

# **“AVE TOGATII”**

**SEXTILLI’S**

**BRIEF GUIDE TO**

## **THE TOGA**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & FOREWORD

Words of Wisdom handed down from my forefathers,  
And forgotten by me!

*“AN OPEN MOUTH IS AN IDEAL INSERTION POINT FOR THE FOOT.  
SAVE SHOE LEATHER; TAKE THEM OFF BEFORE OPENING YOUR MOUTH.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

There could well be a resurgence of the Toga in re-enactment over the next few years.

### **YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!**

All the usual culprits get thanked, Janet, my much better half, for putting up with me, sons Mark & David for doing 'things' to my PC so that, despite me, it still works. Also large votes of thanks, in no particular order, to Dr. Jane Malcom-Davies and Caroline Johnson both of The Costume Society (& JMD & Co.), Katina Bill of The Textile Society, Dr. A.T.Croom from the Arbeia Roman Fort, the Librarians at my County Library without whom getting odd-ball extracts from learned publications from all around the World would have been impossible, my colleagues in the RMRS for putting up with my nagging and many others whom I've doubtless forgotten. Thanks to you all!

Ohh, before I forget. This is just a bunch of ideas' to get things moving in the right direction [I hope]. IPSE DICIT isn't my scene.

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10 April 2007 A.D.

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## TOGATII

The TOGA is making a comeback!! OK, OK - so it's not much of a comeback! However, it looks quite likely that the re-enactment scene is going to go towards Living History and away from Battle scenes. This means that we are going to see a slight resurrection of the Toga and therein lies the crux of a problem! Putting it in a nutshell! We've all seen a Toga on the films and TV; every Hollywood '**ANCIENT ROMAN**' blockbuster has scores of them in it.

That well-known forum scene (*it must be a natural law or ancient charter or something as it seems to slip into every film of the genre*), when there's either a triumph or a disaster in the making. The forum is heaving with people running about in long white night shirts with a white blanket, with or without coloured stripes, draped tastefully over one shoulder, and it's always wrong.

Wrong material, wrong length, wrong width, wrong style, wrong colours, wrong century, wrongly worn and wrongly folded, just to mention a few in passing. For good reason – no doubt – the 'Hollywood Toga' is in a special class: all of its very own!

BUT as our watchwords are AUTHENTICITY and ACCURACY we need to do and be better, **MUCH BETTER!**

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In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are used to the freedom of fitted, sleeved, clothes and are not used wearing the draped, flowing, garments of the ancients. It is a prerequisite that this type of garment is correctly put on. An art form in its own right; patient, painstaking care must be used to get it to hang properly and it is constantly – I do not exaggerate in the slightest - in need of adjustment when being worn. Practice is needed!

The wearing of ANY Toga DEMANDS that the left arm [sometimes also the left hand] is dedicated to the support of the toga and you must glide, short, slow steps, not walk when wearing one. Wearing the full sized Imperial toga is an art that has to be learned and practised. It needs two or three people to put it on you and you CANNOT move at anything other than a stately pace without it falling off. Tripping over the end of the toga was a noted problem then and still is today. The only gestures you can make are with your right hand and, depending upon the way you're wearing your toga, these are sometimes very limited indeed!

Even the Romans didn't like wearing a toga! Juvenal (1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century) noted that it wasn't worn much in Italy "no one wears the Toga until they die", at the same time Martial implies that the 'lower classes' only wore it for religious festivals. It was hot, heavy, uncomfortable and fiddly to wear. You needed to adjust it constantly, it keeps moving towards falling off, and needed a lot of preparation before you got several somebody's put it on you. Senior Roman military figures would be well aware that a *Palludimentum* was the thing, Priests had their own versions of a cloak and the majority of the population would usually have worn a *Sagum* or something similar. On formal occasions, they would have worn the version of the Toga that was suitable for their rank and in the fashion for that century. If the plebs wore one at all – it would have been an expensive garment – it would **NOT** have been the white fluffy blanket style of thing usually depicted (wrong material) and quite

possibly not white either (possibly the wrong colour and expensive to keep clean).

From the simple blanket and 'battle dress' of the Etruscan and early Latin kings period the Toga became a symbol of peace and both an icon of citizenship and a precisely defined official dress item, somewhat akin to the 'court dress' of later periods.

Described<sup>1</sup> as "Essentially a white woollen cloth, cut to a semicircular design, some five (5) yards long and four (4) yards wide, varying according to the size of the wearer. Part of it was pressed, and possibly sewn, into plaits and doubled lengthwise so that one of the folds [*sinus*] would fit comfortably around the hip and chest whilst allowing room enough to walk or move." This would seem to be the Early Republican toga as the later Imperial ones' were often considerably longer and fuller.

These<sup>2</sup> have been described as 4m to 6m (m = metre) long and up to 3m wide depending upon the size of the wearer and how full it is desired to be. It is also known that the later Imperial togas could be 7 or 8m long when they were gathered, and folded, pinned or tied in an *umbo* (boss) at the left shoulder to make them manageable

As an evolving garment – something most people, even if they ever knew, tend to forget - almost all of the major visual differences for a given period are in the size, ornamentation and colour: e.g., Dark for plebs or mourning, Multicolour for the Trabea, Purple for 'Imperial Family' and the embroidered 'Toga Picta' for triumphs, as much as the material it was made from. It's noted by Ovid that they were very thin or translucent fabrics whilst Varro states that you could see the purple stripe through them and Suetonius castigates people for wearing 'Cloaks of Outlandish Colours' and something he called a 'Transparent Toga'!

There were special ways of wearing it, some of which were only used for religious ceremonies, and certain colours were reserved for the distinguished and the upper classes.

