



Kievan Rus Clothing 101

The Basics



Overview



Kievan Rus

Kievan Rus (862-1242 CE) was a medieval political federation located in modern-day Belarus, Ukraine, and part of Russia (the latter named for the Rus, a Scandinavian people). The name Kievan Rus is a modern-day (19th century CE) designation but has the same meaning as 'land of the Rus', which is how the region was referred to in the Middle Ages. The Rus ruled from the **city** of Kiev and so 'Kievan Rus' simply meant "the lands of the Rus of Kiev".

During beginning of the period, a distinct separation between the "Viking" influence and the Slavic tribes was demonstrated in their clothing. As time passed, however, the cultures merged into one. The clothing no longer showed a split between the peoples.

For this class, and my own wardrobe, I focus on the time after the merge but before the seat of Russian power moved to Moscow.

Materials and Shapes

The Rus had access to and used many different types of materials in their clothing; linen, wool, silk, and even cotton were used. Due to the trade routes that ran through the area materials that were not typically seen in areas of Western Europe such as cotton were available to those that could afford it. Linen and wool were the predominant fabrics used in everyday clothing.

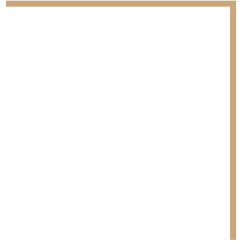
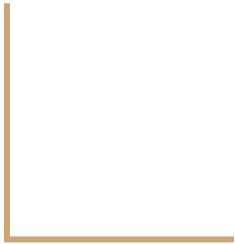
Rus clothing was not form fitting and used geometric construction without the rounded shapes seen in later Western European clothing. The lines of the clothing were based on rectangular body pieces and long somewhat triangular gores and gussets to create the proper shape and fit.

Class Distinctions

Lower classes used unbleached and coarser grades of fabric in their clothing. Those materials were spun and woven by hand as part of the women's duties during the year. The amount and time required to produce the material was so intensive that the peasant classes had a limited number of garments.

Individuals in other levels of society had more expendable assets and resources that enabled them to have more choices in fabric, color, and variety of garments. Social status, wealth, and position was displayed through clothing. The quality of the fabrics increased as the level of wealth increased – the fineness of the weave, the materials used, the pattern woven into the fabric. Instead of unbleached linen and undyed wool, undergarments were made of bleached linen. Fabrics were dyed a variety of colors with the popular being red, green, and blue. Imported fabrics available to higher classes could be of any color and many times had patterns or designs woven into them, stamped onto them, or embroidered.

Layers - Women



Layers

There are five basic layers in women's clothing

1. Base layer - Chemise or rubakha
2. Short overgarments
3. Long, wide-sleeved overgarments
4. Narrow-sleeved overgarments
5. Cloak-like garments

With the exception of the base layer (rubakha), all of the layers are optional and interchangeable.

Layer 1 - Base Layers

Chemise or Rubakha

An undergarment that was always worn with a belt as it was considered indecent to wear it unbelted. Peasants would have worn unbleached linen and may have worn the rubakha alone.

Generally upper classes would have worn bleached linen as the undergarment. A second rubakha was sometimes worn over the bottom layer; it may have been of a colored fabric and had decoration on it of some type. The neck and sleeve cuff were usually decorated either with embroidery, usually red, although someone from the lower classes may have trimmed the dress in red cloth.

Necklines may have been rounded or had a slit in the center or to the side that allowed the dress to pass over the head easily. Small stand-up collars are also known to have been used.

Sleeves were generously long, dangling over the fingers for warmth in the cooler climate and were pushed up creating a ruching effect at the wrists. Dresses were worn above the ground so that they did not drag and allowed freedom of movement.



Layer 2 - Short Overlayers

Many times a shorter over garment was worn over the rubakha.

This could take several different forms including

- Panova
- Zapona
- Navershnik

Panova

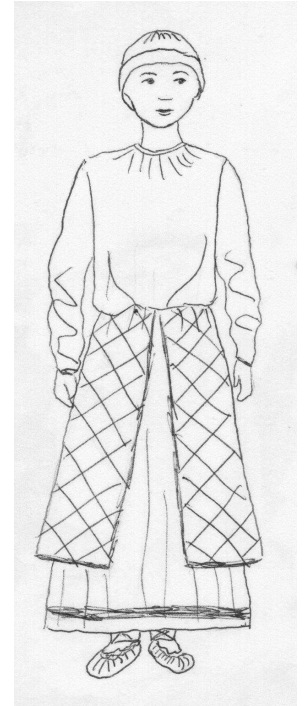
One type of garment was called a panova. This was basically three panels of cloth worn with a belt as a type of skirt. There is some debate over whether the skirt was sewn or unsewn. The panova is generally depicted as being constructed of plaid material.



