

Dress of the Finnish Population of the Early Second Millennium A.D. in the Western Areas of the Novgorod Land

Dress is one of the most spectacular and stable elements of material culture. Every people has its own historically evolved specific forms of national costume whose cut and ornamentation reflect the ethnic, sex, age and social features of the structure of ancient communities.

The main source for the reconstruction of ancient garments is graves. Of particular interest in this connection are the burial grounds of the first and early second millennia A.D. investigated in Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Scandinavia. The graves contain not only the metal elements of the costume but also remains of fabrics, which makes it possible to trace ancient dress styles.

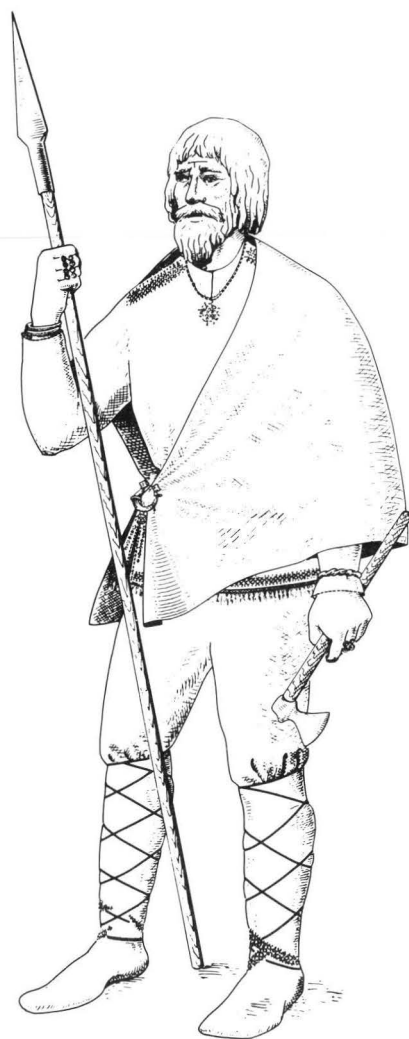
Among such burial grounds is the one near the village of Zalakhtovie situated on the eastern shore of Lake Chudskoye (Peipus), the largest burial monument of the second half of the first and the early second millennia A.D. of those known in the western outskirts of the Novgorod land. It comprises over 200 barrows as well as graves laid in the ground. As regards its material culture dated to the tenth-twelfth centuries, it differed vastly from the nearby ancient Russian grave mounds. At the same time the complex of metal ornaments, the forms of modelled pottery, the ornamentation of textiles with bronze and the technique for making such patterns, as well as some details of the burial custom have very close parallels in Estonia. I believe that the greater part of the Zalakhtovie graves were left by immigrants from the territory of Estonia who settled on the eastern shore of Lake Chudskoye in the tenth century and stayed there for several centuries.

The material obtained from the excavations of the burial ground in the past few years makes it possible to reconstruct the dress of the population that once lived there.

Of particular interest is the evidence for the reconstruction of a male costume (Fig. 1). Two layers of thick woollen fabrics have been found in a man's grave of the eleventh century (barrow 186). The lower layer belonged to a shirt for festive use and upper one to a mantle.

The shirt was of a tunic-like cut, it was sewn of a whole piece of cloth folded in two. The collar and the breast were cut at the crease and the sleeves were sewn of separate pieces. The width of the shirt – 75 cm – was equal to that of the piece of cloth, and the length was about 85 cm. The shirt hem was 20 cm above the knees of the body. The side seams were not stitched to the hem, and therefore the shirt had at the bottom two side cuts 23 cm long. There was a border and a fringe 11 cm long at the shirt bottom.

The shirt was ornamented with bronze spirals and rings. The substrate of those decorations was a thick plaited cord on which small spirals were strung in a strictly prescribed order. When the cord was turned, small loops were left for little rings by means of which the decorations were attached to the textiles. Ornamental bands



decorated the bottom and the shoulders of the shirt, there was a small decoration under the collar and the sleeve edges, and the collar had spiral ornamentation. The types of ornaments from that grave are given in the book by P.-L. Lehtosalo-Hilander (1982, p. 164, Fig. 47).

The left sleeve of the shirt was clasped with one of the bronze bracelets. Metal parts a lyre-shaped buckle and two separating rings – were all that remained of the belt that once bound the shirt. A knife in a leather sheath was suspended from the belt on a chain.

Only fragments survived of the mantle that covered the shirt. However, judging from the location of the pieces of cloth and by the place of the massive penannular brooch which clasped the mantle on the right side at the hip, it seems likely that the mantle covered only the left shoulder of the body and, dropping down in a diagonal

line, was fastened on the side under the right arm which remained uncovered (Fig. 1).

At the legs of the body there were pieces of textiles-remnants of puttees 14 cm wide. The cross-edges of the puttees were ornamented with spirals in geometrical patterns. A narrow band fastened the puttees to the legs.

Thus, on the basis of the evidence from the burial under review, a documented reconstruction has been made of the cut of the woollen shirt and the character of the mantle and puttees. Unfortunately, there are no data on the cut of the thin undershirt which, undoubtedly, had been on the body beneath the thick woollen shirt, neither there are any indications concerning the style of the trousers or of the head-dress, if any.

