

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on limited research of early medieval (9th-12th Century) European clothing, including Viking and Celtic clothes. It is not, however, an historical essay. Simplifications and alterations have been made to fit with materials available on the island of Hârn and to ensure that descriptions fit with a view of Hârn compatible with the illustrations in canon.

Many modern fantasy movies give the impression that people wore drab, patched and crudely woven clothes. Actually, medieval textiles were fairly advanced. Weaving techniques on Lythia (based on Earth history) must be at least 6000 years old. The most significant improvements between 11th Century Europe (an approximate date for modern Hârn) and now are: mechanisation, man made fibres (not always an improvement) and chemical dyes.

Many brightly coloured dyes were readily available in the mediaeval period. Dyeing techniques were well established (although some natural dye materials are not for the squeamish). Nevertheless, the average mediaeval citizen probably only owned two sets of clothes, one for work and one for temple.

HÂRN

On Hârn the urban poor are likely to be the most poorly dressed. The rural unfree are often better dressed than their urban equivalent simply because they have access to the raw materials: sheep, flax and animal hides. Rural and urban freemen will be better dressed again and may even have more than two suits of clothes. Clothiers' guild members are, in the main, the best dressed of all freemen. The nobility may have several special outfits such as hunting attire, court attire and church attire. This will be in addition to several sets of everyday clothing.

This article is intended to give both referees and players a basic idea of how various members of society will dress, and to try to persuade player characters that appearance matters. No matter what their background or bearing, characters dressed as peasants will never get instant access to a noble. Depending upon their attire they may be unable to even see a senior servant. Characters dressed like paupers will be treated like paupers.

Example: Feren of Yuthor, master weaponcrafter, is visited by two individuals looking to buy a new plate half helm. Quarrel has recently invested in a fine new tunic and breeches. Hugh wears the same rags he has always worn. Quarrel is almost penniless (he has spent most of his funds on his new clothes). Hugh has almost enough money to buy a helm. Which of the two will Feren address first? Who will Feren regard as more likely to be able to pay?

CLOTHIERS

Clothiers belong to one of the largest guilds. They manufacture both cloth and clothing. A master clothier will know all the arts of the tailor, glover, draper and haberdasher, although he may specialise in one or two of these. Many Clothiers own large establishments employing dozens of journey-

men and apprentices. Some masters will operate a small, specialised shop.

Items of clothing manufactured by the guild are expensive. For this reason guild items are the preserve of wealthy freemen and the nobility. Most freemen and all those of Gentle birth will buy their cloth and/or clothing from the clothier's guild. As the majority of free and noble women can sew and embroider, home tailoring and embroidery is not uncommon.

There is a widespread disregard of the clothiers' monopoly. Most rural unfree residents of Hârn spin weave and tailor their own clothes. Almost all village wives can spin, weave and sew (unmarried women are called spinsters because they support themselves by spinning). Most rural peasants wear homespun linen and wool.

Clothiers use three basic materials for their products: linen, wool and leather. Leather clothes, although popular with adventurers, are relatively rare. Details of prices and weight are given in the Armour section of the HârnMaster rules. Most linen and wool is baled and sold at market.

MATERIALS

There are three basic clothing materials commonly available throughout Hârn, they are: -

Linen

Linen is a fabric made from flax yarns. It is a cheap and lightweight cloth that, on Hârn, is not often of any great quality.

Flax is a (usually blue) flowered plant cultivated for its textile fibre and also for its seeds (which produce linseed). Flax is sown in late Morgat or early Nuzyael and flowers in Kelen (although each flower only blooms for a few hours). In Agrazhar it is time to harvest the flax. Plants are pulled out of the ground and left in the field to be retted (rotted).

After retting the plants are rippled. This is the process of removing the flax seed. The fibres are then removed from the wood and separated by quality. The finer fibres are wet spun and used to make linen for clothing. The coarser fibres are dry spun and used to make sailcloth (or buckram).

Wool

Wool is, of course, the fleece of sheep. Sheep are sheared in Kelen and the fleeces are either bundled and sold to clothiers or spun at the point of production (by the shepherds' wife, other village women and even by the lady of the manor).

Credits

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Leather

The most common leather comes from cattle, but most common domestic animal hides can be, and are, tanned. Prices vary, with more exotic hides and furs being much more expensive. Leather clothing is relatively rare. Most leather items are manufactured by the clothier's guild, not the hide-workers or weaponcrafters guilds. Leather clothing is usually practical, not fashionable. It is not the thing to wear to Court. Few unfree peasants wear leather, other than for shoes. Many free professions, both guilded and unguilded do, however wear leather. The hunters leather tunic and the metalsmith or weapon-crafters leather apron are common.

