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Latvia

Fragments of Male Clothing in the 9th Century Bog Hoard in Latvia

Some of the most important textile finds in Latvia were discovered as a part of 9th century hoard, which was found in 1936 in south-west part of Latvia in Tīra Bog. These textiles were found by accident in the course of peat cutting. This hoard is considered as sacral, possibly intended to express gratitude to gods. As a result of peat cutting serious damage was done to the hoard, and especially the textile materials. Despite this damage the Museum received more than a hundred textile fragments of various sizes. These finds were obtained a long time ago and have been mentioned in some publications but the textile materials are still not fully researched and analysed. In the beginning of 1980s parts of the textiles had not been fully cleaned from the peat.

Out of 27 items included in the hoard one third are textile materials which were once a part of male clothing. The hoard is important not only because of the large number of textile fragments preserved but also because of how varied those materials were from the point of view of quality and their preparation. Among the textile materials, fragments of at least 15 different types of fabric were found. Some of the materials were hoarse and simple, some of them were high quality and even imported from Western Europe. Fragments of particular garments could be identified among the finds, such as fragments of repeatedly darned legbindings, fragments of fabric footwear, a checked woolen hood with insulation and fragments of a cape. The significance of some bigger fabric fragments remains unclear. Among those are samples of two coloured fabrics, a fragment of fabric with bands of indrawn linen threads, as well as fragments of fabrics with woven-in tufts of unspun wool. Some smaller textile materials have also been preserved, for example, the fragments of three different types of tablet-woven bands, a part of a braid and a ball of woolen yarn.

Not many textile materials from this period have been found in Latvia. Usually those that are found are very small, therefore, one of the most valuable finds was a large cape that was fully reconstructable. The size of the cape was 110 x 210 cm and all the most significant details were preserved – both the starting and finishing edges, tablet-woven bands, both lateral edges and corners. The analysis of the textile materials confirms that a part of the materials is originally from Western Europe. Also the circumstances in which the hoard was found can to a certain extent be linked to the bog finds in Northern Europe.

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