- Purple was of course for the Emperor & family (*but don't believe the propaganda*)
- The Emperors also took to wearing the *Toga Picta* or ornate toga at any old time [sort of party toga?] but he had a purple base colour for his. Generals also wore something similar to it for triumphs, however, depending upon WHEN the triumph was granted he might have had to paint his face red to imitate a god.
- Consuls for entry into office and magistrates for public games wore something similar to an Imperial *Toga Picta* but this may have been a basic *Toga Pura* to which was added a RED stripe and GOLD embroidery. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century toga was woven heavily figured and would probably have had coloured patterns woven in.
- Politicians wore a specially whitened toga when campaigning for office – *toga candida*
- Senators & Equestrians wore White with purple stripes – toga *virilis* or *toga pura*

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<sup>1</sup> Bunson.M. [Altered. Measurements updated to metric units]

<sup>2</sup> Goldman.

- Young men and girls of good family could wear the *toga Praetexta* (white with a red/purple stripe) until such time as the boys assumed adulthood or the girls married. The practise was dropped for the girls during the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.
- Plebeians (most of us) would wear a dark or darkish plain colour - *toga sordida* - unless we were making a status statement in which case white or slightly off-white would be the aim.
- Certain distinguished people wore the form of the toga called *Trabea*. This parti-coloured toga bore, as usual, their rank marker around the edge and may have had some form of decorative piping running through it as well.
- Ladies of negotiable affection and disgraced wives could also wear the toga. There's no evidence that they HAD to wear one; just that they could. A question that needs asking is why on earth they would want to wear such a heavy, cumbersome, unflattering, and concealing length of material. It would seem likely that - if it were worn at all - it would be a light, possibly see-through, token garment.<sup>3</sup>

The '*Capite Velato*,' where the sinus was drawn over their head, by those who were not part of the formal state priesthood, who wore a special 'hat', was the way those participating in sacred rites and such occasions as weddings, funerals, state occasions etc, wore it. As shown in the Ara Pacis it was worn in this manner by those in or entering the sacred ground thus demonstrating their piety towards the gods.



A toga being worn *Capite Velato* by the celebrant in a sacrifice scene from the Altar of Marcus Aurelius. This shows the *dedicatio* (opening rites) of the sacrifice. Although unclear, note that many assistants are wearing some kind of head- dress.

There is a school of thought that the toga was woven as one piece on a special loom. This is quite possible on a very large loom, provided you don't

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I can't wait to laugh at a '**Hello Sailor**' scene in a Hollywood '**ROMAN EPIC**' containing a busty blonde wearing a Gauzy Tunica, 'Wonder-bra', and a "Clingfilm Toga."

want it quickly (mass production is not an option and something in the order of tens of months to produce the multi-coloured, heavily figured, *T. Pixta* is probable), but the larger toga require some shaping to get them to hang properly so they may have been made in two or more pieces. There is evidence on some statues to suggest that the characteristic draping of the folds were sewn in and that there was a kind of piping cord woven into the selvedge.

The various sorts of toga may be tabulated: -

*Toga Candida*

Candidates for public office. This was (possibly hypocritically) specially whitened to show purity.

*Toga Contabulata*. Social status: unclear, but high is probable.

A banded toga, popular in the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D. <sup>4</sup>

This was an arrangement of a number of different bands of colour across the width of the material, i.e. they appeared to run from shoulder to ankle when worn. The number of bands and colours of bands is not clear but would probably vary between clients. As it makes a public statement, it would probably be the toga of choice for the 'New Man'.

*Toga Exigua*. Social status: unclear

The short toga of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. A term borrowed from Horace (*Epistules* 1.19.12-14). There is a probability that this toga, being cheap and easily usable as an extra blanket (which the Romans classed as clothes), may have carried on throughout the Empire period as the plebs toga.

*Toga Picta*. Social status: High [restricted]

This was probably a basic *toga pura* to which was added a RED stripe and GOLD embroidery. Worn by consuls for entry into office, magistrates for public games and a slightly different one by generals for triumphs. The Emperors also took to wearing it at any old time but this could have been based on a purple cloth

*Toga Purpurea*. Social status: High

The Imperial purple toga. Both Caligula & Nero tried to restrict the use of purple <sup>5</sup> in clothes, but people didn't seem to take too much notice.

*Toga Pura*. Social status: High

The basic toga. This would be off-white or greyish as the natural colour of the fleece allowed. Bleaching (Fulling) would have whitened it although the modern 'Pure White' is improbable. In this form, it could have a purple band on it. The BROAD stripe (3"/75mm) (*Latus Clavus*) was reserved for Senators and the NARROW stripe (1"/25mm) (*Augustus Clavus*) for the Equestrians. Although originally on the lower edge of the toga it was moved onto the edge

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<sup>4</sup> The term is derived from Apuleius work *Metamorphoses* 11.3 it is a relatively modern but useful term

<sup>5</sup> As nearly as I can discover the colour that the Romans knew as *Purpurea* isn't the one that we call Purple, although it's not too far off. The Roman 'Purple' seems to be a dark Maroon.

of the *sinus*. What little evidence there is suggests that this could have been sewn on but it may have been woven in<sup>6</sup>.

*Toga Praetexta*. Social status: high or young  
Originally reserved for magistrates and high priests at official functions. It had a reddish purple border.

Until the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. when the girls stopped wearing it, young men and girls of good family could wear the *toga praetexta* until the boys assumed adulthood or the girls married.

*Toga Pulla*. Social status: All  
A dark grey or black toga used by those in mourning or currying favour under stress such as being on trial. An idea scandalously ignored on at least one occasion.

*Toga Sordida*. Social status: Low  
Plebeians (most of us, if we had one) wore dark or darkish plain colours.

*Toga Rasa*. Social status: indeterminate  
A toga with a close clipped smooth pile. The evidence suggests that these were mixed fibre garments.

*Laena*. Social status: high [priestly]  
A priestly toga; possibly purple, about twice the size of a normal toga, worn by the *Flamines* during sacrifice. This was shaped somewhat like a toga but worn draped over both shoulders and hung in a curve, front and back, and was fastened with a pin at the back. Owing to the sheer size of it, the priest in question must have needed a *Camillus*<sup>7</sup> to be a trainbearer.

