

3 Dress in the Archaic Period:

The eighth to sixth centuries

Because the Greeks of the time produced no figurative art and had lost the art of writing we are almost wholly ignorant of the appearance of Greek clothing between the twelfth and the eighth centuries. Despite this, however, we can see that major changes must have occurred during this period. By the eighth century the tightly-fitting tailored female clothes of the Bronze Age had been replaced by looser garments that were draped or pinned in place on the body. The archaeologically recorded appearance of pairs of long dress pins in graves of the late eleventh century probably marks this change in fashion.

In the eighth century representations of the human figure reappear in art. At first they are shown in a highly stylized form (figure 15) but more realistic representations begin in the seventh century.



15 Highly stylized eighth century figures of a man in a long *chiton* and *chlaina* and a woman in a *peplos*

Wraps

When outside of the house a Greek woman invariably wore a cloak or wrap over her tunic. This was always a simple rectangle of wool or linen of varying size and was worn in a variety of ways. Modern scholars tend to lump all such garments together under the term *himation*, which was probably a generic term for them. As we shall see later we know the names of a variety of wraps but we cannot identify specific ones in the surviving illustrations.

As described in the previous chapter the *himation* might simply be worn over the shoulders like a shawl. This is known as the 'symmetrical *himation*' (figure 18 and colour plate 4). In this case the *himation* was sometimes pulled up over the head.

More complex was the 'transverse *himation*' which was chiefly worn over the Ionic *chiton* (figure 33). Here the centre of the *himation* was placed over one hip. One end was brought across the chest, the other around the back and they were then pinned together along the shoulder (and sometimes the upper arm). Frequently the upper edge was rolled or folded down.



A large *himation* might be worn wrapped around the body (figure 34). One end would be hung forward from the left shoulder. The rest would then be brought across the back and either under the right arm or over the right shoulder and covering the right arm. It was then passed across the chest and either flung back over the left shoulder or draped over the left arm. To stop it slipping off the arm a fold of the *himation* was sometimes tucked into the girdle. In some instances the edge of the *himation* was folded down before putting it on. This created an overfold along the edge.

As already mentioned, we know the names of several kinds of wrap. The *chlanis* was made of particularly fine wool, that from Miletos being especially famous. The *xystis* was another fine wrap used on special occasions while the *ephestris* was similar to it but made of thicker wool. Others mentioned include the *ledos*, *ledarion*, *ampechonon* and *lope*.

Underclothes

We have almost no evidence about underclothes beyond some references to a soft band sometimes tied around the breasts. This was known (among other names) as a *strophion*. Representations of it are rare but on one vase a figure of Atalanta (figure 35), a mythological heroine, wears something not dissimilar to a modern brassiere. This is presumably an example of a *strophion*. She also wears a form of loin-cloth (*zoma*).

Entertainers and *Hetairai*

A number of representations of male drinking parties show female entertainers and *hetairai*, high class courtesans. Musicians and dancers may wear 'exotic' costumes (colour plate 3) or skimpy and revealing versions of the *chiton*. The *hetairai* are usually more modestly dressed but reveal their status by their presence at the parties where no respectable woman would have been found.



34 Woman wearing a *himation* draped over an Ionic *chiton*

35 Atalanta in *strophion* and *zoma*

5 Male dress in the Classical Period:

The sixth and fifth centuries

In the classical period Greek men wore clothes that were very similar to those of their womenfolk. Their dress was distinguished more by colour, material and size than by differences in the cut of the garments. Male fashions of this period followed the same trend as female, with simpler clothes replacing the richer garments worn earlier.

Tunics

All the varieties of tunics described in the preceding chapter were worn by men, although in slightly different forms. The Ionic *chiton* was worn in both long (ankle-length; figure 36) and short (to the thigh or knee; colour plate 5) versions. The long Ionic *chiton* tended to be worn by older men and also by others on religious or ceremonial occasions. It also became the standard garb for professional musicians (figure 37). This long version was known as the *chiton orthostadios* or *syрма*.

