frankish stone for Mercian cloaks- and complaining to king Offa that cloaks were too short (Owen-Crocker, pp. 179)! Continental influences changed fashions from pagan styles to Frankish and Byzantine inspired tunics, gowns, and headcoverings. Refined tailoring styles changed the nature of jewelry (Owen-Crocker, pp. 129). Single circular brooches, instead of pairs, were more commonly used to fasten veils and cloaks (Owen Crocker, pp. 138, 148, 157).

By the 10th century, A/S tastes had been refined for several centuries. Byzantine and Frankish styles had influenced previous fashions, but now there was a distinctive Anglo-Saxon style. Luxury fabrics were being imported- since the 7th century; even nuns had a fancy for silk to trim their garments (Owen Crocker, pp. 137). Indigenous plants as well as expensive imported dyestuffs offered a wide color palette. Women wore a wide variety of head coverings, cloak styles, and gowns. Men had a wide variety of choices for formal wear, leg coverings, and cloak styles. Artwork from the period shows garments of elegant drape and outfits of many colors. Gone were the tool appended belts of the turbulent Migration period. Wealthy people, and even field workers, are shown in secure and stable environments

From Dress in Anglo Saxon England by Gayle Owen-Crocker (basic terms- there may be additional appropriate terms)

Common Anglo-Saxon Women's Garments in the Regia Focus Period

A/S Term	Garment	Description	Shape/Form	Length/Attributes
<i>Mentel</i>	Mantle	Worn by noble women-an indoor garment made of fine material-lots of drape as it is manipulated over the arms and hands. Contrasting colors to other garments.	Oval or perhaps rounded halves like a chasuble with an offset hole for the head.	The neck opening is set off center so that the garment hangs lower in back (to at least the calves) than in front (to the knee). Possibly linked to ecclesiastical garment styles.
<i>Cyrtel</i>	Over-gown	Worn by all classes of women as an over-layer with or without belt .Depicted in a wide range of colors- could be linen or light, fluid wool.	A-Line tunic – cut to ease over other layers. Long sleeves, eased at wrist. Full enough through the body to blouse over synched belt.	Hem at least ankle length, frequently covering hem of undergarment. Sleeves are to at least forearm, but can come to the wrist. The sleeves can be straight or can flair out at the wrist.
<i>Smoc</i>	Under-gown	Worn by all classes of women as the base layer of clothing. Long sleeve, usually depicted with “wrinkles” indicating length is bunched up on the arm Band of decoration at the cuff- just visible at the wrist. Wide variety of colors.	A-Line tunic- cut to fit smoothly under other layers. Long sleeves, tight at wrist.	Hem presumably at ankle- frequently covered up by the over-gown. Sleeves are long, but the tight cuff prevents them from sliding down the hand-visible bunching on the forearm.
<i>Wimpel</i>	Wimple	A length of cloth draped about the head, neck, and top of shoulders thus covering the hair and neck but framing the face. Apparently, draped however the Lady pleases. Shown in many colors, often contrasting with the over-gown.	Long rectangle or semicircle large enough to drape attractively.	Long enough to drape in the desired style. The drape around the neck lies on top of whatever layers are on the body- even over the cloak or mantle. Pinned so as to stay on the head and remain closed over the neck.
<i>Cuffie</i>	Cap or Coif	Listed separately from the wimple and veil, this may be a cap or a scarf tied round the head in order to ensure containment of the Lady's hair.	Possibly a Viking style cap or a triangular scarf	Not clearly visible in artwork of the period other than as a line across the forehead underneath the wimple. However, valuable enough to be bequeathed in wills. Can serve as an anchor to which the wimple is pinned.
<i>Bænd</i>	Fillet or circlet	Perhaps a feature of married secular women's appearance, or perhaps simply a pretty accessory. Could be a woven band or a metal circlet, perhaps of leather.	Narrow band that can encircle the head	Worn with other head coverings, often over the wimple or veil. Textile bands may be long enough to tie and have pendant ends.
<i>Rift</i>	Veil	Characteristic feature of ecclesiastical women's attire.	Rectangle/square or circle	Worn over the wimple. In somber colors indicating devotion.

