

# *Chapter 4*

## The Samnite Woman's Appearance

### 1 INTRODUCTION

On the whole it seems that the Samnite woman is not as well represented as her male counterpart in the iconographic record. This may simply reflect a lower level of interest in women's lives on the part of the vase-painters and their customers, but it may also be, at least in part, due to the difficulty in distinguishing the Samnite woman from the colonial Greek woman when the former is not shown in her tribal costume.

This difficulty is particularly pronounced when it comes to scenes depicting everyday life because in them Samnite women are not normally shown wearing their elaborate tribal costume. However, in scenes depicting certain ritual or ceremonial occasions, this costume makes Samnite women instantly recognisable. Thus we have a fuller and more varied view of the Samnite woman in her ritual life than in her more mundane domestic activities. Typically on ritual occasions the Samnite woman is depicted with her husband, the Samnite warrior. Rarely a colonial Greek appears as her counterpart at ceremonial events.

For everyday life Samnite women seem to have preferred the Greek chiton to their tribal costume. However, they sometimes indicated their tribal identity by adding some detail from the native costume to the otherwise Greek-style dress. For example, often instead of wearing the colonial Greek-style girdle around the waist the Samnite woman prefers a decorated belt. On other occasions, Samnite women wear a simple cap on their heads, or a small head-dress similar to a pilos. Particularly remarkable is the drapery worn round the hips which imitates, and was probably inspired by the colonial fashion for wearing a himation, but is fastened according to the Samnite woman's taste. (cf. the neck amphora, BM F 197 (here plate 22; fig. 68) and the hydria, New York Metropolitan Museum 01.8.12 (here plate 16; fig. 69). For full references, v. below).

### 2 THE SAMNITE WOMAN'S COSTUME

The native woman's costume is relatively uniform with certain variations in detail (Weege 1909; Láng 1915; 1940; Heurgon 1942: 424). The main element of the costume is a long garment which reaches to the ground. This is usually shown in profile and both sides of it are identical. The woman is either barefooted or wears white shoes. The full costume also includes a coloured cape which, in the red-figure technique, is portrayed in added white or purple. The cape covers the whole of the upper body and also the arms down to the elbows.

In three-quarter view, when slightly open or hanging over the back, part of the front of the cape is visible. Typically the women wear a piece of drapery, inspired by the Greek himation, round the hips and covering part of the skirt. This feature is depicted by parallel, rounded folds running down the hips. It is one of the typical aspects of the side view of the native woman's costume. A number of the vases described in greater detail in Ch. 6, 2, Ch. 6, 3 and Ch. 6, 4 show good examples of the female costume. The following three vases suffice to illustrate typical side views of Samnite women and provide the basis for the further discussion of the native costume:

1) Hydria, Naples, 874/82721. Plate 134.

In this libation scene the woman holds an oinochoe while the warrior who stands before her holds out a skyphos. She wears the full native costume, including an elaborate head-dress, a cape in added white, and the long garment with the typical rounded folds of drapery running down from the hips.

Astarita Painter.

*LCS* (3/273), p. 400 pl. 156.4; *Indigeni*, p. 17, pl. 46.

Photograph courtesy of the Museo Nazionale, Naples.

For this vase v. Ch. 6, 3, no. Ia.

2) Neck amphora, BM F 197. Plate 22. Fig. 68.

In this scene, showing libations performed at a warrior's departure, the woman holds both a skyphos and an oinochoe. She wears the long garment, again with rounded folds of drapery, and an elaborate head-dress. She also wears a type of jacket which is discussed in greater detail below.

Libation Painter.

*LCS* (3/306), p. 406 (no ill.); *Indigeni*, p. 18, pl. 49.

Photograph courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum.

For this vase cf. Ch. 1, 2 and Ch. 2, 3. v. Ch. 6, 3, no. Id.