36 Man in a long Ionic *chiton* and *himation*

37 Musician dressed in a long Ionic *chiton*, playing a *kithara*



The male version of the Doric *chiton* (figure 38) appears only as a short garment reaching to the thigh or knee. It was worn without an overfold but was pinned at the shoulders in the same way as the female. A variant of it was the *exomis* (figure 39). This was pinned at the left shoulder only, leaving the right shoulder and breast bare. For this reason it was known as a 'one-armed *chiton*' (*chiton heteromaschalos*) in contrast to the usual form which was classed as a 'two-armed *chiton*' (*chiton amphaschalos*). The *exomis* was the regular dress for slaves, craftsmen and labourers. The city of Megara was particularly famous as a centre for the manufacture of the *exomis*.

As well as tunics that were fastened with pins or brooches men also wore sewn tunics (figure 40). These were generally either sleeveless or had very short sleeves. Much more rarely they might have long sleeves. These tunics were woven in one piece and sewn up like their female counterparts described in the previous chapter.

Wraps

Men also wore a variety of rectangular linen or woollen wraps or cloaks when out of doors. Although the generic term *himation* is used today to describe most of them the Greeks themselves distinguished a variety of garments whose names we know but which we are unable to identify in the surviving representations. In the previous chapter we mentioned the *chlanis*, *xystis*, *ephestris* and others as being worn by Greek women. All of these were worn by men as well. In addition men also wore the *chlaina*, a thick woollen winter cloak, and the *ephaptis*, a more costly version of the *chlaina*.

The *himation* generally took the form of a large piece of cloth wrapped around the body (figure 41). One end was hung forward from the left shoulder. The remainder was brought around the back, under the right arm and across the chest. The other end would then be draped over the left arm or flung back over the left shoulder. An alternative arrangement was to bring the *himation* over the right shoulder rather than under the right arm. In this case the right arm would be enclosed in the *himation*. The *himation* could be worn over a tunic (figure 36) but was frequently the only article of clothing (figure 41).

There were definite points of etiquette and fashion involved in the correct draping of the *himation*. To let the hem trail on the floor was considered foppish and effeminate while to wear it with the left shoulder rather than the right shoulder uncovered was positively barbaric.

The 'symmetrical' and 'transverse' forms of the *himation* described in the previous chapter were not commonly worn by men.



38



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38 Man wearing a Doric *chiton* and felt hat (*pilidion*)

39 Man wearing an *exomis*

Another garment worn alone and wrapped around the body was the *tribon*. This was made of coarse dark-coloured wool and was the national dress of Spartan men. At Athens it was adopted by those with conservative, pro-Spartan leanings and later by philosophers. It remained the appropriate dress for the latter for centuries.

The *chlamys* was a slightly smaller cloak (figure 42). It seems to have originated in either Macedonia or Thessaly (where it was known as an *allex* or *allix*). It was usually worn over the left shoulder and fastened at the right shoulder by a pin or brooch part way along its upper edge. This left the right side of the body and much of the front uncovered. Alternatively it could be pinned at the throat (colour plate 5) so that it covered both shoulders.

The *chlamys* was the cloak typically worn by hunters and young aristocratic horsemen. Hunters are frequently depicted on Athenian vases (figure 42) and can be recognized by their *chlamys*, two javelins and felt hat (*petasos*). During the Hellenistic period the *chlamys* came to be worn by soldiers in particular.

