



Synthesis of Clothing Patterns from 13th-15th century Northern Europe

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INTRODUCTION

Archeological finds of extant clothing are extremely rare. All of the current knowledge of medieval clothing construction techniques come from sparse archeological finds from bog burials and the Norse settlement of Herjolfsnes on the southern coast of Greenland, or from other media. Due to such sparse archeological evidence, most modern reconstructions of clothing from the 13th-15th century are usually either direct reconstructions of archeological finds or are based on modern interpretations of medieval pattern making. By examining trends in how extant medieval garments were constructed, it is possible to apply this knowledge to create generalized patterns.



Beinecke MS 229 fol. 66v

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

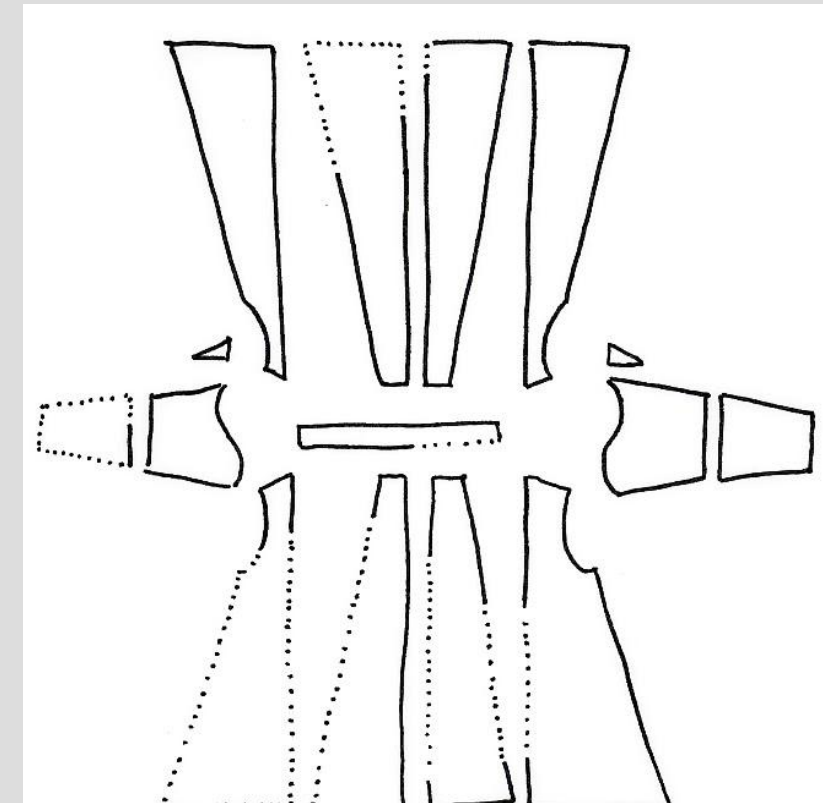
The data in this paper was collected through primary and secondary sources and was accessed through databases, mainly JSTOR and Academia; and various library databases to access research articles and digitized illuminated manuscripts; hard copy books; and websites of archeological committees with published research articles. Some extremely comprehensive research was inaccessible due to language barriers. In order to understand the data, both qualitative (the certain technique) and quantitative (the number of times the technique appears to be used) observations were used while analyzing the data for trends. Due to the uneven distribution of data quantitative analyzation was used less than qualitative analyzation to counteract the effects of skewed data. Each data piece was first analyzed separately for construction methods and then compared to other pieces of data. These observations were used to draw an approximated pattern for each extant garment. Additional data was gathered by analyzing the depictions of garments in both illuminated manuscripts and other methods of artistic depictions such as tapestries, fabric prints, and carvings. Finally, the individual patterns and additional data were synthesized together into one basic pattern for each garment type with included possible variations. An additional write up of the synthesized analyzation of data is provided for each garment type. The map shows the distribution of extant garments (in red) used as data in the synthesis.



PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE

Example of the presentation of evidence in this paper: Herjolfsnes D10594:

Location: Herjolfsnes, Greenland Date: 1280-1400, probably 1350; (C-14 dated)
The garment indexed as D10594 consists of four front gores and four back gores. The outside two gores on the front and back have shaped armholes. The garment was closed in the front with buttons (Østergård 196). The sleeves have a gusset inserted at the back and contain a seam at the elbow (Fransen 42). The neckline is round and has a short collar. The garment D10595 appears to be of the same pattern but is fragmentary (Østergård 199). The pattern and construction seems to be symmetrical. A very similar looking garment is depicted on folio 52r of The Vows of the Peacock (MS G.24). It has a front closure that is buttoned, a collar and fitted sleeves.



DATA AND FINDINGS

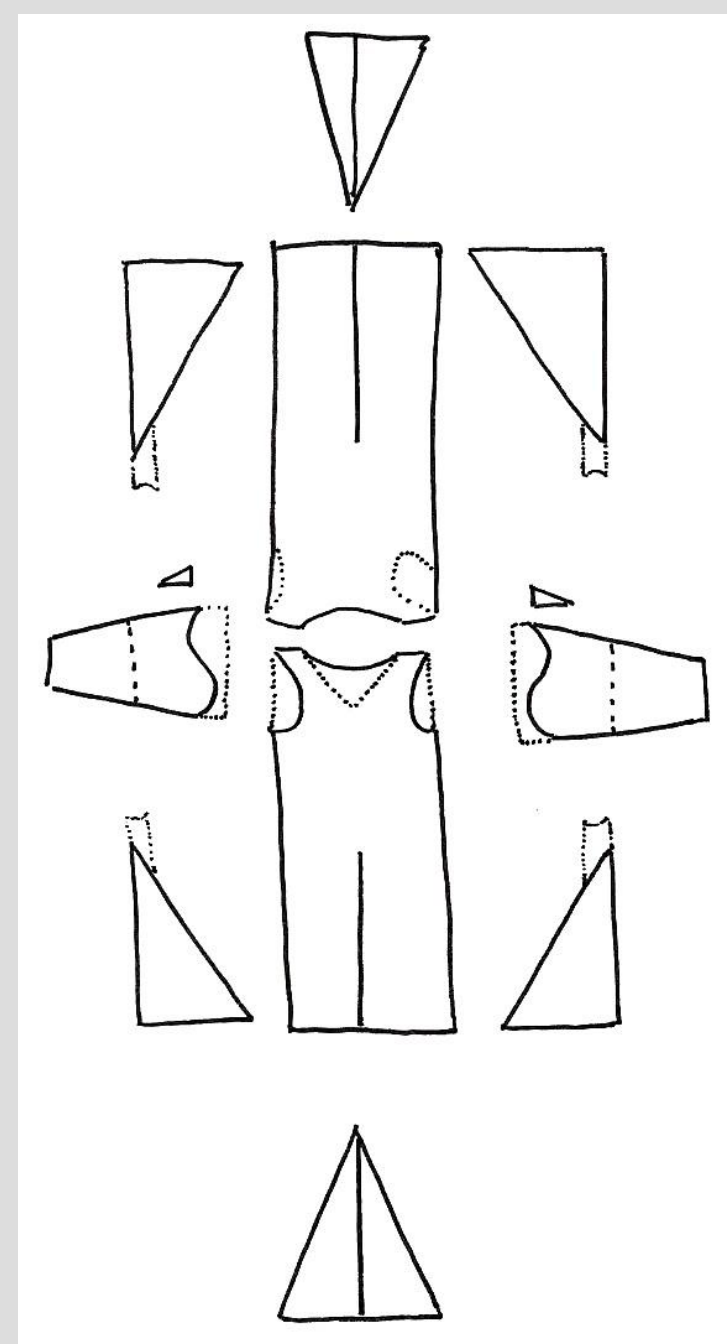


Figure 1

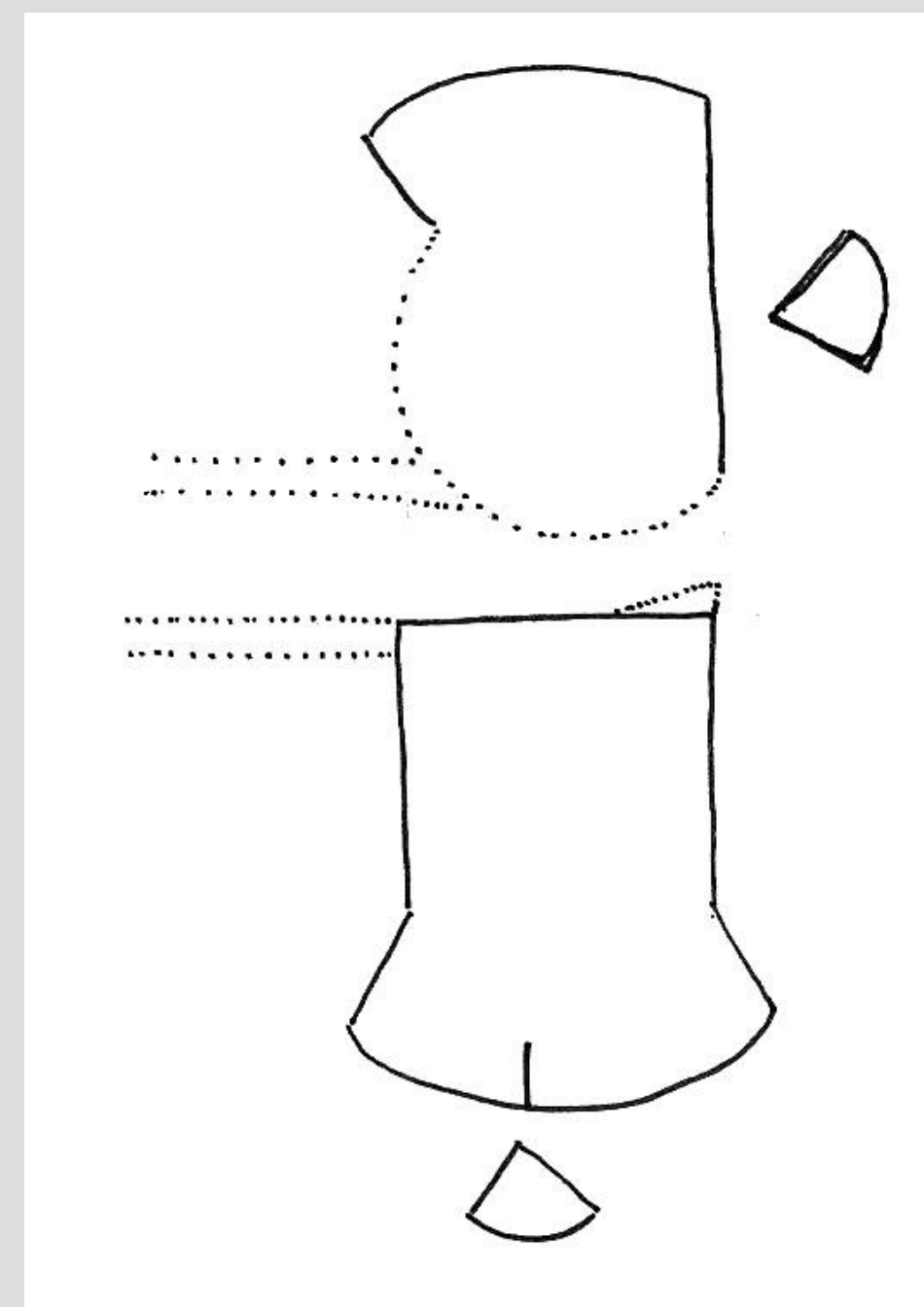


Figure 2

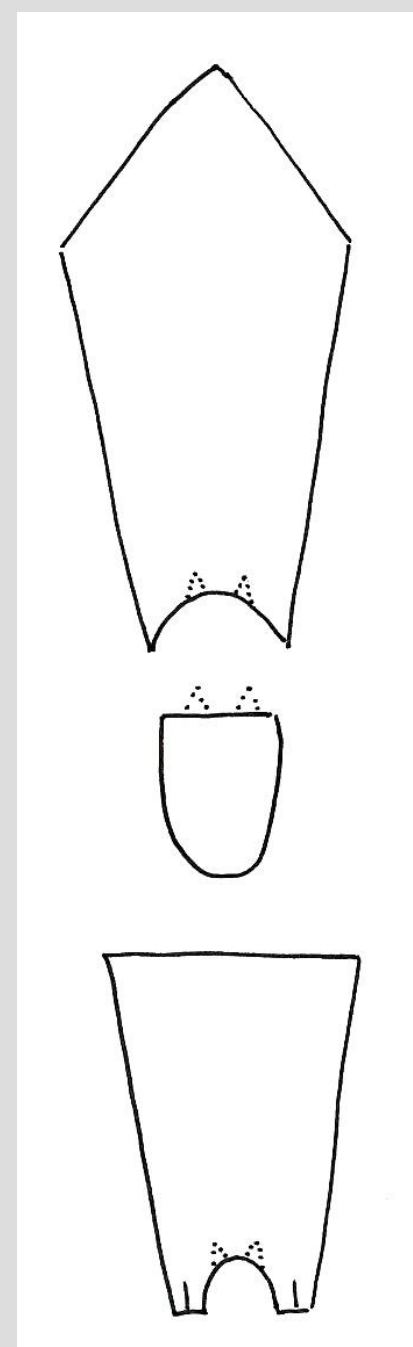


Figure 3

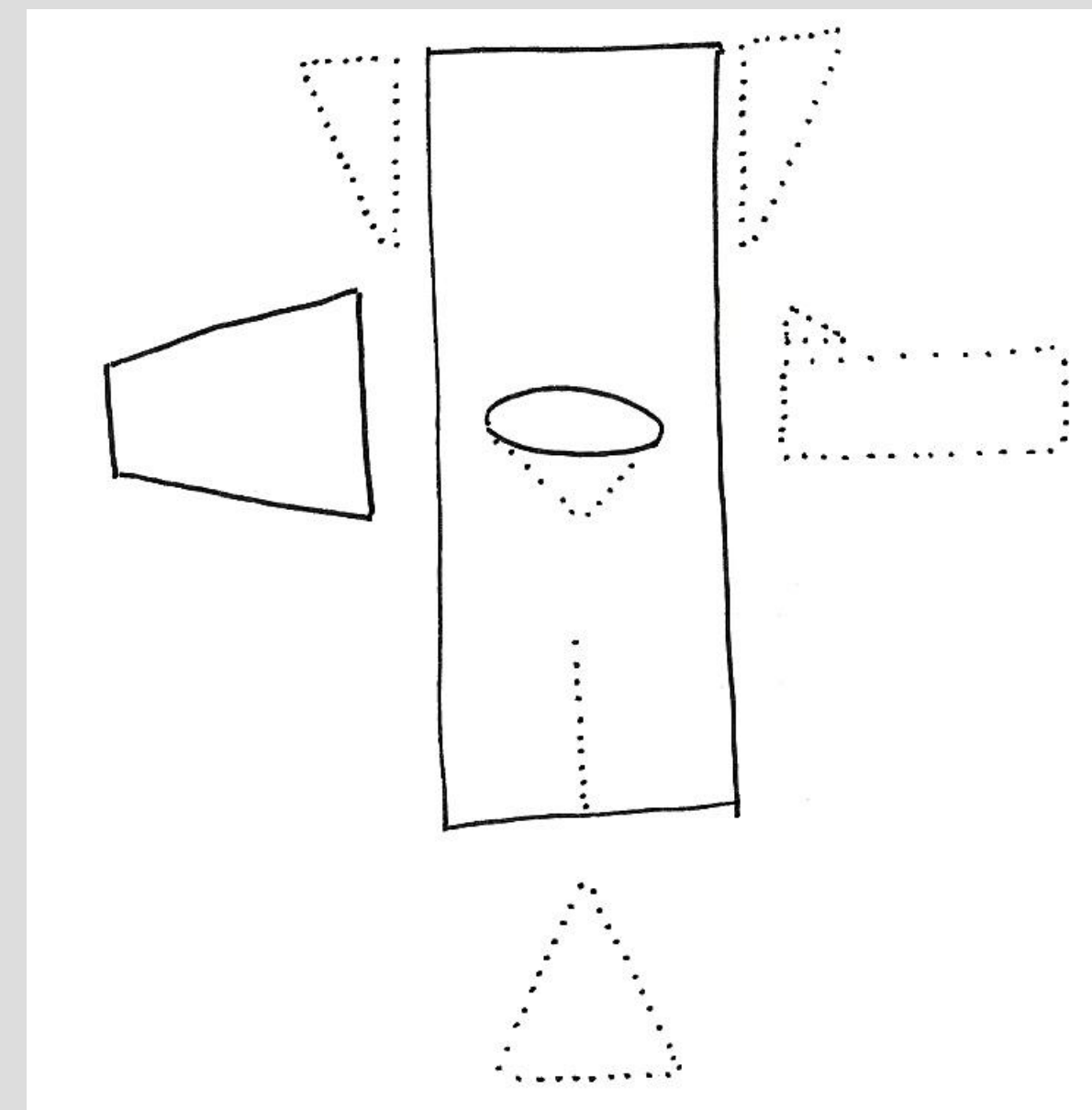


Figure 4