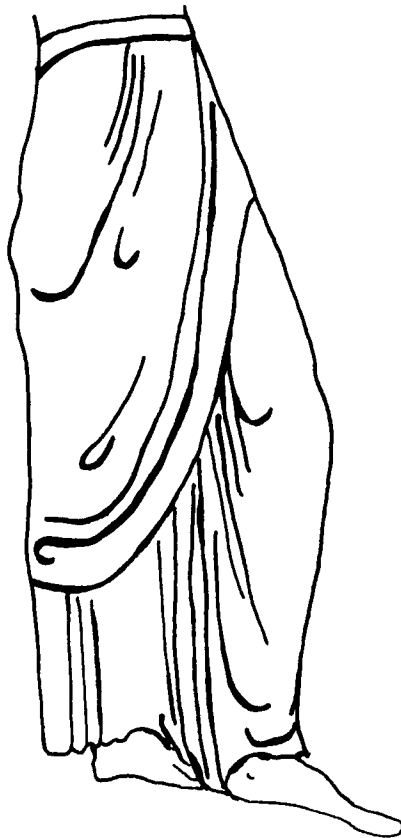


Fig. 68 Woman's skirt and drapery,  
after neck amphora, BM F197



Fig. 69 Woman's drapery,  
after hydria, New York 01.8.12

## 3) Pseudo-panathenaic amphora, Hamburg, Termer coll. Plate 23.

In this libation scene, showing a warrior's return home, a mature woman wears a Greek chiton but fitted according to native tastes. Again the typical rounded folds of drapery descending from the hips are shown. The woman wears a native head-dress and broad belt, in added white. She also wears a long mantle fastened at the neck with a brooch.

Caivano Painter.

*LCS Suppl. III* (2/577a), p. 147, (no ill.); Hornbostel 1977: 398–400, no. 342; Schneider-Herrmann 1982: 148, fig. 3; Termer 1980: 100.1, no. 65.

Photograph courtesy of W. Hornbostel.

For this vase cf. Ch. 1, 2 and Ch. 2, 3. v. Ch. 6, 3, no. IIe.

Only very seldom is a view of the front of the skirt portrayed. For an example see:

Paestan hydria, Brussels, A 813. Plate 135.

Hera in the judgement of Paris scene wears a native style costume and head-dress<sup>1</sup>.

Attributed to Asteas or closely related to his work.

*PP*, pl. XIa; *RVP* (2/147), p. 112, pl. 63.

Photograph courtesy of the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

The material out of which the costume was made, seems to have been of a heavier quality than that made by the Greeks at this time. The light, often diaphanous, chiton or peplos, which we see worn by many women on red-figure vases of the 4th century BC, might have been made of wool or linen, spun into fine threads. It is unlikely that cotton or silk would have reached South Italy before the Ptolemies (for diaphanous garments v. Oakshott 1979: 6, note 13; on cotton and silk v. Lutz 1923: 31–6).

In general there is a notable trend among the indigenous women to make their clothes fit closely to the shape of the body. To achieve this, there must have been more cutting and sewing than was normal for Greek costume. The Greek dress, chiton or peplos, could have been made of one piece of material, either sewn at one side or not at all. Greek costume was draped loosely around the body and the folds could be arranged *ad libitum*, however freedom of movement would have been more difficult for a Greek than for a native woman.

### *The skirt and the drapery*

The skirt appears almost identically in all the artistic representations. It therefore seems unnecessary to describe it more than once. It is the variations in the upper part of the dress which merit detailed discussion. In general, the skirt is a simple garment the most notable feature of which is the drapery mentioned earlier. Sometimes the skirt is patterned but often it is simply left plain. Occasionally the skirt lacks the drapery around the hips. An example of this is given below:

Bell krater, Louvre K 261. Plate 68.

On this libation scene the woman wears the full native costume with cape and head-dress. Her skirt lacks the drapery around the hips, but is decorated with a vertical black stripe with white dots.

Libation Painter.

*LCS* (3/299), p. 406, pl. 159.1; *Indigeni*, p. 18, pl. 50; Forti 1977: 137, fig. 17.

Photograph courtesy of the Musée du Louvre.

For this vase cf. Ch. 2, 1. v. Ch. 6, 3, no. Ib.