Kiev Rus (c_ 900) by
Tadarida



Novisibirsk Museum



StamerovPanova
(sofyalarus.info)

Zapona

Another version was similar to a “tabard” called a zapona; it was a long rectangular piece of fabric that was similar in length to the rubakha. It went over the head, was unsewn at the sides, and was worn belted.



Kram Jaromiry i
Dalebory Zapona



Kiev Rus (c_ 900) by
Tadarida



Navershnik

This garment was generally shorter than the underdress, had shorter and slightly wider sleeves, and a wider width than the rubakha.

Additional decoration would have been commonplace on this layer at the hem, sleeve ends, and collar. The decoration on this layer tended to be more elaborate and wider in area than on the rubakha.

There is some evidence that the noblewomen and their households had robes similar to the navershnik that were both longer and had long wide sleeves. As they were worn by wealthier women, they were made of rich, figured fabrics of wool, cotton, or piled materials.



Layer 3 - Long, wide-sleeved overgarments

Dalmatica

A 2nd or 3rd layer that tended to be longer than a navershnik with wide sleeve openings. The dress tends to be more heavily decorated either with a printed or brocaded fabric or bands of trim or embroidery at the sleeve openings or hem.

This tended to be an item worn by members of the higher classes.

It was worn either belted or unbelted.

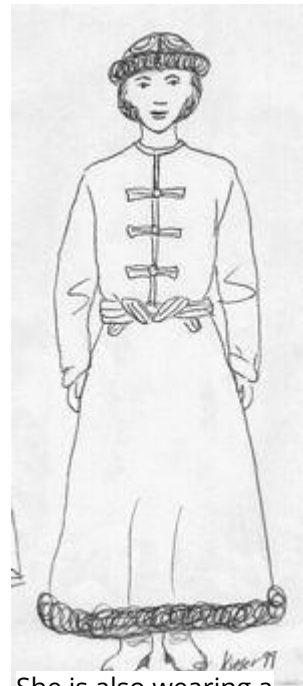


Layer 4 - Narrow, Long-sleeved Overgarments

Outer layers worn for warmth, or possibly to demonstrate wealth, may also have been worn over the layers of dresses in the manner of a robe called a svita.

It could have been used as a light outer layer made of wool during much of the year and lined with fur during the cold winters. Sources indicate that it had an opening that extended partially down the center of the torso with button and loop or button-loop tabs to secure it.

The cut of the svita was close to the body with long, narrow sleeves; it was generally mid-calf or below for women and below the knee to mid-calf for men.



She is also wearing a svita and boots.
sofyalarus.info



Layer 5 - Cloak-like garments

A outer garment called a either a kozhukh or shubki which was basically a fur coat in which the fur was turned towards the inside. Peasants would have worn it with no material covering the outside while wealthier city dwellers would have had brightly colored and rich coverings for the fur lining.

Cloaks were also worn during this early period that were edged with trim and fastened with large clasps or fibula either in the middle of the chest or towards either shoulder with a small chain connecting them.

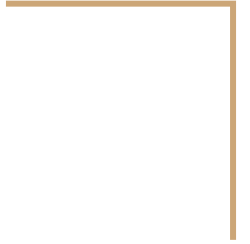
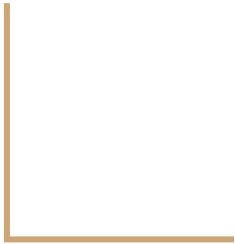


Image from mural



Cloak From Savelyeva Ekaterina

Layers - Men



Layers

Men wore layers that were similar to women although not as numerous.

1. Pants and undertunic
2. Light or heavy overtunic
3. Cloak-like garments

Layer 1 - Rubakha and Undertunic

The basic men's clothing consisted of a shirt and trousers.

The pants, called porty, were not the large, blousy trousers generally depicted as worn by the Vikings; they were narrow and clearly showed the line of the leg. Pants were usually tucked into boots, wrapped at the calf with onuchi or puttee, or in the case of the wealthy classes covered with nogovitsy (a type of gaiter).

The undertunic would have been made from linen or wool. Wealthy men may have worn a second fine wool or silk tunic over the base layer.