<i>Wingas</i>	Puttees	<u>Optional: not commonly depicted on women</u> -lower leg coverings shown on all ranks of men- worn over the hose/trousers or alone for hot weather/heavy work.	Strip about 1 hand-width wide	Wrapped in a spiral pattern from the ankle/foot to the top of the calves. Ends are tucked in or possibly tied.
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Common Anglo-Saxon Men's Garments in the Regia Focus Period

A/S Term	Garment	Description	Shape/Form	Length/Attributes
<i>Cyrtel</i> <i>Tunece</i>	Over-tunic	Worn by all ranks of men. Fancy versions show decorated cuffs and hems (? appliquéd bands of fabric, embroidery, tablet woven bands). Depicted in a wide range of colors- could be linen or light, fluid wool.	A-Line tunic with long, fitted sleeves	Commonly shown belted- reaching the knee. The tight cuff prevents the long sleeves from sliding down the hand- visible bunching on the forearm. Often shown with colored facings at the round or key-hole shaped neck.
<i>Smoc</i> <i>Serc</i>	Under-tunic	Worn by all ranks of men as the base layer of clothing. Farm laborers are shown with slits on the sides from the hem up to the thigh. Worn belted, the skirts can be tucked up as needed.	A-Line tunic with long, fitted sleeves	Hem presumably at knee- frequently covered up by the over-tunic. Sleeves are long, but the tight cuff prevents them from sliding down the hand- visible bunching on the forearm.
<i>Braccas</i> <i>Bræs</i>	Trousers	Worn under the tunic layers- belt loops at the top facilitate a drawstring at the waist.	2 legged trousers- loose fitting in the seat and crotch	Knee length as “shorts” or long fitted pants down to the ankle
<i>Hosa</i>	Hose	Leg coverings- shown as contrasting colors to the over-tunic. Pulled up the leg and over the bottom hem of the trousers. Contrasting colors to other garments.	Single leg hose tailored to the leg	From ankle to top of thigh- tied to the drawstring that holds up the trousers. Possibly footed.
<i>Winingas</i>	Puttees	Optional, but common-lower leg coverings shown on all ranks of men- worn over the hose/trousers or alone for hot weather/heavy work .	Strip about 1 hand-width wide	Wrapped in a spiral pattern from the ankle/foot to the top of the calves. Ends are tucked in or possible tied.
<i>Hose-bend</i> <i>Sceanc-bend</i>	Garters	Optional-Worn over the leg coverings at the top of the calf/bend of the knee. Apparently secures the pants or puttees close to the leg. Made of cloth or leather.	Narrow band long enough to wrap around the leg and tie securely.	The archeological record shows lots of bone and metal tag or strap ends that echo the images of gartered hose. Some depictions shoe elaborate securing knots.
<i>Gyrdel</i>	Loincloth	Shown on agricultural workers. Worn with hose and/or puttees that are gartered/tied at the knee.	Rectangle of presumably comfortable cloth	Worn in lieu of trousers by the poor or perhaps covered up by the trousers in higher ranks. Secured at the waist with some form of cord.
<i>Fetel</i>	Sword belt	Separate from the belt that secures the garments- this secures the sword.	Narrow band of leather	Accompanied by appropriate mounting hardware- buckles, etc.

From Dress in Anglo Saxon England by Gayle Owen-Crocker (basic terms- there may be additional appropriate terms)

Basic Anglo-Saxon Fashion Accessories in the Regia Focus Period

A/S Term	Garment	Shape/Form	Length/Attributes
<i>Hwitel</i> <i>Basing</i>	Cloak	Rectangular Men fasten on the right shoulder. Women drape around the body and pin as needed.	Falls approx. to length congruent with the tunics underneath- can be short for work clothes (farmers, etc) Wide enough to drape comfortable around the body. Men fasten at the throat when wearing the long tunic.
<i>Mentel-preon</i>	Mantle pin	Commonly round, some animal forms.	Men's are shown with stylized dot decorations. Woman's may be of openwork or annular styles.
<i>Scoh</i>	Shoe	Ankle shoes- turned sole construction	Very plain. Some high ranking people have a single line of stylized decoration running down the top of the foot.