As well as some purely indigenous characteristics, the skirt shows a great deal of Greek influence. This can be observed especially in connection with the previously mentioned drapery, which covers part of the skirt with rounded folds. This feature was probably inspired by the himation frequently draped around the hips of Greek figures. However, in the case of the Greeks we do not find those almost stereotypically rounded folds (figs 68 & 69). Instead, the folds flow freely from the loosely attached himation depending on the way its edge is either held in one hand, or draped over an arm, or tucked in between the

<sup>1</sup> The author's view that Hera wears a native style costume here is not shared by all authorities, notably Professor Trendall (pers. comm.). *E.H.*

arm and body. By contrast, the native woman's drapery, including its edges, is treated in a more standardised way. It is fastened under their broad belt. The edges either meet at the front or do not quite meet leaving some space between them. In the first case there are no short vertical folds at the front. Instead, long folds of drapery run across and down the front of the skirt in a gentle curve (plate 22; fig. 68) or flare out in ample curves (plate 134). There is one example, where the meeting of the edges at the front is indicated by a short curve, coming out from under the cape and turning away:

Hydria, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 01.8.12. Plate 16. Fig. 69.

In this libation scene the returning horseman is greeted by a woman wearing native costume including the drapery around the hips, the cape and the head-dress. She is attended by a servant in Greek dress who holds a phiale and an oinochoe ready to give to her mistress.

Group of Naples 3227.

*LCS* (3/284), p. 402, (no ill.); *Indigeni*, p. 17, pl. 48.

Photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

For this vase cf. Ch. 1, 2 and Ch. 5, 2. v. Ch. 6, 3, no. IIa.

This short curve gives the suggestion of drapery running around the other side of the hips. In the other case, where the edges do not meet in front, a group of narrow vertical folds run down the front (v. plate 23 and plate 135).

### *The belt*

The broad belt is worn by virtually all natives, as they are represented on South Italian vases. It is depicted in added white, in black and also left reserved in the red-figure technique. In the latter technique we see in libation scenes a woman wearing a belt adorned with a pattern of white vertical stripes. Two examples of this will suffice:

Skyphos, Bochum Antiken Museum, Ruhr-Universität, S 996. Plate 46.

A woman offers a skyphos to a mounted warrior on his return from battle. She wears native costume including cape, head-dress and a broad belt.

Libation Painter.

Kunisch 1980: 32–3, no. 117 (ill.); *LCS Suppl. III* (3/388b), p. 201, (no ill.).

Photograph courtesy of the Bochum Antiken Museum, Ruhr-Universität.

For this vase cf. Ch. 1, 4 and Ch. 2, 1. v. Ch. 6, 3, no. IIc.

Neck amphora, Vatican Astarita collection, 58. Plate 8.

A woman seems to have just presented the warrior with a helmet at some sort of ceremonial occasion. She wears native costume, including a broad belt, and holds a phiale in her left hand.

Astarita Painter.

*LCS* (3/269), p. 400, pl. 155.1; *Indigeni*, p. 17, pl. 44.

Photograph courtesy of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden.

For this vase cf. Ch. 1, 2 and Ch. 2, 1.

Occasionally a woman does not wear a belt, and the skirt and the additional drapery must presumably have been sewn to the upper part of the dress. For an example of this see:

Bail amphora, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 916.3.2. Plate 136.

This scene representing part of the funerary cult takes place at a stele. A colonial Greek is seated representing the deceased. To the right of the stele is a Samnite woman in ample dress which lacks the usual broad belt. To the left of the stele stands a half-draped colonial Greek.

Torchmen Painter.

*LCS* (3/123), p. 378, pl. 144.2.

Photograph courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

For this vase v. Ch. 6, 4, no. IIIa.

### *The cape*

The cape covers the entire upper part of the body. Often it can be depicted in added white or purple, although examples in the standard red-figure technique also occur. Plate 134

(hydria, Naples 874/82721, by the Astarita Painter) shows a well preserved example of cape in added white. The cape looks fluffy and of light weight like a wrap worn on cool days in summer. In this example the cape was kept together with a brooch, fastened lightly beneath the chin. The light weight of the cape is underlined by the upstanding edge of the neckline, which does not touch the woman's shoulders, leaving her necklace and part of her shoulders visible.

Such capes would have been made by native women, whose primary occupations of spinning and weaving are attested by archaeological finds (cf. Ch. 5, 2). The wool they used was probably of Campanian origin. It must have been of a particularly fine quality and its whiteness, accentuated on the vase, is unlikely to have been inferior to that achievable with Apulian wool which was still highly regarded and praised in the 1st century BC (Heurgon 1976: 14).