Layer 2 - Svita, shuba, opashen, dalmatika

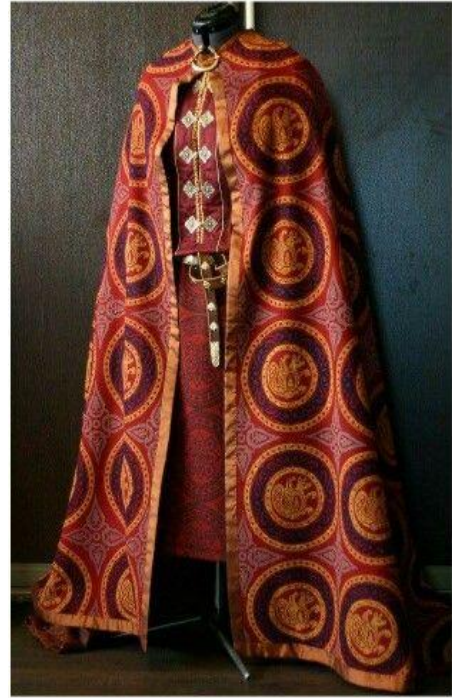
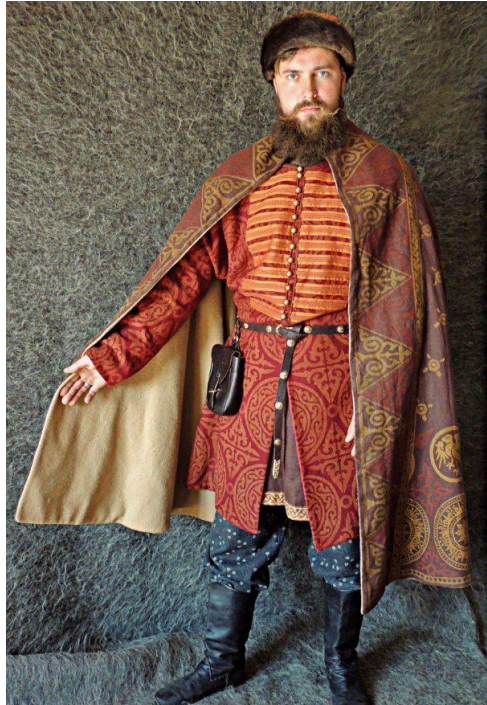
Over the tunic, men had the same option to wear a light or heavy overtunic that ranged from utilitarian to decorative depending on their status.

They may have been made of fine wool or silk with decoration at the sleeve openings, hems, bicep bands, or collar.



Layer 3 - Cloaks

Cloaks were also worn during this early period that were edged with trim and fastened with large clasps or fibula either in the middle of the chest or towards either shoulder with a small chain connecting them.





Basic Accessories



Shoes

Among the poor and those in rural areas some of the people wore shoes made of plant fibers, however, those with more wealth and in the cities preferred leather shoes and boots.

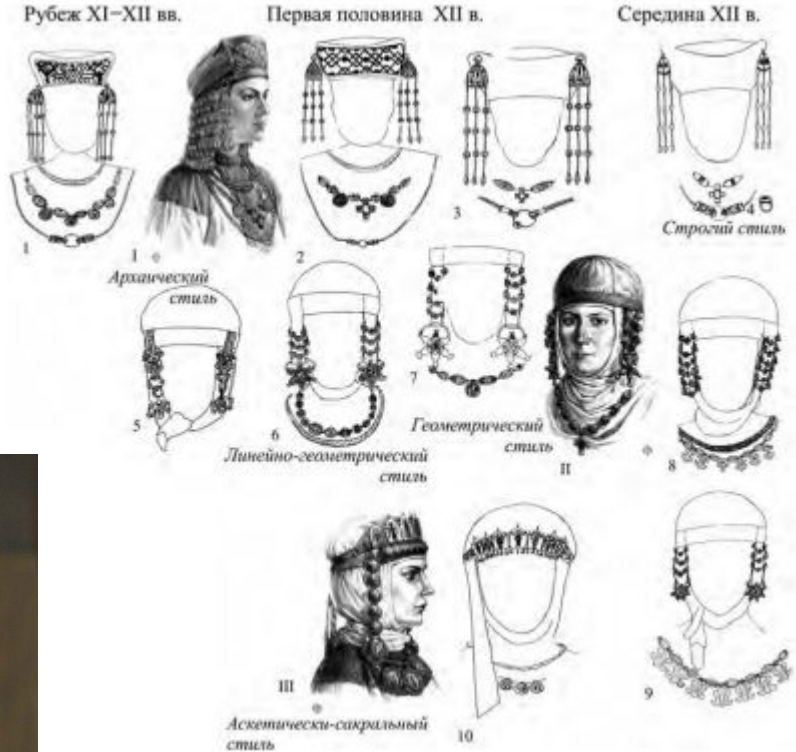
They ranged from low shoes with cutouts to high boots of various colors. Colored leather indicated wealth.



Hats and Headdresses



Жіночі платки



Resources

Mistress Sofya la Rus Medieval Russian Life (<http://www.sofyalarus.info/Russia/>)

Ancient Russia: Life and Culture. Edited by B. A. Rybakov For the material site administrator thank VI Kulakov and E. Tyurin. scanning and text processing NT.

Kievan Garb: An overview of design and embellishment for 10th to 13th C Russian clothing by Sfandra Dmitrieva Chernigova