



Bayeux Tapestry detail

Anglo-Saxon Tunic

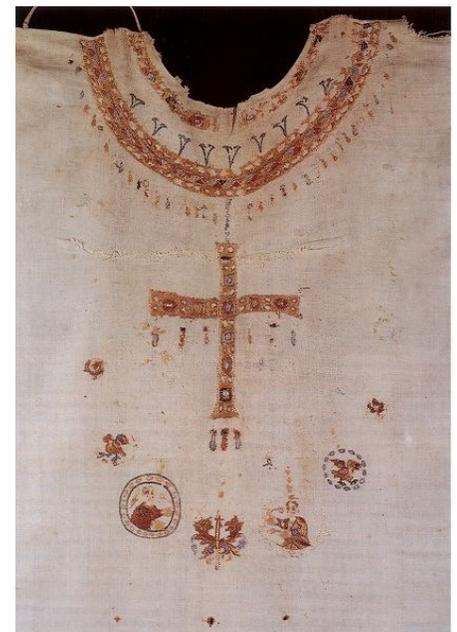
By Baroness Kaleeb the Green Eyed

I began work on this tunic at least two years ago. I worked steadily on the research, design and embroidery. I got the neckline embroidery completed and attached to the tunic and began the cuffs. Then I got sick right before Kingdom Arts and Sciences, so I never completed the tunic. I just entered the embroidery and not a completed tunic. This year that will change. I have completed the cuffs and hand stitched the garment together.

I have chosen a nice dark brown twill wool for the fabric of my tunic. Twill weaves are slightly more complicated to produce on a warp weighted loom. This tunic might be reserved for fancy occasions. A few snatches of fabric have survived, so we know that the Anglo-Saxons were familiar with this weave. I have placed the embroidery on a second piece of wool and attached it to the tunic. It was a common practice to transfer embroidery from an older garment to a new garment and reuse the work. That argument is behind my reasoning for the two colors of wool on my tunic. To the best of my knowledge there are no surviving complete wool tunics with embroidery. You can see some small details on the Bayeux Tapestry (even though it is 300 years too new,) which suggest embroidery along the collar and cuffs. I have used this information to locate my neckline and cuffs. The tunic is fairly long on me, so the embroidery is on the upper part of my body where it is most likely to be seen.

I have pieced my tunic in a manner which conserves my fabric. It was more work to put in a shoulder seam, but it allowed my tunic to be longer. This was a trade off I was willing to make. I have made the tunic a little fitted to my body, but it is not too tightly fitted. "It is evident from garments surviving in Scandinavia and on the Continent that early Germanic clothing was skillfully tailored, with gussets, insets and shaped seams (Hald 1980;Nockert 1991.)...In early Anglo-Saxon graves, however, metal artefacts are rarely positioned over seams and hems and little functional needlework has survived. Where it has, the techniques prove to be the same as those of the Late Anglo-Saxon period." (Rogers, 2007,pg. 99-100.) My Anglo-Saxon Crafts book was even less helpful about seam treatments, when it commented that Anglo-Saxon stitchers' knew all of the tricks of a modern seamstress and then some.

I stitched the tunic together with a running stitch followed by flat felling all of the seams. I put in the occasional lock stitch to keep my seams nice and flat and to prevent a disaster if a seam should break. I would not recommend flat felling the seams of a wool tunic. I thought the seams would lay flatter than they do. I was also caught off guard at how difficult it was to sew through several layers of wool at once. On a single or double layer of wool the needle just glides through the wool, but that is not the case for four layers. I sewed the tunic with wool thread. It was a pleasure to work with and the wool thread should wear well on the tunic and it should not cut surrounding fibers, if the tunic is stressed or stretched. Most surviving garment bits are stitched in the same fiber as the ground fabric. If I were to redo my tunic or make another one, I think I would do a combination of a running stitch, followed by whip stitching the seams and tacking them down. This combination of stitches would produce a similar result but with two less layers of fabric in the seams. This may not seem like a big difference, but I think it would be very helpful in the areas where multiple seams meet.



Queen Bathilde's burial shirt