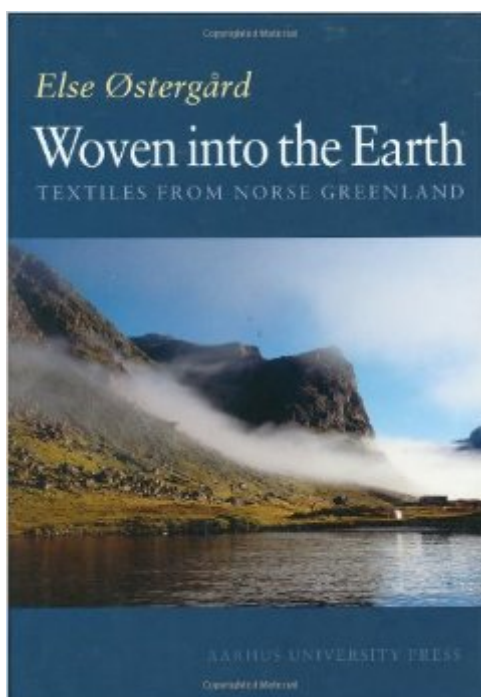


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# Woven Into The Earth: Textile Finds In Norse Greenland (None)



## Synopsis

One of the century's most spectacular archaeological finds occurred in 1921, a year before Howard Carter stumbled upon Tutankhamun's tomb, when Poul Norlund recovered dozens of garments from a graveyard in the Norse settlement of Herjolfsnaes, Greenland. Preserved intact for centuries by the permafrost, these mediaeval garments display remarkable similarities to western European costumes of the time. Previously, such costumes were known only from contemporary illustrations, and the Greenland finds provided the world with a close look at how ordinary Europeans dressed in the Middle Ages. Fortunately for Norlund's team, wood has always been extremely scarce in Greenland, and instead of caskets, many of the bodies were found swaddled in multiple layers of cast off clothing. When he wrote about the excavation later, Norlund also described how occasional thaws had permitted crowberry and dwarf willow to establish themselves in the top layers of soil. Their roots grew through coffins, clothing and corpses alike, binding them together in a vast network of thin fibers - as if, he wrote, the finds had been literally sewn in the earth. Eighty years of technical advances and subsequent excavations have greatly added to our understanding of the Herjolfsnaes discoveries. *Woven into the Earth* recounts the dramatic story of Norlund's excavation in the context of other Norse textile finds in Greenland. It then describes what the finds tell us about the materials and methods used in making the clothes. The weaving and sewing techniques detailed here are surprisingly sophisticated, and one can only admire the talent of the women who employed them, especially considering the harsh conditions they worked under. While *Woven into the Earth* will be invaluable to students of medieval archaeology, Norse society and textile history, both lay readers and scholars are sure to find the book's dig narratives and glimpses of life among "the last Vikings" fascinating.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

superb. The binding is good, the paper is good, the editing appears to be good, the content is way cool. The pictures (printed on a very fine semi-matte paper) are very clear; there are diagrams of almost every weave discussed, and clear discussions of all the weaving tools found in Greenland and some other Norse sites, as well as the material, dyes and finishing methods. Two garments are diagrammed on graph paper (a hood and a dress). The writing is clear and interesting and accessible, and the writers clearly care about the people who were behind the artifacts they are examining. My only additional desire would be for a summary of the recent research on the history and demise of the Greenland colony (and maybe an explanation of the two-page statement in Inuktitut (?)). If you are a costumer or a scholar or a fan of weaving in different circumstances from the ones we enjoy now, this is a rewarding and fascinating book.

It is rare that more than a few shreds of fiber survive from an archaeological site. Thanks to the unique climate and soil conditions in Greenland, we have a number of whole garments that have survived from about a 200-year span during the middle of the medieval period. Until now, most of that information was known in detail only to specialists. Ms. Ostergard's book collects the information she and her colleagues have derived from the Greenland finds and presents it clearly and succinctly, with full color photographs and line illustrations describing the weave, cut, pattern and techniques used to sew the items in meticulous detail. This book is a permanent asset to the study of medieval costume, an instant classic and, thanks to its clarity of writing and layout, useful even for the costumer.

This hard-cover book, translated from Danish, is a fascinating look at an obscure treasure. Clothing found in the ancient settlements of Greenland (1000 A.D.) is discussed, color photos and drawings explaining construction details of the garments are included. It is a beautiful book and anyone interested in clothing or textiles of the middle ages will consider it a must-have.

This book is so well written that you can read it even if you aren't particularly interested in weaving, and enjoy it. It is a cultural connection between the craft of weaving and the culture of life. Highly

recommended to weavers who are interested in the history of their craft.

This is a fantastic book for academical purposes or for someone who has been re-enacting early middle ages for some time. By this I mean somebody who is really interested in making medieval garments themselves. I would not recommend this book just for the pleasure of reading.

This book goes into the weaving, dyeing, thread production, types and amounts of animals needed for cloth production in the Greenland colony in the 14th century. Highly recommend it especially when the author comes to something that she didn't know she says we have no idea.

If you enjoy those "archeological dig" televisions shows, then this book is ten times better, at least. Well set out, great pictures, absolutely fascinating and all information very accessible. This book is a fantastic read, I think that anyone interested in Viking Culture, Medieval History, and Textiles and Fashion throughout the ages will adore this book.

This book is so interesting and thought provoking. It is fascinating that the woolen garments survived at all, even in pieces, as burial shrouds in these coffin-less burials. There was almost no wood available for use on Greenland - driftwood, mainly, or imported wood - so using it for coffins would have been foolish. Christian law of the time in Iceland forbade burying the dead naked - and the Norse in Greenland originally came from Iceland. The quality of the weaving was superb, as evidenced by the many close-up views of vǫldmal (vathmal) cloth, and the author discusses its use as a trade good by the Norse Greenlanders in trade with the Inuit and fellow Europeans. Expensive book - well worth it.

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