We may surmise that the cape, depicted in added purple (cf. for example plate 16: hydria, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 01.8.12), is meant to represent real examples dyed that colour. Research indicates that the purple used for dyeing, as well as for painting, was derived from an extract of the murex shell.

#### *The jacket-like cape*

Occasionally native women are shown wearing a jacket-like garment instead of the standard cape. Unlike the other capes which seem to be simple wraps, these seem to have actual sleeves, although it is not always possible to discern exactly how these garments were worn.

In plate 22 (neck amphora by the Libation Painter, BM F 197) the jacket-like cape has an unusual shape which is difficult to interpret. It fits the upper part of the body tightly. All of the right shoulder and also somewhat more than that, is covered by folds of material coming down from the head-dress. The right sleeve, which remains visible, goes down to the elbow (fig. 70). The garment is fastened at the front. This is indicated by two vertical lines and two dots, one black, one white. It has a low-cut neck-line, depicted by two rounded lines. The frontal part hangs down below the waist with a remarkably fashioned edge, indicated by two parallel rounded lines. The front part seems to be kept close to the waist by the broad belt. One can suggest that some of the horizontal lines are supposed to depict the belt coming out from beneath the garment through holes cut into the frontal part.



Fig. 70 Jacket-like cape, after neck amphora, BM F197

This solution cannot be applied in another case, where the woman wears a broadly similar type of cape, but with the frontal part, though similarly shaped, shorter and hanging loose over the upper edge of her broad belt (plate 9: hydria, Louvre K 277<sup>2</sup>. v. LCS (3/301) 406 pl. 160.1; *Indigeni*, p. 18, pl. 51; cf. here Ch. 1, 2 and Ch. 6, 3, no. 1c).

In any case one can say that the example with the long frontal part (plate 22) seems to have been shorter on the side where a horizontal line under the elbow might mark its lower edge, than on the other side. The real problem in discussing this type of garment is that the depictions do not always permit a fully reliable interpretation of how it was worn.

### *The chiton*

In everyday life the Samnite woman seems to have preferred the Greek-style chiton to her native costume. The native costume seems to have been favoured for ritual occasions. Sometimes, however, the chiton was worn at such events but with certain native adjuncts.

Plate 23 (pseudo-panathenaic amphora by the Caivano Painter, Hamburg, Termer coll.) shows a libation in honour of a warrior returning from battle. The woman depicted here is of heavier proportions than those usually represented, suggesting that she is a matron or mother. She wears a Greek-style chiton but follows native taste in that it fits tightly to her body. Greek women preferred ample, loosely arranged folds for their clothing.

Her broad white belt and her skirt, which is fashioned in the usual way (as described above) accentuate the non-Greek impression. On the other hand, it is typical of the Greek manner that she leaves exposed the upper part of the left breast, her left shoulder, and her left arm, so that the upper edge of the dress runs from under the arm on the left side up and over the right shoulder.

Additionally, she wears a long cape or mantle, fastened together by a brooch which is slightly left of centre on her neck. Her cape, which covers her right shoulder and hangs down her back, is very different from the standard wrap type and equally bears little relation to the jacket-like garment. She also wears a remarkable head-dress which is discussed below.

### *The head-dress*

One of the most noteworthy features of the Samnite woman's costume is the head-dress. The standard head-dress is of a purely indigenous shape. It consists of a piece of cloth, which is folded in rather complicated way. It is not clear if this style belonged to some old tradition or to contemporary fashion among the native women. A typical example of this type of head-dress may be seen on the hydria (Naples 874/82721) by the Astarita Painter (plate 134; fig. 71). The exact shape of the head-dress is not standardised, however. A variant example of the same theme may be seen on the neck amphora (BM F 197) by the Libation Painter (plate 22; fig. 72). Here the woman wears a long veil, which is formed into folds running across the head and into a high point on the top of the head. The latter might be caused by a particularly high coiffure underneath the veil. Some of the material of the veil rests on the right shoulder in a number of folds, while the rest hangs down the back. This would have supported the weight of the whole creation, thus allowing it to stay in place even when the woman moved her head, as she would have done in the process of offering the skyphos to the departing warrior.