Other Materials

Additionally, more expensive materials are available in some Hârníc towns and cities, they are:

Emelrene Linen

A superior quality linen imported from Emelrene on the Lythian mainland. This is softer, lighter and better quality than most Hârníc linen.

Silk

A very light and fine material imported at great expense from the far ends of the world. Silk is expensive. If you need to ask how much it costs, you can't afford it!

Some mediaeval accounts show that worn out silk garments were unpicked and the threads collected and re-woven. This shows the value of silk thread in the medieval economy.

DYES AND DYEING

Dyeing cloth is an art. Expert dyers are usually specialist members of the clothiers guild. They use a variety of dye-stuffs and mordants to create a wide range of colours. Some colours can be altered by overlying, but mixing plant and/or animal extracts is not like mixing paint. Most dyers prefer to achieve a colour with only one dye.

Many wild dye plants are supplied to dyers by the apothecaries guild.

Mordants

A mordant is a substance applied to a fibre to help the dye to adhere. One of the most common mordants, also used to brighten the colour, is Alum, made from stale urine, oak or alder chips; burnt seaweed or kelp. Iron and copper are also used as mordants.

Dyestuffs

There are three types of dye, Animal dye, Vegetable dye and lichens. An impressive number of colours can be produced. These common dyes are unlikely to add significantly to the price of an item of clothing, most common dyes add approximately 10% though this can increase to 50% for certain colours. By far the most common dyes are the vegetable dyes. Dye plants like madder (red), wood (blue), dyer's green weed (green) and weld (yellow) are often grown in gardens. Many rural families have the means to dye their homespun clothes.

COLOURS

Blue

Blue dyes are from Bilberries, Elderberries, Privet, Sloe, Yellow Iris Roots and the most famous dye of all - Woad. (cost: +10-30%)

Black

Black dyes are from Alder bark, Blackberry shoots, and Bog Mire (mud) boiled in an iron pot, Oak bark. Many of these are actually an extremely dark black-brown. (cost: +5-20%)

Brown

Brown dyes are from Alder, Birch, Hops, and Onion skins. (cost: +5-20%)

Green

Green dyes can be extracted from Bracken, Dock Sorrel (greenweed), Foxgloves and Nettles for a dark green. Greens can also be made by overdyeing some yellows with Woad. A tricky process. (cost: +10-20%)

Pink

Pink is extracted from Madder. (cost: +10-20%)

Crimson

Crimson can be extracted from some lichens found in Northern Hârn (Orbaal). It is one of the more expensive common dyes. (cost: +25-50%)

Red

Reds can be extracted from some insects (like cochineal) Alder (again), Madder and Sorrel roots. (cost: +10-20%)

Purple

A fairly cheap purple dye can be extracted from bilberries (blueberries). Although the dye is fairly fast bilberries are wild food and are likely to be scavenged by local peasants before they can be harvested for dyemaking. The colour achieved is more of a blue-purple than a royal (Tazach) purple. Tazach purple (an extremely expensive imported dye) accounts for the high upper cost percentage. (cost: +20-200%)

Yellow

There are a huge number of plants & flowers from which yellow dyes can be extracted. A few are: Ash, Birch, Broom, Crab Apple, Gorse, Heather, Marigold, Privet, Weld and Yellow Wort. (cost: +5-20%)

DYED CLOTHING

The more expensive items of clothing are usually dyed. Colours are bright (pastel shades are a sign of faded and well worn garments, not of fashion). Good quality wool, linen and silk are often sold in dyed swatches and hold dyes well. Some clothiers dye the wool before weaving and so can create plaids and tartans. This is more common in Jarin cultures. It is unusual for cheap wool, linen, or sailcloth to be dyed.

The most common colours available are: dark (purple) blue, light blue, light green, dark green, bright yellow, red, brown and black, these are the cheapest dyes. All increase the price of clothing by 5-25%. White is achieved by bleach-

ing but is not popular, except with the clergy of certain religions, because of the difficulty of cleaning the garments. Royal blue and purple dyes are extremely expensive and, in any event, in most areas are reserved for the exclusive use of the nobility.