*Trabea*. Social status: High  
A high status garment, whose usage seems to stretch from before the 5<sup>th</sup> c. B.C. to at least the 5<sup>th</sup> c. A.D., about which little detail is known. Dionysius of Halicarnassus<sup>8</sup>, states that the 'Roman Knights' {Equestrians?} wore a parti-coloured toga - the surviving depictions show a toga made from a material, possibly multi-coloured, that today could be called 'Jacquard' woven or possibly heavily embroidered - it was therefore a mark of distinction. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it became the ceremonial dress for the Emperor and Consuls, in this form it would also have the relevant purple edge of the wearers' social rank and may have had some kind of decorative 'piping' running, more or less centrally, along the lower end length of the cloth.

However, when worn by Augurs as a badge of office it became a shortish, rounded, purple, and scarlet striped cloak, fastened to the shoulders by fibulae.

There are other 'official' types of over garment that compliment the toga and for some ranks and ceremonies there are specific types of headwear.

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<sup>6</sup> Wilson

<sup>7</sup> The innocent assistant at a rite. This would be a young boy of good family, there is a little evidence to suggest that young girls also performed this duty but it is unlikely.

<sup>8</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus III.16 noted by Wilson (p68)

## BRIEF CHRONOLOGY.

Although a form of the toga [*Tebena*] appears in Etruscan times it wasn't the garment we associate with the Romans. Merely an oblong of cloth that got used as a tunic and blanket, it was the basic garment for the farmer working in his field: or his 'battle dress' when drafted into the army. Mrs. Farmer wore one as well but she also had a 'dress'<sup>9</sup>. It was only afterwards that it metamorphosed into the - much-despised - formal dress item. It never seems to have been a popular thing to wear.

### The Republican Toga.

By the second century B.C., the toga had, with the two exceptions noted, become an item of purely male dress, and was worn over a *tunica*: the *tunica* fell to mid-lower calf length. It had a rounded lower edge and a small over-fold [*Sinus*] at the top. This form seems to have continued in use until well into Imperial times

### Late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.

During this period, the toga developed into a much larger garment; some 5 metres long, which could no longer be put on alone. You needed at least two others to help. To cater for this the shape changed to a roughly trapezoidal form for the *sinus* area over a semi-circular form at the bottom. Quintillion (late 1<sup>st</sup> century) goes to some length about the correct way to wear one for oratory:-

“In my opinion the Toga should be rounded and cut to fit if it is not to be unshapely. The front edge should reach the middle of the shin whilst the back should be somewhat higher...the *sinus* should fall to a little above the edge of the *tunica* if it is to be the most becoming, it should not fall below it. That part that passes like a belt from under the right arm to over the left shoulder should be neither too tight nor too loose. The portion that is last to be arranged<sup>10</sup> should sit rather low, since it will sit better thus and may be kept in place. A part of the *tunica* should be drawn back in order that it may not fall over the arm when we are pleading, and the *sinus* should be thrown back over the shoulder, while it will not be unbecoming if the edge is turned back.”

### Early 2<sup>nd</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

There seem to have been some relatively minor changes to the way it was worn and the *sinus* came to be longer – further towards the calf than previously – and a different way of wearing came into use. From the Trajanic relief's it looks as if the fold coming under the right arm to the over the left shoulder (*balteus*) was folded tighter. This went under the part hanging over the left shoulder. The *Umbo* also became exaggerated by an increase in overall length.

### Early to late 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

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<sup>9</sup> Akin to the Greek *Peplos*, the so-called 'tube' dress. Mr. Farmer may have worn underpants as his other garment.

<sup>10</sup> Later known as the *umbo*



The *balteus* became grossly exaggerated; it was concertina-folded to form a smooth band and was taken twice around the body. Much practice in preparing this is required. Thus, I would think it isn't a suitable idea for re-enactment when we are frequently short of people and time.

#### Early 4<sup>th</sup> century

The style with an exaggerated *balteus* continued but the *sinus* also grew so baggy that if not held on the right arm it swept the ground.

#### Late toga

After the 'fall' of the Western empire the toga slowly changed to a shape akin to a 'Yale' type of key. It must have been easier to put on, cost less and easier to wear.

## SOME THOUGHTS ON RECONSTRUCTION

### MATERIAL.

**A**lthough silk, cotton, linen and mixed fibre toga are well represented it would seem that for the most part the Romans used a wool based material. Pliny the Elder (NH 8.24.195) reports that some mixed fibre cloths were made from “Poppy Stems and Flax.” In order to get the draping right the material must be exceedingly pliable and not heavy; it must be of such a texture that it will, by its own weight, fall into graceful folds. The surface must be soft and with sufficient nap that the folds will cling together without any form of pinning. The standard material purchased from re-enactment suppliers is usually too hard and stiff and close clipped or ‘polished’ material won’t cling, it’ll slip at the slightest movement, and so is of no use. Of modern textiles a thin, soft, pliable, muslin cloth or something of a similar nature gets near the requirements, although there may other fabrics that would be suitable.

As pointed out above, the cloth does not HAVE to be 100% wool neither does it have to be White unless you’re being a Senator or Equestrian. If used for re-enactment artificial fibres should be avoided, as they are not authentic, although you may find that, for any number of reasons, not least cost, it is almost unavoidable; but, let’s face it, unless we say nobody will know.

For the average man of about 1.8m (5’ 10”) tall and a 965mm (38”) waist for planning purposes you need to think about a piece of cloth of about 5 by 3 ½ metres.

