

Printed-pattern headscarves in Kihnu cultural space

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of the unique tradition of wearing headscarves as practiced by the islanders of Kihnu. I discuss the importance of cotton print headscarves in the traditional clothing of Kihnu women and explain the meaning of kallisseltsi headscarves as an intra-community phenomenon, giving an overview of the origin and characteristics thereof.

Printed cotton headscarves are considered an integral part of Kihnu traditional clothing, but as purchased goods they have, up to the present, remained beyond the scope of ethnographic studies. Headscarves are classified by material, origin and purpose. Even today, seven different types of headscarves are known; names were assigned to the different types based on their patterns.

Headscarves must always be worn in harmony with the main item of clothing: the skirt. The colours and stripes of the skirt convey the events that take place in the course of a woman's life. Adherence to the rules is supervised by the elders of the community and by the more knowledgeable members who look after the preservation of the island's traditions. As with wearing, there are also specific unwritten rules concerning the care, storage and folding of headscarves.

In the Kihnu community, the most valuable cotton headscarves are those made of red printed cotton fabric that were produced in Russia, in the factories of Aleksandrov County in the Province of Vladimir in the late 19th century and the early 20th century. Elsewhere in the world, the headscarves are also known by their main colour – Turkish red. Owning kallisseltsi headscarves is, in a way, a status symbol in the Kihnu community: the owner of the largest number of headscarves is considered the proudest and richest. The circulation of headscarves is very carefully monitored, and the most valuable ones are only worn during important life events.

Keywords: Kihnu cultural space, folk costumes, headscarves, communal clothing norms

Introduction

The island of Kihnu is one of the most unique cultural areas of Estonia. In 2003, Kihnu was included in the UNESCO List of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity as the Kihnu Cultural Space. Thanks to the island's deeply rooted traditional way of life, the culture of Kihnu continues to offer valuable diverse research opportunities for folklorists and ethnologists.

One of the more exhaustive studies on Kihnu traditional clothing, *Kihnu skirts yesterday and today*, published by Kristi Jõeste in 2012, discusses the history and usage of Kihnu skirts up to the present day. Maile Sutt, a student at the Culture Education Department of the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy, wrote one of her seminar papers in 2006 and her graduation thesis in 2007 on the subject of Kihnu skirts. In 2012, Kihnu traditional children's clothing was examined in a graduation thesis by Maaja Kalle, a student of the Estonian Native Textile Programme at the UT Viljandi Culture Academy. An overview of Kihnu handicrafts and traditional clothing can be found in several books: *Kihnu Roosi käsitöökogu (Kihnu Roosi's Handicraft Collection)*, Summatavet 2010) and *Kihnu Roosi kindakirjad (Kihnu Roosi's Mitten Patterns)*, 2008), jointly written by the Kihnu master of handicraft Rosaali Karjam and Kärt Summatavet, as well as in an autobiographical book about Rosaali Karjam, titled *Elumõnu (Pleasure of Life)*, compiled by Svea Aavik (2009).

Mare Mätas (FW Pukk 2014–2015: Mätas), the director of the Kihnu Cultural Space Foundation and a passionate supporter of Kihnu culture, has said that cotton print headscarves and aprons, which are so important for the persistence of the Kihnu folk costume tradition and which have, since the 20th century, been among the favourite clothing items of Kihnu women, have sadly been neglected by researchers as unimportant extra elements of clothing and purchased goods.

Little has been published about Kihnu headscarves. A brief overview of the subject can be found in the chapter about Rosaali Karjam's collection of headscarves in Kärt Summatavet's book *Kihnu Roosi käsitöökogu* (2010) and in Mare Mätas's paper given at the Ingrid Rüütel Jubilee Conference in 2005 (Mätas 2005). The relationship between headscarves and skirts and the role of headscarves as a part of the full traditional costume have been examined in the chapter "Skirts and other elements of clothing" in the book *Kihnu Skirts Yesterday and Today* (Jõeste 2012), as well as in the chapter "Kihnu women's 'extra fittings'" in the book *Pleasure of Life* (Aavik 2009).