40 Man in a sleeveless tunic

41 Man wrapped in a *himation*

42 Huntsman dressed in a *chlamys*, *chiton* and *petasos* (felt hat)



40



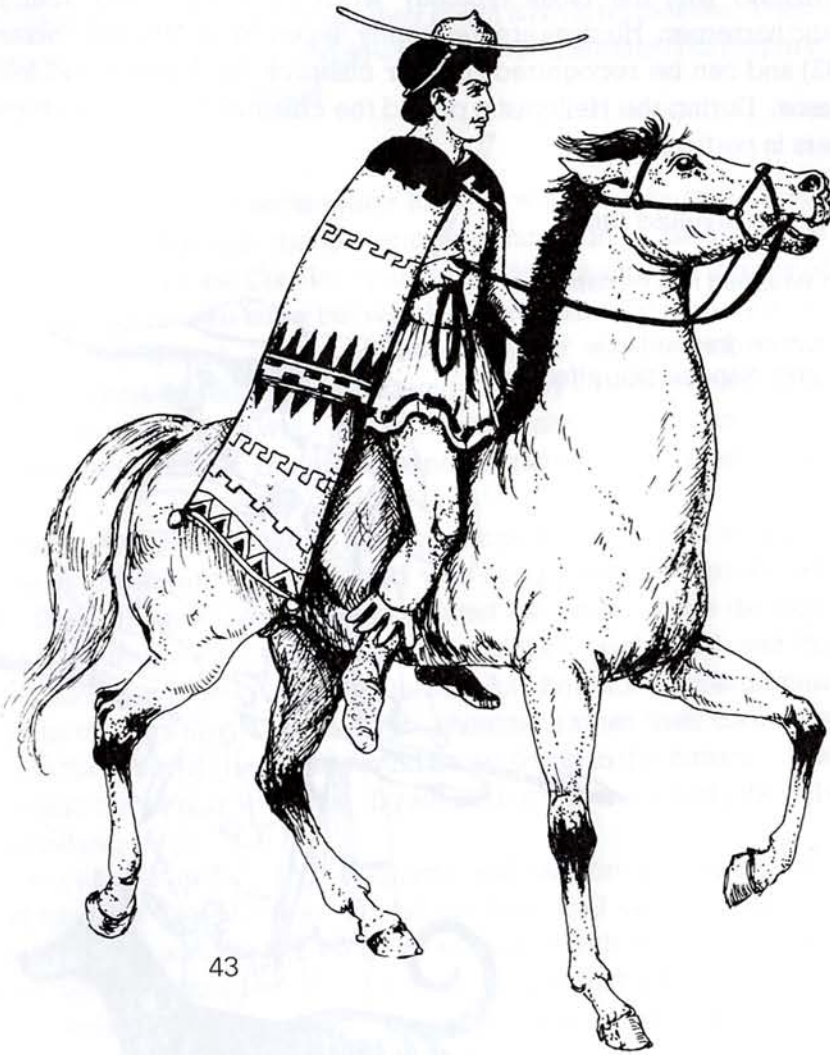
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42

Another cloak favoured by horsemen was the Thracian *zeira* (figure 43; see chapter 9). This was a long, gaily patterned woollen cloak. It was often worn with Thracian style boots.

Each of the cloaks and wraps discussed so far was considered by the Greeks as a 'single cloak' (*haplegis*) as opposed to a 'double cloak' (*diplegis* or *diplois*). 'Double cloaks' seem simply to have been folded in half to form a double thickness of material before they were put on. Where they can be recognized they appear (figure 44) to have been worn in the same manner as the *chlamys*.



43 Horseman wearing a *zeira*, *chiton* and *petasos*

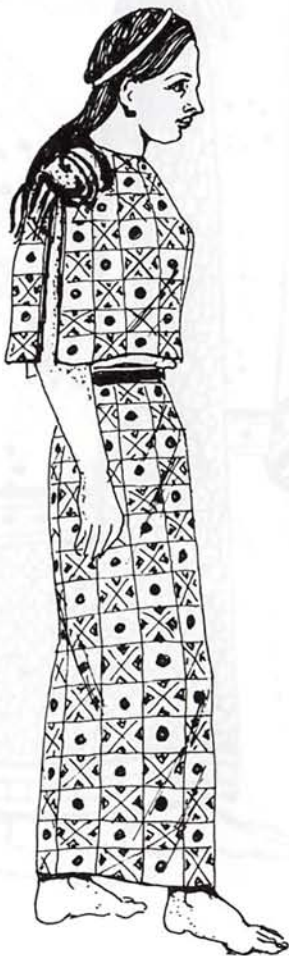
44 Man in a 'double cloak'



PLATE 1 Minoans and Mycenaean



16



17

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the earliest surviving works of Greek literature. Composed by Homer, probably towards the end of the eighth century, they tell the story of the Greeks' war against Troy and its aftermath. They are set centuries before, in the Mycenaean period, and contain a mixture of garbled memories of Mycenaean times, contemporary features and pure invention which it is hard to disentangle with any confidence.

Other poets of the seventh and sixth centuries, such as Hesiod, Alkman and Sappho, wrote of the world they saw around them. This was one dominated by wealthy aristocratic families conspicuously displaying their wealth in their luxurious clothes, perfumes and jewellery.