***NB: This does not apply to the variants of the Toga known as the Exigua, Laena, Contabulata or the Trabea, which will need different lengths and/or colours of cloth.***

Cloth is often supplied a nominal 60” (1.52m) wide (actually about 58”/1.47m) and bought by the metre, which implies that you need to think in terms of a 15m (16 ½ yards) length as being sufficient. If you don’t want the full width large sized one, you could get away with 10m, or a bit less. If you’re content to fudge a “short” toga of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. a *Toga Exigua* could be made from a single length of 1.52m wide material about four or five metres long.

### SIZES<sup>11</sup>

**T**hese are NOT set in stone! They are only ideas’ of the nominal given by measurement from various statues. The requirement of each individual will vary according to however full he requires it to be; hence the final dimensions will vary.

The principle evidence is from the Scholium on Persius<sup>12</sup> from where Isodores quoted a claim of six ‘*ulnae*’ for the depth. As the size of the *ulnae* is disputed (anything from 18” to 6 foot (0.5 to 1.9m)) this could mean a toga

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<sup>11</sup> After Wilson with amended figures

<sup>12</sup> Scholium, Persius, V, 14. “Mensura togae iustae **senas ulnas** habebat.” Isodore, Orig., XIX, 24, 4 “Mensure togae iusta si **sex ulnas** habeat.”

with a depth of 9ft to 36 ft, which isn't exactly helpful. A series of experiments in about 1923 seems to indicate that somewhere about 18" (0.5m) is the right figure.

There is a commonality of shape, which means that only a few sketches are needed.

NB: THESE ARE NOT TO SCALE, THE PROPORTIONS VARY WIDELY.

The 'UNIT' referred too below as 'U' is from the base of the neck to the floor when wearing flat heeled shoes. The **GIRTH** measurement (G) is taken at the waistline.

For those who have forgotten: Mathematical terms such as  $2.43U+G$  means 2.43 times **U** plus the **G**irth measurement, similarly  $0.33U$  is 0.33 times **U**. Some books you may refer to call the dimensions by different names; thus, what I have called the width may be called the height, and the length may be called the width. "You pays your money and you takes your choice"; as far as I'm concerned if it's laid out flat on the floor the longest dimension is the length. How you wear it is a different problem!

The dimensions given are those calculated for a mythical individual 5' 10" (1.8 m) tall with a **U** of 62" (1.58m) and a **G** of 38" (97cm) rounded to the nearest 10mm or 1/2."

1] Toga of the *Arringatore* [Orator] [Figure 1] Circa 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.  
When dressing a Flammine at any period the toga would be twice this size.<sup>13</sup>

Extreme length	A>F	$2U+G$	162"	4.11 m
Width of each end	A>B & E>F	$0.33U$	20.5"	0.52 m
Length of lower edge	C>D	$1U$	62"	1.57 m
Extreme width	G>H	$1.125U$	70"	1.78 m

2] Large Republican Toga [Figure 2]

Extreme length	A>F	$2.29U+G$	180"	4.57 m
Width of each end	A>B & E>F	$0.5U$	31"	0.78 m
Length of straight upper edge	C>D	$1.125U$	70"	1.78 m
Length of straight lower edge	J>K	$1.29U$	80"	2.03 m
Extreme width	J>K	$1.5U$	93"	2.36 m
Width of lower section	K>Q	$1.36U$	84.5"	2.15 m

<sup>13</sup> This is what the real experts say. Something 8.2m x 3.5m worn correctly back-to-front would need a trainbearer at least. Thus, I feel that this may be incorrect.

### 3] Ara Pacis Toga [Figure 2]

This can be used for Officials and Citizens but NOT the Emperor or Flammines up to the early part of the Empire. For ordinary private citizens during the first two centuries A.D. the toga can be made at least 6" [150mm] shorter and narrower.

Extreme length	A>F	2.33U+G	182.5"	4.64 m
Width of each end	A>B & E>F	0.125U	8"	0.2 m
Length of straight upper edge	G>H	1.29U	80"	2.03 m
Length of straight lower edge	C>D	1.25U	77.5"	1.97 m
Extreme width	J>K	1.72U	106.5"	2.70 m
Width of sinus	J>Q	0.67U	41.5"	1.05 m
Width of lower section	K>Q	1.06U	63"	1.60 m

### 4] Large Imperial Toga. (Figure 2)

Extreme length	A>F	2.43U +G	189"	4.8 m
Width of each end	A>B & E>F	0.5U	31"	0.76 m
Length of straight upper edge	G>H	0.86U	53.5"	1.36 m
Length of straight lower edge	C>D	1.71U	106"	2.69 m
Extreme width	J>K	2.1U	130"	3.3 m

### 5] An intermediate Toga. (Figure 5)

Extreme length	A>F	2.33U+G	144.5"	3.67 m
Width of each end	A>B & E>F	0.33U	20.5"	0.52 m
Length of straight upper edge	G>H	1.2U	74.5"	1.89 m
Length of straight lower edge	C>D	1.5U	93"	2.36 m
Extreme width	L>M	1.93U	120"	3.05 m
Width of lower portion	M>Q	1.07U	66.5"	1.69 m
Width of upper portion	L>Q	0.86U	53.5"	1.36 m
Cut off	A>J	Variable about 0.33A>Q		
Length of folds	A>K	Indeterminate about 80% A>Q		

6] A late Empire Toga (Eastern Empire)  
(Figure 3)

Extreme length	A>H & G>B	2.36U+G	184.5"	4.69 m
Extreme width [along line Q]	D>L or E>K	2.25U	139.5"	3.54 m
Width of each end of the tongue	H>G & A>B	0.32U	20"	0.5 m
Length of tongue	A >N	1.57U	97.5"	2.48 m
Length of straight upper & lower edges	K>L & E>D	0.57U	35.5"	0.9 m
Width of sinus to cut off points	J>H & M>N	0.75U	46.5"	1.18 m
Width of lower edge to cut off points	G>F (other side equal)	0.375U	23.5"	0.6 m
Width of sinus	Q to line KL	1.18U	73"	1.85 m

7] A Toga at the end of the usage of the garment.  
(Figure 4)

Extreme length	B>F	2.125U+G	132"	3.35 m
Width of end	A>B	About	6"	150mm
Width of end & intermediate	G>F & K>D	About	10"	250mm
Length of straight upper edge	H>J	0.5U	31"	0.79 m
Extreme width	E>L	0.75U	46.5"	1.18 m
Length to point of widening	B>C	1.07U	66.5"	1.69 m
Length to end of widening	B>D	1.43U	89"	2.26 m

8] Imperial Toga with folded bands. (Figure 2)  
Imperial wear only.