The ethnographic archive (EA) and the archive of correspondents' responses (CR) of the Estonian National Museum (ENM) do not contain materials

directly devoted to Kihnu headscarves, and the collections of the ENM cannot compete with the number of headscarves owned and used by Kihnu women. A search of the Estonian Museums Public Portal (MUIS) retrieves six visually similar headscarves, two of which were collected on Kihnu island, two on Ruhnu island and one in Narva. The Kihnu Museum has seven items, called *kallisseltsi* headscarves, in satisfactory condition and an additional 71 headscarves with very scarce data about their collection. Kihnu headscarves generally cannot be found in museums due to the fact that, following the tradition, they are still used in everyday life. Kai Maser's contribution in finding and mapping the most valuable Kihnu headscarves is truly remarkable. In 2004–2005, she made drawings of more than 20 privately owned *kallisseltsi* headscarves. The drawings are held in Maser's private collection.

The aim of the present article¹ is to introduce Kihnu women's unique and enduring culture of wearing headscarves and the importance of cotton print headscarves in Kihnu women's traditional clothing. I also want to clarify the meaning of the *kallisseltsi* headscarves as a community-level phenomenon by explaining their origin and differences from all other types of headscarves.

My paper is mostly based on oral history collected on the island of Kihnu. My questions focused on the traditions related to headscarves and on older or more recent headscarves owned by the islanders. Oral information and photos were collected on Kihnu island in April 2014 as a heritage fieldwork assignment for the Estonian National Textile Programme of the UT Viljandi Culture Academy and during independent fieldwork in October 2014 and April 2015.

Printed cotton headscarves in Europe and Russia in the 19th century

The oldest and most valuable headscarves worn on Kihnu island are the so-called *kallisseltsi* –headscarves with patterns printed on a red background which were brought to the island at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century; the wearability of these scarves has not lessened up to today. To better understand the phenomenon of these headscarves and their value, we should take a look at the printing techniques of the time. Although the islanders have mostly valued these scarves for their beauty and durability, not paying much attention to their precise origin, we need to learn their origin for the sake of our research.

1 This article is based on a seminar paper, "Printed pattern headscarves in Kihnu traditional clothing", defended at the UT Viljandi Culture Academy (2015, supervisor Kristi Jõeste). For valuable advice, I give my thanks to the director of the Kihnu Cultural Space Foundation, Mare Mätas, director of the Kihnu Museum, Maie Aav, museum keeper, Veronika Tšetšin, as well as to Kai Maser, Maria Michelson, Helyd Põlluste, Linda Tamm, Leida Tapp, Triinu Tšetšin, Alma Täll and Ulvi Umb. I am very grateful to Kristi Jõeste for her advice and support.

The year 1797, when the long-time secret concerning the dyeing of cotton thread and fabric with so-called Turkey red or madder was finally revealed, proved to be revolutionary in the European printing industry (Sandberg 1994: 143). Madder (*Rubia tinctorum*) had so far been successfully used to dye wool and silk. Turkey red (madder) was used for dyeing cotton in India and Turkey, and due to the non-binding characteristics of cotton fibre, it involved a complicated multi-step process. Together with the root of the madder plant, it was necessary to use several additional substances, such as lye, oil, potash, alum, sheep dung, tannin, etc. and to boil, wash and dry the fabric repeatedly during the dyeing process.

The company Nicholas Koechlin & Feres, founded in Mulhouse in eastern France, where the production of fabric with printed paisley patterns on a red background was started in 1809, can be considered a pioneer in the field of printing on red textiles. This type of fabric, known as *merinos*, was the first cotton fabric to be printed with a dye made with madder roots in Europe. A few years later, a colourist of the same company found a way to print multi-coloured patterns on the originally red-dyed fabric by using bleaching substances and mineral pigments (Sandberg 1994: 144). Continuing his experiments, he discovered a method in 1820 for easy production of bicoloured fabric by corroding it with chrome yellow (Sandberg 1994: 146).