Female dress

In the Archaic period the universal female garment seems to have been the *peplos*. This is also called the *heanos* by Homer but this may be a purely poetic term. The *peplos* was made from a rectangular piece of woollen cloth that was slightly taller than the wearer and more than twice the width of her body. To put it on (colour plate 2) the top was folded down, creating an overfold (*apoptygma*) which reached to about the waist. The *peplos* (figures 16 and 17) was then folded around the body and a piece of material (the *epomis*) was pulled forward over each shoulder and fastened to the front above the breasts with long pins or brooches. The double thickness of material created by the overfold may have helped to prevent the material ripping where it had been pinned. At the open side of the *peplos* one edge of the material was probably wrapped over the other and then fastened tightly in place with a girdle. This girdle, which would have helped to take some of the weight of the garment off the pins at the shoulders, was always worn. Alternatively the side may sometimes have been sewn shut and the *peplos* stepped into or drawn on over the head. The side may also have been closed with small brooches but this seems rather unlikely – on vases such brooches are never shown even where the pins at the shoulders are clearly visible.

The *peplos* is often shown as very richly decorated and is commonly described as *poikilos*, 'worked in many colours'. Floral, geometric and figured designs all appear (figures 17 and 18) and are similar to those on contemporary pottery. These designs probably derived originally from Phoenician and other eastern sources. Presumably, however, such elaborately decorated clothing was worn only by wealthy women. The poorer classes and slaves should be imagined dressed in garments of plain colours or of undyed wool.

16 Woman wearing a *peplos* fastened at the shoulders by long pins

17 Woman in a richly decorated *peplos*

Over the *peplos* a linen cloak or shawl was worn. Modern scholars usually call this a *himation* but it seems that this was probably a rather later generic term for 'cloak'. Homer and the other poets of the period refer to this garment as a *kredemnon*, *kalyptre* or *kalymma*. It varied in size and could be worn in a variety of ways. It was frequently draped over the shoulders like a shawl, with the ends falling over the arms and the front of the body left uncovered (figure 18). It might be drawn up over the head (figure 19) and could also be held over the face as a veil. In several cases two or more women are shown sharing a cloak. Sometimes it was worn wrapped around the body but this style was more favoured by men (see below and figure 22).

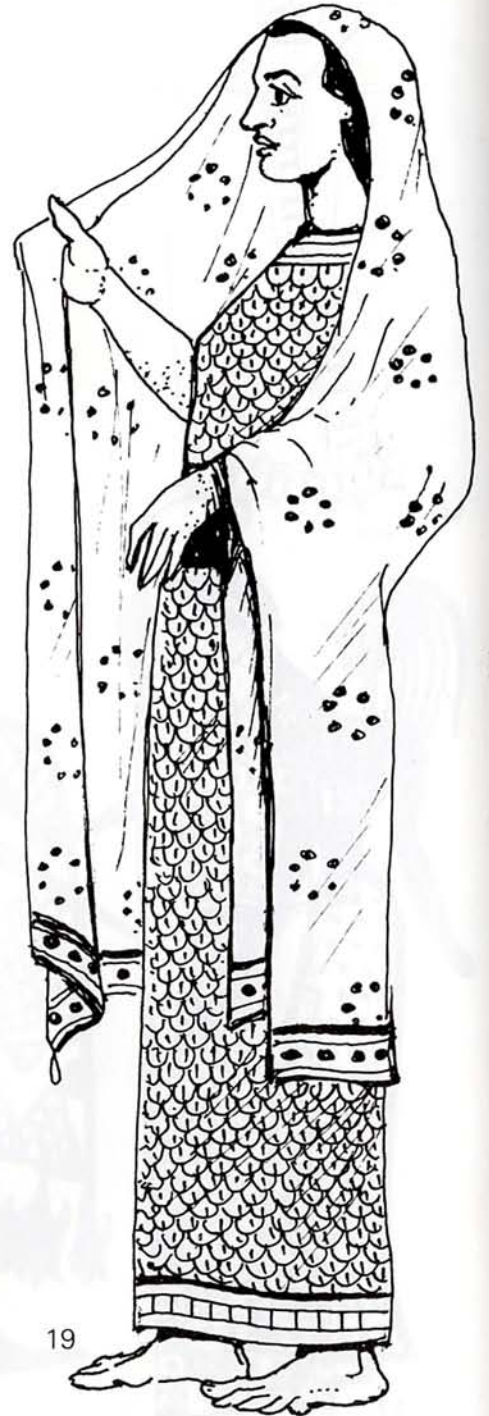
An alternative to the *kredemnon* was the *pharos*. From the poetic descriptions it seems that this was also made of linen and was a particularly large and luxurious garment worn only by the rich. It seems to have been worn in the same way as the *kredemnon*. Some sources, however, suggest that the *pharos* may also have been worn as a dress in the same way as the woollen *peplos*.