Wealth Display in Anglo Saxon Culture-The higher the rank, the more conspicuous consumption and display of fashion features.

Female Specific Wealth/Rank Display	Male Specific Wealth/Rank Display
Mantle Voluminous yet fluid skirts, cloaks, head-coverings Silk Wimple/Veil High quality jewelry/hardware Complex/polychromatic tablet weaving for bands, garters, etc. Multiple colors worn at once Luxury fabric decoration at hems and cuffs on Royal tunics Embroidery at Hems and Cuffs of Royal Garments Solid metal or metal brocaded circlet for the wimple Each garment a different color- dark or luxury colors	Long Tunic Long Cloak High quality jewelry/hardware Complex/polychromatic tablet weaving for bands, garters, etc. Multiple colors worn at once Luxury fabric at decoration hems and cuffs Embroidery at Hems and Cuffs Multiple accessories- puttees, hose, garters and shoes, etc. all at once. Sword belts with high quality hardware. Each garment a different color- dark or luxury colors

Ornamentation: The most common form of ornamentation for men and women appears to be bands of contrasting colored fabric joined to or appliquéd onto wrists and hems. Tablet woven bands with decorative patterns can also decorate these areas. The elaborate patterns in some depictions suggest embroidered patterns layered on top of the contrasting facing.

Color: A wide range if domestic and imported dye stuffs were available to the A/S people. Artwork from the period may not give accurate shades, but it does show that each garment in an outfit was likely to be of its own color. Polychromatic suits are a regular feature of important people in manuscript pages.

Royal Clothing of State

<i>A/S Term</i>	Garment	Description	Shape/Form	Length/Attributes
<i>Gerela</i>	Masculine Long Over Tunic	Worn by highest ranking men for formal occasions. Fancy versions show decorated cuffs and hems (? appliquéd bands of fabric, embroidery, tablet woven bands). Depicted in a wide range of colors- could be linen or light, fluid wool.	A-Line tunic with long sleeves, fitted or straight at the wrist.	Ankle length, worn as a top layer over other garments. Depictions suggest luxury fabrics. Ornament on cuffs, collar, hem, and sometimes at center front.
<i>Gerela</i>	Feminine Over Gown	Worn by highest ranking ladies for formal occasions. Fancy versions show decorated cuffs and hems (? appliquéd bands of fabric, embroidery, tablet woven bands). Depicted in a wide range of colors- could be linen or light, fluid wool.	A line gown with $\frac{3}{4}$ or long sleeves. Flared or funnel shaped at the wrist.	Ankle length, worn as a top layer over other garments. Depictions suggest luxury fabrics. Ornament on cuffs, collar, hem, and sometimes at center front.
<i>Godweb-mentel</i>	Cloak of State	Worn by men and women over other fine garments.	Semi circular, the straight edge draped over the shoulders	The straight edge is highly ornamented. Clasps with a knot or round brooch in the center of the chest.
<i>Corenbeg, Cynehelm</i>	Crown	Worn by kings and Queens	Circular band with various upright parts	Queens wear theirs over their wimples/veils.

corenbeg, corona or cynehelm

Female Head Coverings:

Head coverings are a distinctive feature of feminine dress in Regia Period Anglo-Saxon culture. Several different types of head coverings are discussed in period literature and artwork. Wimples appear to be the most common form, although the wimple can be of several styles. Head coverings are depicted in a wide range of colors that usually contrast with the colors of the garments on a figure. High quality head coverings are of sufficient enough values to be bequeathed in wills. Discrete pins are employed to secure the wimple to either the hair underneath or to a coif or scarf that contains the hair. Regardless of the style, head coverings conceal all of the hair with the exception of small indications at the front hairline.