Although indigo fabrics had dominated the textiles of various European nations for centuries, cotton fabrics with a red background achieved fast popularity, and the fabric printing industry became a global business. Inspiration for designing the printed patterns was found in the patterns of Persian cashmere shawls, complementing them with a rich variety of floral motifs.

In Russia, the use of printing blocks and stencils constituted a popular and widespread method for printing textiles. The technique of printing red fabrics arrived in Russia via Europe. Russia began importing the Turkey red dye in the form of extract from France and Holland in the 1800s (Meller 2007). The success and growth of the Russian textile printing industry, which was at that time mostly concentrated in the Province of Vladimir near Moscow, was based on cotton textiles. Being cheaper than other patterned textiles, they were very popular among peasants and the working class. Development of the printing industry was supported by the fact that, due to economic stagnation in France, many experienced dyers, printers and designers searched for work in Russia (Yefrimova, Belogorskaya 1985: 7). The Trekhgornaya Manufactory, which belonged to the brothers Prokhorov (est. 1812; according to the present Trekhgornaya Manufactory web page, in 1799), and the Baranov manufactory, which belonged to the brothers Baranov (est. 1846), were among the most noteworthy textile printing businesses in Russia in the

19th century. Shawls and headscarves, mostly manually printed and in production up to the 20th century, formed a large share of the production of the Trekhgornaya Manufactory. Most of the models already had the classic design: rich floral wreaths and wide borders with rhythmically balanced bouquets and wreaths. This textile factory is still operating in Moscow under the name of Trekhgornaya Manufactory; their production includes a small selection of fabrics and headscarves decorated with authentic historical patterns.

In 1846, the Baranov Manufactory monopolised the production of cotton textiles with a red background, and the peasants of central and southern Russia became their main consumer group. The output of the Baranov Manufactory was mostly decorated with floral and Oriental paisley motifs. The application of three to four different print inks resulted in bright and decorative scarves. Two main types of composition were used in the design of the scarves: the monochrome main body of the scarf was decorated with two, and less frequently, with four floral bouquets or paisley motifs, or the main body was decorated with small motifs. In both cases, the body of the scarf was bordered with lush patterns. The production of the Baranov Manufactory won prizes and recognition both at international and Russian exhibitions (Yefrimova, Belogorskaya 1985: 10). In 1848, the Troitsko-Aleksandrov Manufactory, owned by the Baranov family, grew the madder used in the production of their firm in the Drebent region in southern Russia. In 1889, the synthetic alizarin red dye² was introduced (Meller 2007: 32). The Baranov Manufactory operated successfully until the 1920s. The motifs based on the patterns developed at the Baranov Manufactory are today used by a Moscow-based textile company, Artel, which is mostly devoted to the production of textiles printed with old historical patterns. Several American, French and Japanese companies also produce textiles similar to the famous “Russian patterns”; these are mainly labelled as quilting textiles. Kihnu women discovered these textiles in the first decade of this century, and thanks to the fact, a large quantity of new fabrics for headscarves and aprons arrived on the island, bringing joy to the community.

Traditional clothing of Kihnu women

Within the larger grouping of Western Estonian folk clothing, clothing from the island of Kihnu constitutes a sub-group which developed in relation with the particular characteristics of the population and settlement, local economic life and the cultural contacts of the area (Kaarma, Voolmaa 1981: 279).

2 Alizarin was the first natural dye to be produced synthetically which found use in textile industry. Earlier, the roots of madder were used, which contain natural alizarin, the organic compound $C_{14}H_8O_4$.

Kihnu clothes, which people of Kihnu are happy to wear even today, have been used, with slight changes caused by fashion trends, since about the second half of the 19th century. The most important article of clothing for a Kihnu woman is a woollen, vertically striped skirt (see Photo 1) – *kört* – the colours and stripes of which express the events and related emotional states in the woman's life cycle. This is a unique intra-community sign system, a "barcode" which outsiders might not be able to understand.