18

18 Woman wearing a cloak over her *peplos*

19 Woman wearing her cloak as a veil



19

Male dress

On vases of the period most men are shown wearing a tunic known as the *chiton*. Unlike the female *peplos* it seems that this was sewn rather than pinned. Certainly Homer talks of the *chiton* being 'drawn on' and does not describe it as being pinned, nor do pins or brooches ever appear in representations of it. It was probably woven as a long rectangular or slightly cruciform piece of cloth with a gap left in the centre for the head. It would then be folded in half and sewn up the sides either with holes left for the arms or with the cross piece forming short sleeves.

Older men and the better off wore an ankle-length *chiton* (figures 20 and 23), usually without a girdle. The poet Hesiod recommended a long *chiton* for winter wear. Younger men, and those engaged in more active pursuits, wore a thigh-length version (figure 21) which was usually held in place by a belt. The length of the *chiton* could be adjusted by pulling material up through the belt so that it hung over it in a small fold (figure 21). The *chiton* was frequently made of linen but it seems probable that wool which was both cheaper and warmer was used as well.

Men also commonly wore a wrap or cloak over the *chiton*. Sometimes indeed no *chiton* was worn and the wrap was the only garment (figure 22). The male cloak was generally described by contemporary writers as a *chlaina* although again the word *himation* is commonly used today. The *chlaina* was a warm, woollen garment worn by rich and poor alike and accordingly made in varying weights and textures.



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20 Old man in a long *chiton* and *chlaina*

21 Young man in a short *chiton*

22 Man wrapped in a large *chlaina*

Two versions of the *chlaina* are mentioned, the *chlaina haplois* ('single *chlaina*') and the *chlaina diplo* ('double *chlaina*'). The single *chlaina* was sometimes worn wrapped around the body (figure 22). One end was hung forward from the left shoulder. The bulk of the garment was then drawn around the back and under the right arm. Alternatively it could be brought over the right shoulder, wrapping the right arm within it. The material was then taken across the chest and either thrown back over the left shoulder or draped over the left forearm. More commonly, however, the single *chlaina* was worn over the shoulders as a shawl in the same manner as the female *kredemnon* (figures 20 and 23).

The double *chlaina* (also known as a *diplox*) poses a problem. Homer describes it as being closed by a brooch but no brooch is apparent on any of the surviving representations. It seems most likely that it was a single *chlaina* folded in half and worn as a shawl in the way just described. The brooch could then have fastened it on the wearer's chest.

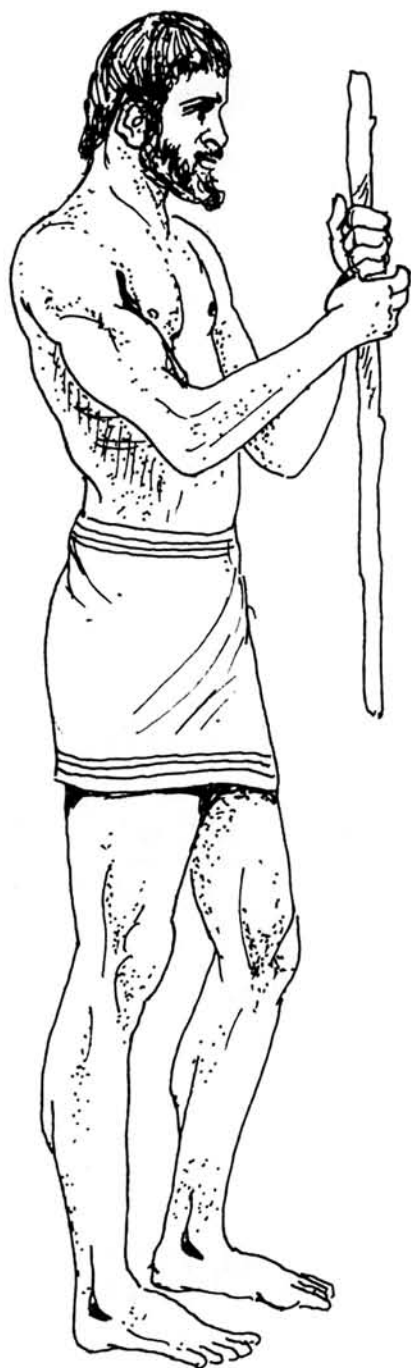
Men also wore the linen *pharos* which has already been described above. It was draped in the same way as the single *chlaina*.