Coif (?)- Possibly formed like a Viking cap (a rectangle folded in half and seamed up one side to form a cap) or a scarf tied close to the head to contain the hair. This head covering is suggested by artwork depicting a line of fabric across the hair line; however, its exact form is not known.

(A hair covering is visible out from under the wimple folds on a carving of the Virgin and Child)

<http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/rhuddlan/images/100x-ivoryvirchild.html>

Semi-circular “Hood Wimple”- A half circle of fabric-the diameter long enough so that the straight edge can drape across the head and touch each outer shoulder mark-closed at the throat by a pin or brooch. This does not appear to have a lot of drape or movement.

(The woman fleeing the house afire in the *Bayeux Tapestry* is wearing a hood wimple)

<http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/rhuddlan/images/107x-bayeaux1.html>

Long Rectangular Wimple- A length of fabric wide enough to drape from the top of the head down the back to the shoulder blades, long enough for the ends to cross under the throat pass back over the shoulders or hang down the torso- thus forming a myriad of folds. A brooch can be used to secure the fabric, but period artwork appears to display that the length and weight of this style allow it to be draped so that brooches are not necessary or apparent. (The 2 women wear their long wimples with great style in the Cotton Claudius BIV, Folio 10)

<http://www.uvm.edu/%7Ehag/rhuddlan/images/cottclaudb4f10.html>

Square or Short Rectangle Wimple- A square or near-square of fabric that drapes around the head and shoulders, falling generously down the back and sometimes falling to the sternum or breast in the front. One corner appears to cross under the chin to the opposing shoulder in the front- a brooch secures it all at the top of the shoulder. Although there are not as many folds as with the long rectangular wimple, some elegant drape is apparent.) This woman in the Arenburg Gospel is wearing a veil with a lot of drape, but no hanging ends)

<http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/rhuddlan/images/10xx-asti-arenbergf9.html>

Fillet- A band worn in conjunction with other head coverings, encircling the head. Textile fillets appear to be long enough to knot at the back of the head and have ends that hang down the back. Tablet woven bands, lengths of textile, or leather bands would seem to be used in this capacity. Some high ranking women appear to wear metal circlets and crowns in this capacity. There are several images which suggest that the fillet secured the head covering underneath a veil or a wimple- in this case, they appear at the across the front hairline and the pendant ends can be seen hanging down the back out from under the veil layers.

(Queen Emma wears an elaborate crown over her wimple in the Encomium Emmae Reginae)

<http://www.uvm.edu/%7Ehag/rhuddlan/images/1041-encomium.html>

Veil- A rectangular or square shaped fabric that drapes across the head like the hood style wimple. This is worn on top of the wimple and is characteristic of “vowesses” or women in religious orders. (A veil is being dropped on the head of Queen Emma in the New Minster Liber Vitae)

<http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/rhuddlan/images/1031-libervitae-d3.html>

Web Resources:

Period Information Sources:

<http://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/piclib/photos.php>- Photos of the York excavations

<http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/rhuddlan/images/index.html>- A collection images of A/S appearance from the period

<http://www.sjolander.com/viking/museum/bt/bt.htm>- The Bayeux Tapestry on-line

Articles of interest:

<http://www.cs.vassar.edu/~capriest/index.html>- A wide ranging body of research regarding Regia period cultures.

<http://www.medievaltextiles.org/gallery/gallery.html>- Weave types recreated for reference purposes- not all of Regia period.

<http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/cloth/stitches.htm>- A catalog of extant sewing technology samples from across the medieval period

<http://members.aol.com/MtFreehold/SeamsYork.htm>- Images of the seams from the Coppergate textiles

http://www.virtue.to/guest_authors/archaeological_sewing.html- Descriptions of extant sewing samples from across the medieval period

<http://www.forest.gen.nz/Medieval/articles/Oseberg/textiles/TEXTILE.HTM>- A survey of the textiles found in the Oseberg Queen's burial

<http://www.geocities.com/baldurstrand/winingas/winingas.html>- Very- Excellent directions for making and wearing Winingas- (Check with your AO regarding the hooked ends, though).

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