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Водолазська Євгенія Олексівна

Київський національний університет технологій та дизайну

(м. Київ)

Науковий керівник – к. культ. Чернець М. О

ERA OF GOTHIC DRESS CULTURE

The exact dates of the fall of Rome are heavily debated by historians. Many place it at about 476 A.D. The Empire of Rome had been invaded by many Germanic or northern cultures including, Visigoths, Vandals, Ostrogoths, Huns, Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Franks. During these invasions many shipping and highway networks that had allowed for communication and trade between the eastern and western parts of the Empire were destroyed, dividing and segregating it. As a result of this division the artistic and cultural life of Rome was wiped out and replaced by the cultures of these warring tribes. The only unity between these provinces existed solely in the Christian church. This period is known as the Middle Ages or the Dark Ages. Life in the Middle

Ages, even for the nobles, was tough. food was not good, disease spread, there were no efficient and clean ways of heating homes. towards the beginning of the Middle Ages the feudal system was developed which was a hierarchy of classes that formed a social structure. In the 11th century a cultural revolution began as a result of the Carolingian Dynasty (771-987) beginning with Charlemagne. Communication avenues opened and became more efficient, an emphasis was again placed on art and culture, and national monarchies were forming in France, England, and Spain; a more modern Europe was developing. there was a general increase in prosperity during this time. However it was still not a great time - The black death reigned for two years in this period wiping out a third of the population in western Europe. Also the crusades were underway in this time period and as a result there was a lot of eastern influence that was brought back and integrated into western culture. The church and state were working together. the 13th century witnessed an emergence of a middle class - trades and guilds developed (like modern day unions in benefits). [3]

The costume of the High Gothic Period demonstrated a new sense of sophistication in draping as well as a new appreciation for the human body under draped fabric, although there was little study of the anatomy of the body in art or medicine. Just as the art of the period stressed structure, simplicity, and a graceful spirituality, so the clothing stressed proportion, graceful draping, simplicity, and a lack of the tensions and zigzag edges that had been so much admired in Romanesque clothing.

There were also changes brought about by refinements in weaving and fabric. Fine-woven woolens, domestically manufactured, allowed for a new softness of line, and the greater use of silk also created softer, more elegant effects. Since ornament in dress was kept to a minimum, the line of the costume now attracted attention, not pattern or decorative detail.

The Crusades did, however, introduce a symbolic decorative scheme in military wear to distinguish a person's family through certain emblems; this eventually led to the complex decorative development of heraldry that influenced decoration in many kinds

of clothing. But during the High Gothic Period, the simple crosses, lions, eagles, and dragons used to emboss the surcotes worn over armor were kept for strictly military purposes and were not allowed to dominate civil dress, as in later medieval times. Even the use of family colors to achieve a particolored effect behind the family crest was not allowed to dominate the beauties of the almost classically draped lines of civil dress garments. Such particoloring remained primarily an aspect of military wear until well into the fourteenth century. [2]

The Gothic time dress is usually divided into two periods, Early Gothic period (1200-1350) and Late Gothic period (1350-1450). The outfits in the Early Gothic period were more sophisticated, graceful and simpler in cut than the Romanesque period. Sleeves used to be tight and the forearms were given more importance. Minimal trimmings on the Gothic clothing were also a feature of the Early Gothic period. The Gothic dresses were usually longer and the necklines were deep. Styles changed quickly during the Late Gothic period. The period moved from the earlier flowing draperies that metamorphosed, into fabrics that kept on becoming more and stiffer with the passage of time. During the 15th century, the extremes were mostly in the upper silhouette. Crisp pleats, tight belts, padded doublets, leg-o-mutton sleeves were also some of the important features of the Gothic clothing in the Late Gothic period.

In the Early Gothic period, men wore hair at a sensible length often in a bob to the jaw line with a bang across the forehead. Men often bleached their hair as blond hair was popular. Few men wore beards. In the Late Gothic period, men wore hair bobbed with neatly curled ends. Young girls in both periods wore their hair loose, flowing upon their shoulders. But after marriage, they used to confine their hair in a bun at the nape. They also used to wear many types of hair pieces, such as wimple and gorget, to cover it.

Gothic corset is an important piece of Gothic dress. It shapes the body of a girl like an hourglass. It was very popular during the Victorian and medieval ages. Even today, Gothic corset is widely popular as even today, hourglass shape of a girl's is considered as aesthetic and flattering. At the outset, a Gothic corset was very uncomfortable to

wear. It is only with the passage of time that the garment became more soft and convenient to wear.

Gothic outfits like fishnets are summer temperature friendly. Fishnets can be worn on arms, legs or even as shirts and jumpers. Cotton bloomers, lace-trimmed long skirt and flowing gauzy skirts are some of those parts of Gothic clothing that are very comfy to wear in the summer. Men wear shirts with ruffles, buckles and lacing that look just like pirate shirts. In summer, male Goths wear light natural fiber shirts and short black trousers, accessorized with wide-brimmed hats, black umbrellas and silver ornaments. Gothic clothing is incomplete without Gothic boots. Female Goths usually wear dark black boots with high heels, while Gothic men wear dark black flatted boots, which are usually heavy. However, one can also come across Goths wearing bloody-red boots. [1]

In this way, this exciting period saw the foundations of modern western Europe established through the rise of cities, national states, and capitalism. It also marked the high point of development in the Catholic faith with spiritual values that spread from architecture to clothing. In clothing the soft, draped lines marked the first time since the Greek that so much attention was placed on the ideal beauties of the draped body.

Everything from clothes to architecture is close to me and I hope that my theses helped you to plunge into this era together with me.

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