Extreme length	A>F	2.25U +G	177.5"	4.51 m
Width of each end	A>B & E>F	0.33U	20.5"	0.52 m
Length of straight upper edge	G>H	1.2U	74.5"	1.89 m
Length of straight lower edge	C>D	1.5U	93"	2.36m
Extreme width	J>K	1.93U	119.5"	3.04 m

## **DRAPING**

There is a belief that the Ancient Greeks and Romans merely took up their clothes and flung them on, with the drapery falling naturally into graceful flowing curves that gave the wearers no further trouble during the day. Well, there's no holding back such foolishness; except to say that it's another one of those fairy stories that no sane individual should harbour.

Doubtless the Romans wore loosely draped garments with much greater ease than do we, they didn't really have anything else and were used to it. On the other hand we are not used to it and need to practise; we also need help in getting the toga on in the first place! It also helps if you cheat & use a few hidden safety pins the way the Romans seem to have done. Nothing can be fully laid down as the EXACTLY how to put on and wear a toga, you need to get together and put one on a few times and experiment with the best way. Certain **GUIDE** points may be made; they are aimed at the assistants.

## **CONVENTIONAL EARLY IMPERIAL AND SHORT TOGA.**

1] The wearer stands erect with his arm held straight out from either side of his body at shoulder level (a cruciform stance). He cannot assist other than by holding a fold and by doing a slow 'twirl' when instructed. Theoretically, according to Quintillian [see page VI], Plebeians and Equestrians should wear the tunica kilted at the waist so that the front hemline is at the middle or lower margin of the calf and the back 25 to 50mm (1" to 2") higher, however, it doesn't really matter and it may be necessary to do something different.

2] The toga is put on from the rear for this bit. When the toga is being prepared for donning; gather the folds before putting it **OVER** the left shoulder. The folds are uppermost and should hang down the front to about the wearers' knee or mid calf level. Adjust the folds if required, the wearer can grip them [bending his left elbow only] if needful.

3] Depending upon available space it may be advantageous to get the wearer to do a slow quarter or half 'twirl' during this next operation. Keeping the folds together, drape them **DOWN** the wearers back and around **UNDER** the right arm - the depth of any 'droop' depends on how 'full' the toga has been made and hence the length you have to play with - and then **UP** across the chest (with the left hand out of the way) and back over the left shoulder. Tucking it over a belt may help the draping on the right side.

## **THE 'ARM-SLING' METHOD [If the toga is a LONG one]**

As 1 – 3 above except that the remainder goes around loosely **OVER** the right shoulder and under the right forearm, holding the right arm in kind of sling, before going over the left arm or shoulder again alternatively it may be tucked under and into the folds left the first time around.

## USING THE UMBO

As 1 above

2] As 2 above except that the folds are uppermost and should hang down the front. Adjust the folds if required, the wearer can grip them [bending his left elbow only] if needful. The long end is then drawn up inside the wrap-over folds from the first time around and is bunched so as to hang over the outside.

## CINCTUS GABINUS

The ancient authors are definite that this manner of wearing the toga was only used when engaged in sacrifice or some other solemn religious rite.

Servius says, "Girt in the Sabine manner, that is, with part of the toga drawn over the head, and part girded" and again "the *gabinus cinctus* is the toga so thrown in the back that one edge of it is brought again from the back girds the figure." Isodores says similar things but also mentions embroidery hanging down.

As 1 & 2 above then

3] Depending upon available space it may be advantageous to get the wearer to do a slow quarter or half 'twirl' during this next operation. Keeping the folds together, drape them DOWN the wearers back and around UNDER the right arm. Twist them together and pass them across the body at the belt line. Secure by tucking it into the belt beneath the first pass, where possible, at the back. There should be enough slack left to allow the first fold to be pulled over the head. Some discretely hidden safety pins would come in handy here.

## THE HOLLYWOOD TOGA

### [AN INFORMATION PIECE ONLY]

Filmmakers, and others with time and budgetary restrictions, have their own version of the toga that is NOTHING like the real one - except from a great distance & if you don't look too hard. It consists of a largish strip of cloth made into a circle with overlapping ends and sewn together towards the ends, the Greek letter alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is somewhat similar.

Usually they also sew into the crossover a large hook of some kind to allow it to be hooked onto the body garment at the neck. This circle of cloth is put on over the head and the sinus is tucked into the wearers' belt. Sometimes it's sewn onto the tunica.

PLEASE, PLEASE DO NOT make yours like this!

NB: I did say at the beginning that this is a BRIEF GUIDE so if I haven't addressed your particular problem all I can say is that I'm sorry but you'll have to do your own research.

## COLOUR LIST

These pages are restricted to **POSSIBLE** colours for a toga.

Ancient writers attest to all the colours noted below, however, the Roman cloth colour palette was much smaller than those available to the 21<sup>st</sup> century dyer. Notwithstanding that it was still substantial and could be stretched by over dyeing.

The 'Electric' tints that are common today would not have been available but, as has been proven in the last century, some of the colours would have been very bright when new. The colours were not 'fast' in the modern sense, they would wash out and fade in sunlight nor could they have been uniform piece to piece. As the favourite way of dyeing was 'in the fleece', long before spinning was attempted, they varied in hue along and across an individual piece of cloth. Even if 'piece dyed' it is probable that, owing to the differences in fibre cleanliness and amount of preparation the colour would vary across and along the piece.