Five differently coloured skirts are used to mark occasions in a woman's life. The importance of the skirt is enhanced by other items of clothing worn with it which clarify the different levels of meaning of the skirt (Jõeste 2012: 7). In a festive set of clothes, a Kihnu woman wears a short blouse (*käüsed*) with embroidery on the collar, sleeve cuffs (*värglid*) and the lower edge of the back side. Both cross-stitch and satin stitch are used to embroider the blouse; in addition to embroidery, the collar and the lower border of the back side are decorated with coloured crochet (*iegeldet*) lace or bobbin (*pulgakirjad*) lace. Starting from the second half of the 19th century, a fringed shawl with printed patterns was worn over the short blouse (Kaarma, Voolmaa 1981: 286). In everyday wear, a buttoned chintz jacket, actually a blouse in the present-day sense, is worn with the woollen skirt. According to oral tradition, the sewing patterns and the tradition of wearing such a jacket/blouse arrived on the island in the first decades of the 20th century, brought along by a tailor who moved to Kihnu from the mainland. Characteristically, these jackets have somewhat short sleeves so that they would not hinder working. Today, the traditional Kihnu skirt can be matched with all kinds of different blouses and jackets.

The Kihnu patterned woven belt, on which the pattern is formed with madder red and dark blue woollen thread (occasionally adding some bright pink and yellow), differs from the belts of other regions due to its alternating pattern. On one end of the belt, the pattern has a patchwork appearance (*lapiline*), and the other end of the belt has patterns with claw-like motifs (*küüsiline*).

The belt is worn red side out; the patchy side underneath and the claw-patterned side on top; it is wrapped around the waist bottom-up, the ends of the belt are hidden underneath. In old times, the belt was worn on the shirt, not on the skirt (FW Pukk 2014: V. Tšetšin).

Traditional woollen knitted stockings reached over the knee; the sides were decorated with travelling stitches, and the upper part, covering the thigh, was decorated with different specific types of patterns (*sukahambad*, *lappidega kiri*, *kirjakiri*). Today, people prefer to wear knee-high knitted stockings



Photo 1. Kihnu woman, Rosaali Karjam, wearing a headscarf and an apron. Collection of the Kihnu Museum. Photo by Jaan Rõõmus.

decorated with *kirjakiri* (Aavik 2009: 99, 94). The traditional dark-coloured leather shoes (*pastlad*) are today mostly worn by performers of folk music and dances; in everyday life they have been replaced by modern shoes. Shoes are selected so that they match the skirt and have comfortable heels.

A married woman's set of clothes includes a coif (*tanu*) and an apron. The earlier white coifs were decorated only with lace borders; starting from the second half of the 19th century, coifs were richly embroidered, and today the coif has been replaced by cotton headscarves. Girls of all ages and young women also wear headscarves with their Kihnu clothes, while small children wear baby bonnets made of cotton fabric. In the early 19th century, aprons were made of white linen fabric and decorated with embroidery; in the mid-century, they were replaced by cotton printed-pattern aprons which were worn even on festive occasions (Kaarma, Voolmaa 1981: 286). Patterned cotton aprons have an important role in the clothing of married women even today.

The grey women's jacket, the design of which is similar to cotton jackets, was named after the grey woollen fabric which was originally used for sewing these jackets. Today, these jackets of slightly figure-following design are made of grey, blue and greenish fabric. The knee-length overcoat, made of grey fulled woollen fabric and decorated with a cotton border on the collar, has almost disappeared from use. Sheepskin coats are also quite rarely worn today, having been replaced by modern coats and jackets.



Photo 2. A scarf with a wheel design. Alma Täll's private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*

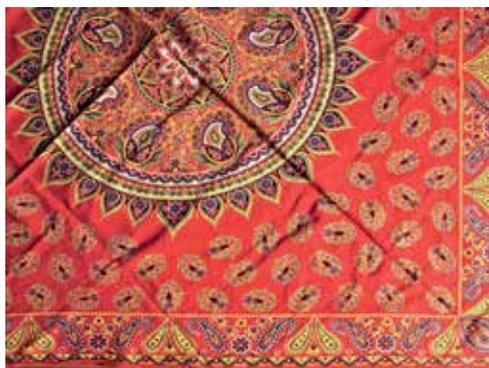


Photo 3. A scarf with a wheel design. Linda Tamm's private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*

Noteworthy is the fact that Kihnu women are happy to wear their traditional clothes on their home island, but when travelling to the mainland, they, and especially the younger members of the community, often prefer to wear modern clothes in order to avoid excessive attention.