A different but equally remarkable type of head-dress is worn by the woman on the pseudo-panathenaic amphora (Hamburg, Termer coll.) by the Caivano Painter (plate 23; fig. 73). The back of her hair is worn in a net while on her head she wears a relatively high cylindrical head-dress, which resembles a *polos* or an Etruscan *tutulus*. White and red horizontal stripes run round it and a row of small vertical white stripes marks the upper edge. This form of head-dress emphasises the matronly appearance of the figure. It seems unlikely that this type of head-dress was either an individual invention or a fashion peculiar

<sup>2</sup> v. note 3 in Ch. 1, 2, p. 7. *E.H.*

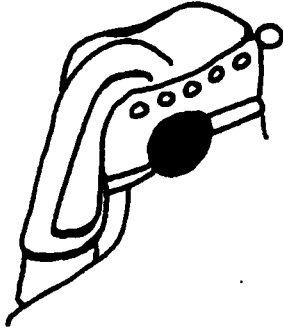


Fig. 71 Woman's head-dress, after hydria, Naples 874/82721



Fig. 72 Woman's head-dress, after neck amphora, BM F197



Fig. 73 Woman's head-dress, after pseudo-panathenaic amphora, Hamburg, Termer coll.

to Campania since there are depictions of head-dresses of closely similar or related types on Paestan vases. Rather it seems likely that it belongs either to some old tribal tradition or to a more widespread contemporary fashion among native women. The following are three Paestan vases showing broadly similar head-dresses:

a) Paestan bell krater, Richmond (Virginia) 81.72. Plate 61.

A native woman is shown wearing a head-dress of roughly cylindrical shape. It seems to be made of soft material. It is of a longer size than the Campanian example and bends backwards into some folds. It is decorated with a pair of parallel lines at both edges.

Ascribed to Python.

*RVP* (2/285), p. 160, pl. 104c; Mayo 1982: 240, no. 113.

Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia.

For this vase cf. Ch. 1, 5, Ch. 2, 1 and Ch. 6, 2.

b) Paestan hydria, Brussels, A 813. Plate 135.

The scene shows the judgement of Paris. Hera wears a cylindrical head-dress<sup>3</sup> which is somewhat lower than the Campanian example. It is decorated but it is difficult to discern the details. Professor Trendall (*RVP*) describes this head-dress as a crown with a veil beneath it.

Attributed to Asteas or closely related to his work.

*PP* pl. XIa; *RVP* (2/147), p. 112, pl. 63.

Photograph courtesy of the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels.

c) Paestan neck amphora, Paestum, 21370. Plate 137.

The scene shows the birth of Helen. Leda is shown rushing towards Helen's egg from the left. Tyndareus stands on the right side of the egg. Leda wears a head-dress of cylindrical shape which is similar to the Campanian example (plate 23; fig. 73). It is decorated with some difficult to discern motifs. Unlike the other two examples, this head-dress stands rigidly upright. Professor Trendall (*RVP*) refers to this head-dress as a 'polos-crown'.

Signed by Python.

*RVP* (2/240), p. 139, pl. 89a.

Photograph courtesy of the Museo Nazionale, Paestum.

<sup>3</sup> v. note 1 on p. 97. *E.H.*

*Conclusion*

Like their male counterparts, Samnite women have a distinctive costume which distinguishes them from colonial Greek women. However, the women seem to have reserved their full costume for religious or ceremonial events, opting instead for an adapted version of Greek costume for everyday life.

The scenes when the full costume is worn can provide some insight into the status of the native women. The costume they wear is highly elaborate. The scenes strongly suggest that they are the wives of the native warriors to whom they offer libations. The warrior themselves wear an elaborate costume and have arms and sometimes also horses in their possession. One may reasonably assume that the warriors, depicted on the vase and tomb-paintings, were men of relatively high status. All of this suggests that they enjoyed high status and probably no small degree of wealth. This view is further supported by the fact that the women are sometimes accompanied by a servant.

The Samnite women may be seen as roughly equivalent to a female citizen of high class in a Greek community. The fact that they are shown having adopted some aspects of Greek appearance for everyday life only serves to reinforce this suggestion.