On the whole, the reconstructed male costume from Zalakhtovie is comparable to that of the peoples of the Baltic region. Thus, remnants of short closed caftans have been found in Livonian and Latgal cemeteries, the difference being that they had on the sides inset oblique gores instead of cuts as in the shirt from Zalakhtovie. In rare cases male Livonian and Latgal caftans were decorated with bronze (Zarina, 1970, p. 156, Fig. 89). A knee-long closed woollen dress with spiral ornamentation on the hem has also been found in a boy's grave in the Karja burial ground on the island of Saaremaa in Estonia (Kustin, 1958, Fig. VI). Puttees and mantles had been characteristic elements of dress with all Baltic peoples. Puttees decorated with bronze are known to have been in use by Latgals and Livonians (Zarina, 1970, p. 186; 1980, p. 126).

In the Zalakhtovie burial the mantle covered only one shoulder of the body. Exactly the same manner of wearing mantles was common among ancient Vikings. Researchers believe that a mantle flung over one's shoulder and fastened with a brooch on the side was most suitable for riding. On other occasions it could have been worn in a different way (The Viking 1966, pp. 204–205).

Grave 186 so far has been the sole investigated burial in Zalakhtovie in which a man's body was so splendidly dressed. Suffice it to say that about 4000 small bronze spirals and rings had been used for ornamentation. This, indeed, testifies to the wealth and eminence of that member of an ancient community. It is also attested by the grave goods (silver-plated ornaments, and a battle axe, not a work axe as was the usual practice).

In the other men's graves of the cemetery textiles are encountered but very rarely. Most often they are puttee cloth; as a rule, the puttees were ornamented with decorations which helped their conservation. Ordinarily, only metal parts of the costume have survived – buckles, belt sets, horseshoe-shaped brooches, etc. In one case fragments of leather trousers have been found.

In the men's burials at Zalakhtovie two types of brooches can be distinguished, differing in size and position. One group comprises large penannular brooches (8–9 cm in diameter, weighing up to 100 gr), always placed below the waist of the body, more often on the side. They could, as in the case of grave 186, fasten the mantle flung over one shoulder. The other group consists of middle-sized brooches (about 4 cm in diameter, weighing about 8 gr) which were on the breast and, as a rule, did not occur in the graves together with brooches of the first group. They could have belonged to mantles fastened on the breast, which would explain why brooches of the two different groups do not occur together.

In none of the 25 women's graves excavated by us were there such substantial pieces of dress cloth as in the male burial 186. Therefore, the main source for the reconstruction of the female costume consists of its metal elements.



Conspicuous among these are penannular brooches and large pins with cruciform heads, always present in pairs in the graves (sometimes attached to the pins were plate chainholders connected by rows of chains). Brooches were found in 18 graves and pins in 8. Judging from archaeological and ethnographic evidence, women in different groups of the Baltic-Finnish population used brooches for fastening mantles on the breast (Zarina, 1980, Fig. II). Occasionally mantles were fastened with pins (Moora, 1960, p. 16). However, the combination of double pins and brooches in the same complexes, as is the case with four burials in Zalakhtovie indicates that in these cases they were used for fastening different items of outer clothing: the brooches for mantles and the pins, judging by their weight and size, for other outer garments of thick cloth (Fig. 2).

The style of the pin-fastened outer dress in the Zalakhtovie graves cannot be reconstructed. However, H. A. Moora states that female tunic-like outer dress was sometimes made of two pieces, so that »the top of the back-piece also covered the shoulders and extended on both sides from the neckline to the breast where it was

fastened by two pins or clasps» (Moora, 1960, p. 15). It appears that it was exactly the same type of dress fastened on the breast with pins that was worn by the population of Zalakhtovie.

Similarly, H. Appelgren-Kivalo reconstructed the costume of a Karelian woman. In recent years P.-L. Lehtosalo-Hilander, based on the material from the Luistari cemetery has revised H. Appelgren-Kivalo's view. She believes that the two pieces of textile of which the female dress was made were bent outside at the top and butt-joined on the shoulders with brooches (Lehtosalo-Hilander, Sarkki, Tomanterä, 1982, pp. 14, 26, Fig. 13c). However, that dress reconstruction is not suitable for the population of the Zalakhtovie or for the Ests, since not only brooches but also pins were used for fastening the costume, and a dress cannot be butt-joined on the shoulder with pins. Moreover, the location of brooches in the graves – on the breast, not on the shoulder, contradicts that conclusion. Further excavations will, of course, help to finally elucidate this question.

Female dress was worn with a belt from which a knife in a leather sheath was sometimes suspended. Beneath the outer garment was an undershirt of thin linen cloth. Now and then, the undershirt was fastened at the neckline with a small horseshoe-shaped brooch. Married women wore a *linik*, a head cover fastened at the back of the head with a small bronze pin. Similar head gear and pins were common among the Ests. In many of the female graves remains of puttee textiles were found, ornamented with bronze spirals.

Thus, the dress of a woman in Zalakhtovie in the eleventh-twelfth centuries consisted of an undershirt, an outer woollen garment, a mantle, a head cover and puttees. The costume was supplemented with different decorations.

The material that has been reviewed gives a more precise form to our concepts of the character of the costume of the Baltic region Finns in the early second millenium A.D. It shows that, along with certain peculiarities of its own, the dress of the Finnish population of the western outskirts of the Novgorod land had common features with that of the inhabitants of the countries of the whole Baltic region, both as regards the cut of the garments and the character of ornaments.

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