In theory any colour not specifically reserved or forbidden could be used, however, certain colours were definitely reserved for mourning and high status people; others may have been avoided because of civil connotations. Purple {*Purpura*} was the colour normally reserved for the Imperial family and White was the colour usually used by the Equestrians and Senators thus it is probably that the Plebeians used light colours, but not necessarily white.

It has been suggested that the colour we call Purple is not the same as the Roman *Purpura*. Evidence seems to suggest that a darkish Maroon could be a closer match. As Romans were always touchy over their civil status and would tend to portray the highest possible status available to them white, off-white or light Almond could be the correct sort of colour for plebeians. If you wish to wear a *Contabulata* or *Trabea* or some other kind of 'party' toga check the colours don't clash [the Romans didn't seem to bother too much though; it was 'The more expensive the better'], but that's up to you and your pocket.

### COLOURS GROUPED ALPHABETICALLY BY MODERN NAMES

Modern colour	Roman colour	Comments on use
A natural reddish hued wool	<i>Erythraeus</i>	Probably the gingerish colour you can get on modern sheep
Almond or light tan	<i>Amygdala</i>	
Amethyst Purple	<i>Amethystinus</i> <i>Purpura</i> <i>Amethystina</i>	Maybe reserved
Black or very dark Brown	<i>Niger</i>	Mourning only
Black, Deep	<i>Coracinus</i>	Mourning only
Bright Red	<i>Russus, russeus or</i> <i>russatus</i>	
Brown with a red tinge	<i>Fuscus</i>	Probable "The poor mans Purple"
Brownish Yellow	<i>Cerinus</i>	
Cherry Red	<i>Cerasinus</i>	



Chestnut Brown,	<i>Glandes</i>	
Dark Blue	<i>Venetus</i>	
Dark Green	<i>Paphiae myrti</i>	
Dark Grey. Black or very deep Brown-Black	<i>Pullus</i>	The colour of mourning and self- abasement
Dark Rose Purple	<i>Purpureus laconius</i>	Reserved, high status
Golden Yellow	<i>Aureus</i>	
Green	<i>Viridis</i>	
Green Yellow	<i>Galbinus</i>	According to Martial this was popular with the vulgar rich.
Grey	<i>Threicia grus</i> <i>Glauco</i>	Mourning
Grey, pale or maybe pale pink	<i>Albens Rosa</i>	Grey according to Ovid. The colour of mourning and self abasement
Heliotrope		
Hyacinth	<i>Ferrugineus?</i>	
Indigo blue	<i>Indicum (?)</i>	
Light Blue	<i>Aer</i>	
Light Rose Purple	<i>Purpureus [dibapha] Tyrius</i>	Maybe reserved
Marigold Yellow	<i>Calthulus</i>	
Mauve	<i>Malva</i> <i>Molocinus</i>	
Pale Lavender	<i>Conchuliatus (um)</i>	
Pea Green or Bluish Green	<i>Prasinus</i>	
Purple Four major shades: - Lividus, pale; <i>Ruber</i> , red; <i>Atter</i> , dark & <i>Voilaceus</i> , blue.	<i>Purpura</i>  <i>Thalassinus</i>	Reserved colour
Purplish Red	<i>Ferrugineus?</i>	Careful with this one. Possibly treasonable.
Red – Blue	<i>Viola Serotina</i>	
Red or Reddish Blue	<i>Heliotropium</i>	
Reddish Orange	<i>Crocotulus.</i> <i>Flammeus</i>	
Reddish Purple	<i>Ostrinus (Ostrum)</i>	
Reddish Violet	<i>Hyacinthinus.</i> <i>Ruber Tarentinus</i>	

Saffron Yellow, Red-orange. Yellow with Orange overtones	<i>Croceus</i> (Perhaps the same as <i>Crocotulus</i> )	
Scarlet	<i>Coccinus</i> , <i>Coccineus</i> , <i>Hysginus (um)</i> , <i>Puniceus etc.</i>	Part of the costume of an Auger, thus it may have been a colour to avoid.
Sea Blue	<i>Cumatilis</i>	
Sea Blue or Darker blue?	<i>Undae</i>	
Sky Blue	<i>Caesicius</i>	
Turquoise Green	<i>Callainus</i>	
Violet	<i>Ianthinus</i> , <i>Violacius</i> , <i>Violeus</i>	
Violet Purple,	<i>Tyrianthinus</i>	Possibly reserved
Walnut Brown, Dark brown with red overtones	<i>Carinus</i>	
White	<i>Albus</i>	
Yellow, Wax like. Brownish Yellow	<i>Cereus (perhaps the same as Cerinus)</i>	
Yellow-Red	<i>Luteus</i>	

I can't understand why anybody would want to wear clothes dyed with the shellfish derived version of the Roman *Purpura*. From the descriptions, it was sticky, smelly, and not at all nice to wear. Some Emperors stated that they preferred white but if they had to wear it then the vegetable derived purple from Gaul was the choice.

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## **OUTLINE DRAWINGS OF THE TOGA.**

The dates given are extremely approximate. There is evidence that styles went on for centuries after they first became popular, far longer than I have noted. The bits of the ARA PACIS included show that different wearing styles coincided even if they may have been 'old fashioned'.

I have followed, and simplified, the outlines given in the magisterial, and rather hard to follow, book written by Ms Wilson.

### **SINUS.**

This is the bit of the toga was folded back to obtain the characteristic draping. The folds may have been sewn in or held by the Roman equivalent of safety pins.

### **CLAVUS. [Purple edging]**

There is evidence to suggest that this may have been sewn on after the toga was trimmed to size for the owner.

Figure 1.

TOGA OF THE ORATOR.

Dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

Originally this toga may have been painted to resemble a parti-coloured garment known as the *Trabea*. There is no sinus on this garment.