23 Old man wearing a long *chiton* and *chlaina*

Another male garment was variously called the *zoma*, *diazoma* or *perizoma*. *Zoma* appears to have had several meanings depending on the exact context but Homer uses it of a kind of loin-cloth or kilt (figure 24) tied or wrapped around the waist. In poetry it is worn by athletes and by warriors below their armour and on vases versions of it are worn by athletes, craftsmen and labourers. It went out of use among athletes during the fifth century.

There is also some evidence that clothing made out of skins was worn. In the *Odyssey* there is a reference to a hairless deer skin being used as a poor man's cloak. Hesiod recommends the use of a cape made of kid skins as protection against the winter rains. However, the only skins shown on vases are those worn by gods, heroes and other mythological figures. These are usually fastened around the neck by knotting the paws together. It is unlikely that skins were actually worn in this way in real life.



24 A runner and a labourer dressed in *zomata*

4 Female dress in the Classical Period:

The sixth and fifth centuries

By the end of the sixth century there was a clear reaction against the luxurious style of dress described in the previous chapter. The historian Thucydides attributed this to the influence of conservative Sparta and to a desire to render the gulf between rich and poor less blatant. This reaction against ostentatious living gained extra impetus after the Persian invasions of Greece in 490 and 480. Later in the fifth century we find the victorious Greeks drawing pointed contrasts between Persian softness and Greek austerity.

It should, however, be noted that the changes described here may have only affected limited areas. Our best information comes from Athens and it is clear that in other areas of the Greek world older styles continued for sometimes considerable periods after fashions had changed there.

Tunics

From c 540 Athenian women began to change from the *peplos* described in the previous chapter to the Ionic *chiton*. This was a much lighter linen garment adopted from the Greeks of Ionia (whence the name Ionic) although Herodotos maintains that the Ionians originally borrowed it from the Carians of Asia Minor.

The basic Ionic *chiton* (figure 25) was made from a rectangular piece of cloth. This was about as wide as the wearer when she stood with arms outstretched and slightly taller than her. It was folded into a cylinder which was sewn up at the side. The upper edge was then closed along the shoulders and upper arms by a series of small brooches or buttons (colour plate 4). Alternatively it might sometimes be stitched. Finally a girdle was tied around the waist, which pulled in the material and created long, baggy sleeves. The excess length was pulled up through the girdle to hang down in a kind of pouch (the *kolpos*) of varying size. Occasionally crossed cords were worn on the torso to hold the *chiton* in place (colour plate 4).

Although the *peplos* and the Ionic *chiton* co-existed for a time and were even worn together (see figure 29), with the *chiton* under the *peplos*, the *chiton* soon became the most popular garment among Athenian women and spread to other areas of mainland Greece. Herodotos tells a spurious but fascinating story of an Athenian expedition against the island of Aigina



25 Woman tying a girdle around an Ionic *chiton*

at some time in the early to middle sixth century. The expedition was wiped out but for one man. When the survivor reached home and broke the news the enraged women pulled the long pins from their *peploi* and stabbed him to death. The horrified Athenians supposedly punished their women by making them adopt the Ionic *chiton* which was not closed with long dress pins.