Figure 1: All kirtles, gowns, and tunics appear to have started with the same basic rectangular shape for the main body panel. In most cases, a triangular godet was inserted into a slit made at the center of that main body panel. There is a wide variation of necklines. One or multiple godets or gores would have been inserted at the sides of the garment underneath the armholes. There were two main styles for the sleeve pattern: a fitted sleeve or a batwing (unshaped) sleeve. The sleeve may have been closed using buttons up to the elbow or simply have been sewn together completely. Short sleeves, half sleeves, and three quarter sleeves were all in use.

Figure 2: All hoods appear to have the same construction. The head area was either a rectangle or was rounded to fit the curve of the head. The only major variations seem to be the placement of the godets which were either placed at the center front or at each shoulder. The latter construction was used if the hood had a center front opening such as those found in London. Most hoods appear to have had liripipes. These were sometimes cut in one piece with the hood but were also often cut separately.

Figure 3: Both hose with foot pieces and without foot pieces have been found. Most hose appear to have two slots cut into the front where the foot pieces join to act as gussets. Hose construction seems to have been a method to use up small pieces of leftover fabric as most hose are heavily pieced, especially on the foot area.

Figure 4: Undergarments seem to have been based on a geometric pattern as there have been no depictions of tight fitting undergarments. Geometric patterns are only suitable for loose fitting garments. Only two actual finds have been analysed in this paper, but both appear to have had a similar pattern. The body is made out of one large rectangle with a hole cut into the center for the head. Godets or extra panels were added to increase the width for ease of movement. The sleeves were probably made out of trapezoidal pieces.

CONCLUSIONS, ANALYSIS, AND IMPLICATIONS

It is possible to synthesize the current available information to create generalized patterns for the articles of clothing chosen in this paper, however there is not enough surviving information for some pieces to make a well grounded conclusion on their patterning. All data, except that for undergarments, is skewed by the disproportionate amount of information which has been found at Herjolfsnes and this is exaggerated as a lot of vital information was excluded from the synthesis due to language barriers. Other accessibility barriers were also encountered such as the inability to find reputable sources of information for some findings like the Söderköping Tunic. As this research does not include computer or mathematical models, human error and bias was inevitable. Despite these shortcomings, the findings are still valuable as they provide a visual representation of the major trends in clothing patterns of the time. As the study of clothing construction is fairly niche, even in the archeological world many studies are only available in the language that they were originally written. In the modern world were translating between languages has become easier and more accessible, it is odd that throughout the course of this research this simple barrier has repeatedly caused issues. It would be interesting to attempt to recreate a garment depicted in an illuminated manuscript with a pattern from this paper as it would test the viability of the findings of this paper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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