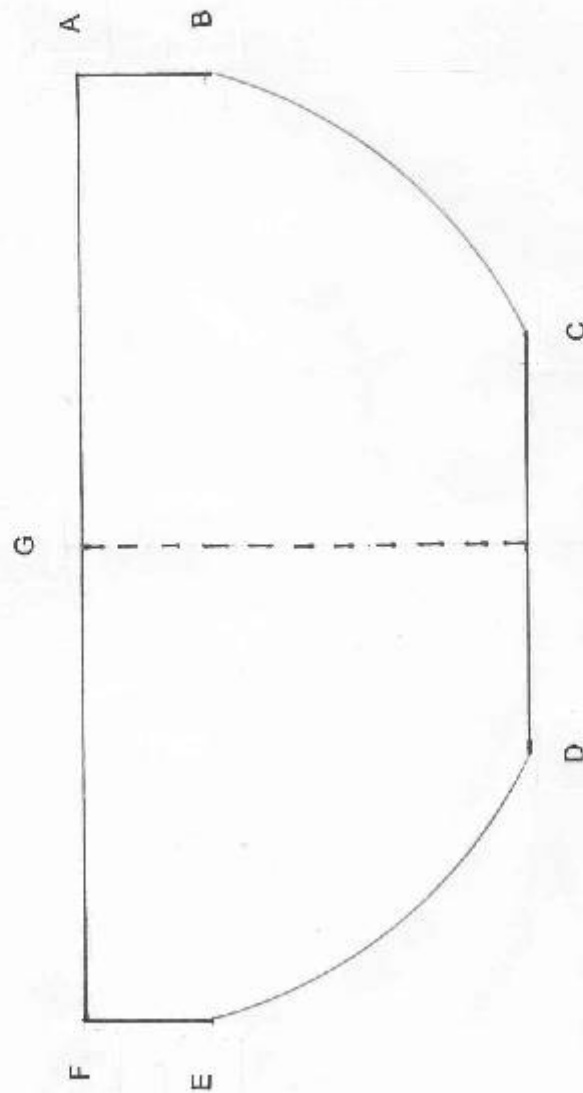


Figure 2. GENERALISED OUTLINE OF THE TOGA  
2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.  
NB: The relative proportions of the parts varied over this period

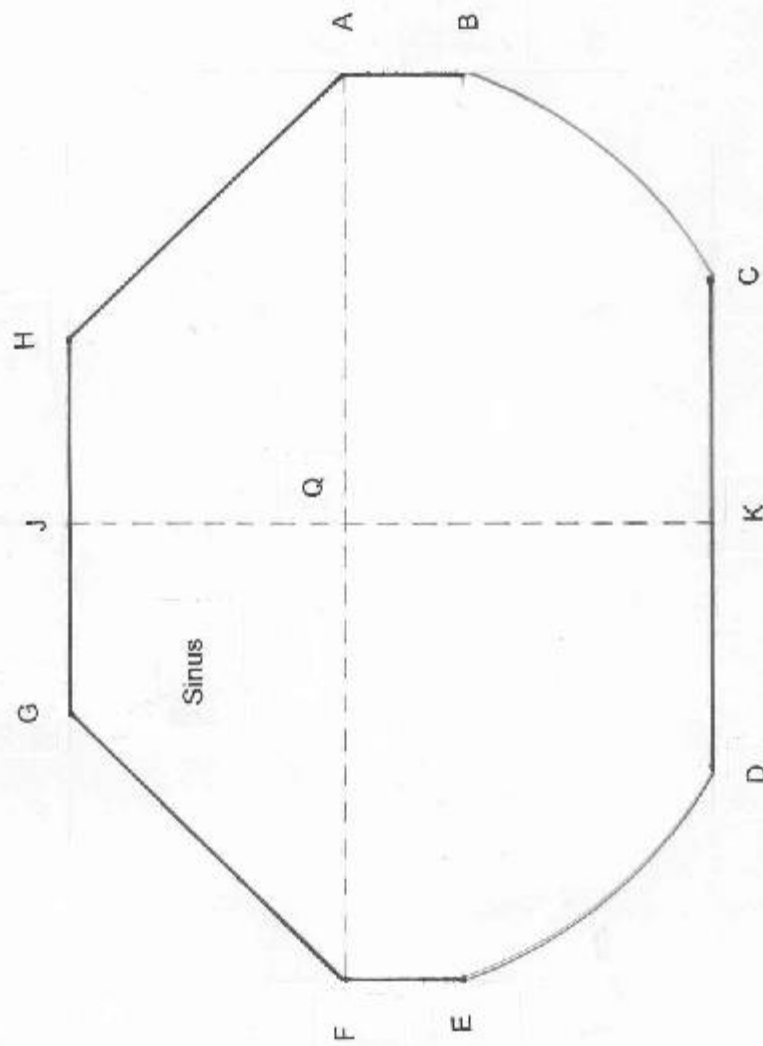


Figure 3.

LATE IMPERIAL TOGA  
3<sup>rd</sup> century to 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. but possibly earlier and later