CLOTHING

The items of clothing listed below are the everyday garb of Hârn. Fashions change extremely slowly and only a brave (or extremely well paid) clothier would consider manufacturing an innovative or unusual item of clothing.

It must be remembered that clothing is the primary means of determining someone's class or status. An Earl dressed in poor quality, homespun, wool leggings and tunic would be treated as a serf, unless recognised, and even then he would likely be treated with suspicion until formally identified. A peasant dressed in fine and expensive woollen robes would be treated deferentially, provided he could talk and act like a noble (which is, admittedly, unlikely). However, should their subterfuge be discovered the Earl would be treated as eccentric, or ill: the serf would almost certainly be executed.

The list below names and describes all common items of clothing. Some names are not historically accurate or are one of several possible words used to describe the item. (I have chosen to use the terms undertunic and tunic rather than the equally correct tunic and overtunic, or the even more confusing tunic & tunic.)

Rural peasants wear what they produce or can barter from neighbours. For most of Hârn this is wool of varying quality. Linen clothing is, however, fairly common in the area around Aleath.

Breeches (Trews)

Breeches, or Trews, cover from the abdomen to either just below the knees or down to the ankles. They are loose fitting, held up with a belt or ties and are almost exclusively male attire (this may of course depend on the degree of female emancipation in your version of Hârn). Breeches are usually wool or buckram, but leather is also available.

Chemise

A linen undergarment worn by ladies. A chemise is similar to the male shift (see below), although often longer. It covers at least the shoulders, torso, hips and groin. It may also cover the arms and the knees, ankles and/or feet.

Cloak

A long overgarment, one that reaches down to at least the knees, and may sweep the ground. Some are hooded. Cloaks are usually simply a rectangle or semicircle of cloth. A cloak is fastened to itself or to other clothing with a brooch, pin, or sometimes a cloth tie.

Coif (Cap)

A shaped piece of cloth or leather which covers the skull and often the ears and/or cheeks. It is usually close fitting and tied under the chin.

Girdle

A broad cloth belt, frequently elaborately embroidered. Many free and gentle ladies wear girdles about their waists, over other garments. Girdles are usually laced at the back.

Hat

Hats are principally fashion items. They come in many shapes, sizes and prices. Hats such as the Korbi, common on the western shores of Kanday are cheap. A Kaldoric nobleman's hat will be made from expensive materials. Conical hats, with or without brims are favoured by many noble ladies and some scholars, especially shek-pvar. Truncated cones and brimmed coifs are also fairly common. Colours tend to be bright and many hats are decorated and plumed, peacock feathers are a favourite. Most hats only cover the skull.

Hood

A cut and shaped item of headwear. Hoods cover the skull, neck and across the top of the shoulders and chest. It is usually loose fitting. The most common type of hood is the liripipe. The liripipe has the hood coming to a long, conical point usually well over a foot in length. This hanging point can be wrapped around the head or neck for extra warmth. Hoods are generally regarded as male garments, although women, especially older women, do wear them. Hoods can also be worn as turban like hats. This is done by placing the face hole over the top of the head and wrapping the rest of the hood around the head. This is the popular fashion among the Nobility.

Hose

Leg coverings, they are not woven as tubes, but are cut and stitched to shape and held up by cloth ties. They cover at least feet and calves and can cover up to the hips and (rarely) abdomen. Usually made from dyed linen they are regarded as the attire of freemen and the gentry. (Hose are not the close fitting 'tights' seen in old Holly-wood movies, they are simply loose & baggy tubes of cloth.)

Leggings

Strips of cloth or leather bound around the legs. Alternatively, another name for hose. Leggings are often cheap undyed cloth and are considered peasant clothing.

Mantle (Cape)

This garment is simply a rectangle or semicircle of cloth that is held in place by a pin or brooch, usually at the right shoulder. Not often worn by commoners (a blanket serves as well in cold weather and is much cheaper) it usually hangs down to the back of the knees. Many women's mantles, especially those of married women, have a hole in them to allow them to be worn as hoods, when worn this way they also cover the back down to the waist.

Robe

Covering at least from shoulders to ankles robes are often, but not always sleeved. Many robes are longer than necessary and shortened to the desired length by the use of a belt.

Men's robes tend to be loose fitting and are usually worn by clerics, scholars and nobles. For this reason they are usually of a good quality cloth. They are frequently slit (usually at

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the sides or at the front and back, but occasionally at sides, front & back) from the hem to knees or hips, to allow the wearer to ride a horse.