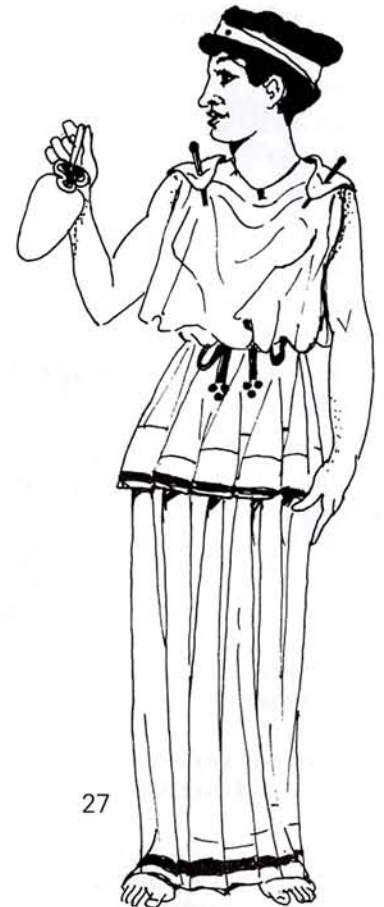
Early in the fifth century the *peplos* came back into fashion. It was a wider, fuller garment than before, made of lighter wool, simpler in style and frequently plain or with only coloured borders. The Dorian Greeks of the Peloponnese had continued to wear it during its time out of favour in Athens and it had become particularly associated with them. For this reason it was frequently called the Doric *chiton* rather than the *peplos*, although Herodotos always refers to it as an *esthes*.

It was put on and pinned at the shoulder (figure 26) as described in the previous chapter and was usually girdled at the waist. The overfold (*apoptygma*) tended to be longer than before, frequently long enough to hide the girdle, although its size did vary. One variety (figure 27), with a very long overfold and the girdle worn on top of the overfold, is known as the '*peplos of Athena*'. It is called this because it was the style used by the sculptor Pheidias on his famous statue of Athena Parthenos.



26

26 Woman wearing a Doric *chiton*



27

27 Woman wearing the '*peplos of Athena*'

The Doric *chiton* like the Ionic was usually sewn up at the side, occasionally with a decorated seam, but it might be worn open (*schistos*; figure 28). This was the way Spartan women wore it and the Athenians of the fifth century were scandalized because the Spartans also wore it without a girdle.

The two types of *chiton* were sometimes worn together again (figure 29) and soon began to influence each other. A number of varied styles are shown in surviving representations. Frequently the dress worn is so hybrid that it is difficult to tell whether it should be classed as Doric or Ionic. Some (figure 30) combine the pinning of the Ionic *chiton* with the Doric overfold. The Doric *chiton* might have some material pulled up through the girdle, creating an Ionic style *kolpos*. An incipient version of this can be seen on figure 27. Other varieties of tunic include an Ionic *chiton* with two girdles and two *kolpoi* (figure 31) and a Doric *chiton* (figure 29) showing two overfolds, one to the waist and the other to the breasts. One of these overfolds must have been sewn on to the *chiton* as a separate piece of material. Sometimes the Doric overfold at the back is pulled up over the head, like a veil.

Another type of tunic is occasionally seen worn over the *chiton* (figure 32). It was probably made from a long rectangular piece of material woven with a slit for the head in the centre. This was then folded in half and sewn up the sides, leaving holes for the arms.

The long-sleeved tunic (*chiton cheiridotos*) was considered rather un-Greek but examples do occur (colour plate 3). It was worn alone or with a *chiton* and was more commonly worn by women than by men. This too was made from one piece of material, this time woven in a cruciform shape. A slit for the head was again left in the centre. The material was folded in half and sewn at the sides and along the undersides of the sleeves.

We encounter the terms *chiton*, *chitonion*, *chitoniskos* and *chitonarion* in literary texts and inscriptions, but we do not know what distinguished one from another. It has been suggested that they might refer to variations in the fineness of the material or to the size of the dress but we do not know if these suggestions are correct. Similarly, we hear of women (and effeminate men) wearing a *krokotos* or *krokoton*, which was clearly a luxurious, saffron coloured garment of some sort, but we are not sure what it looked like.



28 Woman in an ungirdled Doric *chiton* which is open at the side

29 Woman wearing a Doric *chiton* with an extra overfold over an Ionic *chiton*

30 Woman in an Ionic *chiton* with Doric style overfold

31 Woman in an Ionic *chiton* with two girdles

32 Woman wearing a sleeveless tunic over a *chiton*

33 Woman in a transverse *himation* over an Ionic *chiton*