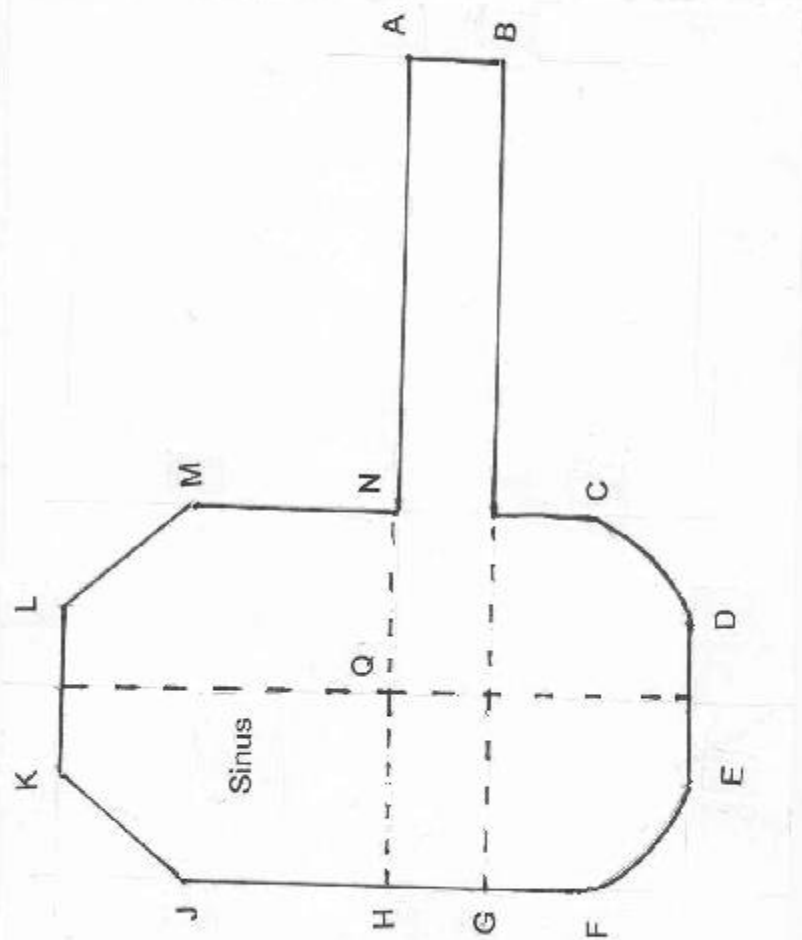


Figure 4.

LATE EASTERN EMPIRE TOGA  
 Circa 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

This is the last garment that can be realistically identified as a Toga.  
 Essentially it is all sinus

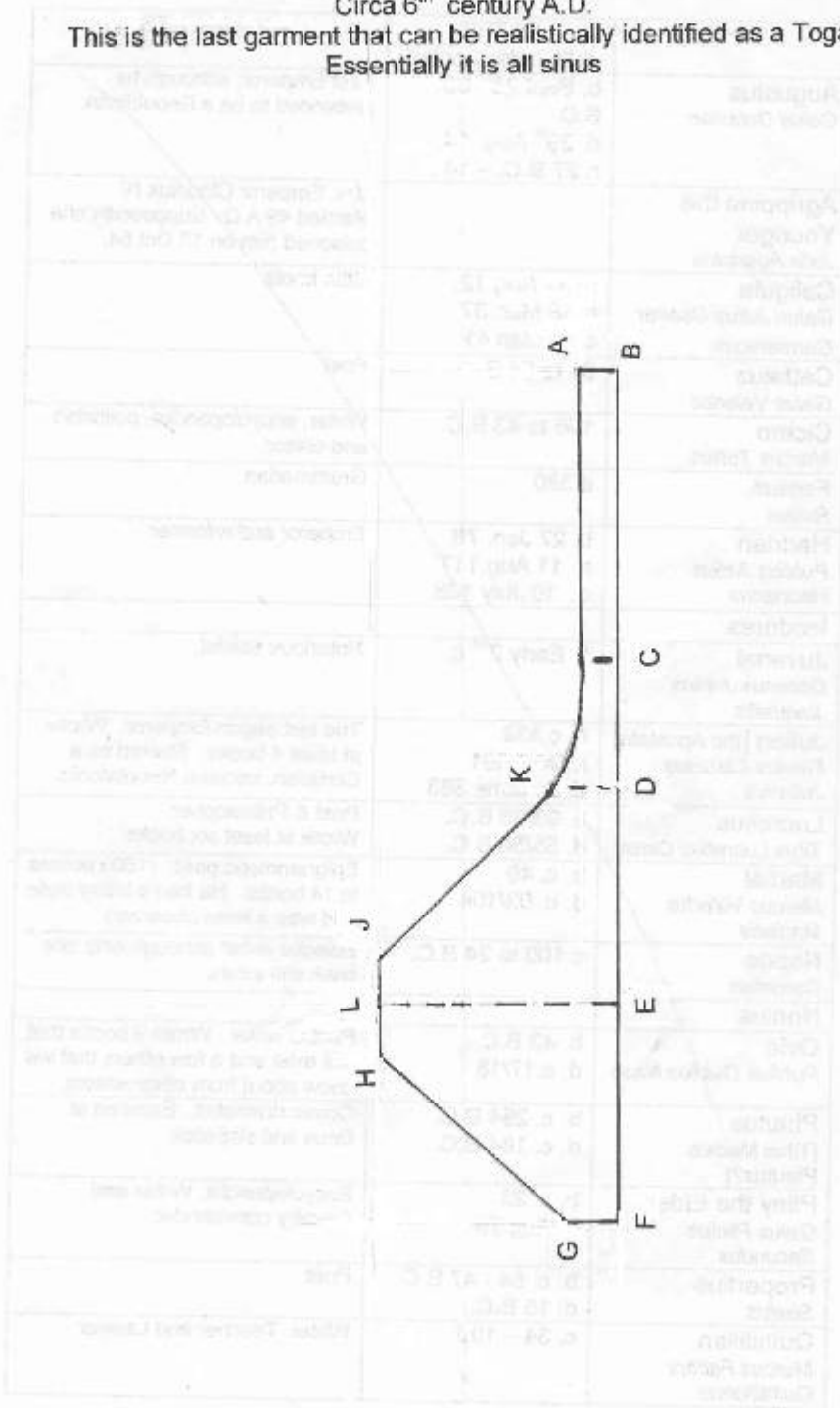


Figure 5

AN INTERMEDIATE TOGA

Dating comes somewhere between the large and late Imperial models.

Essentially it's an extra large Imperial with a bit cut out.

The short lines (A>K) are the positions of some folds that need to be maintained in order for it to work.