Women's robes are common to women of all classes. Peasant robes are almost always homespun, undyed, or home dyed, wool or linen. The robes of women of free or gentle birth are more elaborate. They are made of better materials, usually good quality wool, and are often patterned or embroidered. Cheap robes are usually long and loose fitting. Current fashion, for those who can afford better quality garments, is for robes to be slit at the sides from hips to underarms (or sometimes at the front and/or back, from neck to waist). This is to allow for tight lacing, to show off the figure. Women's robes, like men's, can be slit from the hem at the front and/or sides. This is to show off the (usually ornately embroidered) undertunic worn beneath.

Shift

The common male undergarment, covering upper arms, torso, hips and groin. It is almost always made from linen.

Surcoat

The name 'surcoat' is applied to two items of clothing. For all practical purposes, they are identical. However, the people who wear them consider them to be completely different. A surcoat is usually simply a rectangle of cloth with a hole for the head (although many are sewn together at the sides) it covers from shoulders to thighs or knees. The two types are: the homespun garment worn as an overcoat by commoners; and the garment worn over armour by men at arms, knights, nobles, and their retainers. The only practical differences are in the quality of the garment and the presence of the emblazoned achievements of the knight or lord. Surcoats are often tied at the waist with a belt.

Tunic

Also known as the Tabard or Overtunic, especially the female garment. This garment covers at least the torso, hips and groin. It may cover part or all of the arms and also down to or just below the knees. The female version of this garment is essentially the same, covering the same areas. Tunics are usually wool or buckram, but leather is also available.

Undertunic

One of the basic, and virtually universal, items of clothing. A cloth (usually wool) garment which covers the arms, torso, hips and groin (sometimes also the thighs). The male undertunic is effectively a shirt and may be the only upper body garment worn in warm weather. The female version of the garment is much longer. It is always at least calf length, usually ankle length and frequently reaches the ground. Long-sleeved undertunics, both male and female, often have some form of lacing at the wrists to allow a tight fastening.

Vest

A linen undergarment that covers shoulders, thorax, and abdomen (another name for a shift). Alternatively, it is a leather overgarment or item of armour that covers the same area.

Wimple

Two pieces of cloth which essentially form an alternative to a hood for ladies, they are a mark of marriage and are not worn by unmarried women, except by priestesses of Peoni, who are in any event married to their church.

Fastenings

Neither buttons nor pockets have been invented. Clothes are fastened by lacing or by loops and toggles. Small items are carried in pouches or purses attached to a belt.

TYPICAL CLOTHING

The typical male peasant would wear: a linen shift, a wool undertunic, wool leggings or breeches, a wool tunic and a wool hat or hood. He may also own a pair of leather shoes. In winter he would simply wear more layers, though he may also own a surcoat for some extra warmth.

The typical female peasant would wear a wool undertunic, overtunic or robes and a hood or wimple; probably leather shoes, and possibly a linen chemise. She is likely to rely on a blanket for use as a shawl, or cloak, for warmth in the winter.

Freemen's clothing is much more diverse. Many free farmers and other unguilted freemen are likely to be similarly dressed to the peasants. Richer unguilted families and most guildsmen will be much better dressed.

A typical freeman will wear a good quality wool undertunic, tunic, breeches and hat or hood. He will have leather shoes or boots and probably a linen shift and hose. He may own a cloak or mantle.

A typical freewoman will wear a russet undertunic, overtunic or robes and a hood or wimple. She will have leather shoes or boots. She is also likely to wear a linen chemise and hose. She may also own a cloak or mantle for warmth in the winter.

Most nobles have one (or more) bonded clothiers in their employ. The nobility wear a wide variety of rich fabrics and bright colours.

CLOTHING AND STATUS

Natives of Hårnians will usually be able to estimate a person's wealth and social status from their clothing. Many will also be able to identify people who are 'not from around here'. In Kanday, the type of hat worn will differentiate west coast dwellers from those living on the Eryna River. In most Kingdoms 'yokels' are easily identified by city dwellers. For players, this can have interesting consequences.

Players carrying arms & armour, but poorly dressed, or dressed in a foreign style are likely to be considered mercenaries or rogues. They will probably be regarded with suspicion, caution and alarm by most people. They are likely to be reported to local authorities, carefully watched, and may be harassed by guards.

Players carrying the same arms & armour, but well dressed are likely to be considered as lesser nobles, or at least, important servants of nobles. They are less likely to be harassed and more likely to be treated with deference.