The headscarf as an element of Kihnu women's clothing

The wardrobe of a Kihnu woman includes a number of headscarves which are selected according to the situation and the stripe pattern of her skirt. In Kihnu oral tradition, headscarves are classified according to their origin, the material they are made of, their function or their colour. One of the possible divisions was suggested by Mare Mätas (2005: 40–43), who divided headscarves after their characteristics into *kallissitsi* or *kallisseltsi*³ scarves, silk scarves, Riga scarves, fine wool scarves, scarves preserved from the time of the pre-war Estonian Republic, fringed scarves, and the scarves sent by relatives and acquaintances from Sweden in the middle of the 20th century.

Kallisseltsi or *kallissitsi* headscarves are the printed cotton scarves made in pre-revolutionary Russia, mostly produced at the printing enterprises in the Province of Vladimir in the late 19th to early 20th century. The main colour of these scarves is alizarin red, and they are printed with patterns using yellow, green, blue, black and white dyes (Photos 2, 3 and 4). Published sources confirm the existence of hundreds of versions of these scarves (Yefimova, Belogorskaya 1985: 8), many of which were owned by Kihnu islanders. These scarves, more than a century old, well-preserved and still usable, have the highest value for Kihnu people today.

3 The word roughly translates as 'of the dearer sort'. – Editor's note.



Photo 4. A scarf with the “stallion eye” pattern. Veronika Tšetsin’s private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*

Brightly coloured fringed **silk scarves** were worn over the coif; they were also used to cover the head in church, but today they are not used anymore. Young girls wanted to own silk headscarves for pride’s sake: “My father was a shop owner and he put these scarves on sale in his shop. [...] I wanted to get a silk scarf from the Lepp’s shop; my father did not want to give me one – it would cost money! But I still got a silk scarf!” (FW Pukk 2015: Täll). The shortcoming of silk scarves was that they did not hold the shape and did not sit well on hair: “Silk does not sit well on the head and disintegrates with time” (FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Tapp).

Printed-pattern cotton headscarves brought by sailors from Riga and Liepaja are called **Riga** and **Liibü scarves**. They are mostly of a bright background with different patterns and are suitable for wearing with a half-red skirt or with a dark skirt with a few brighter stripes. While examining these scarves, it was possible to ascertain that some of them still originated from the Russian cotton printing industry; for example, the “Riga scarf with a wheel design” was actually produced in the Trekhgornaya Manufactory (Photo 5). Some headscarves were also brought from Memel (Klaipeda).

Fine wool scarves came from different locations, for example, from Russia or Switzerland, and the origin of older scarves is not known (Photo 6). Mainly, these headscarves are worn when going to church, but older people also use them as everyday headwear. Some of the woollen headscarves

are called “scarves with a black cross” (regardless of the fact that the cross could also be white or any other colour). When such scarves are worn, a cross-shaped symbol, formed by the pattern of the motifs, can be seen on the top of the head. Such headscarves are produced today at the Pavlovo Posad Manufactory in Russia, and in Russian culture, these scarves were also worn when going to church.

Scarves from pre-war Estonia were bought at local shops during the first period of independence of the Estonian Republic (1918–1940); many such scarves are known to have been made at the Sindi textile factory (Photos 7–9) using a thinner cotton fabric.

Headscarves sent to Kihnu people by their relatives in Sweden in the second half of the 20th century are called **Swedish headscarves** and are used both for everyday and festive wear. Besides the red background, other colours are used as well, and often the scarves are decorated with patterns similar to peacock feathers or ears of corn (Photos 10 and 11). As headscarves of similar patterns and colours are worn with Dalarna folk costumes in Sweden, such scarves can be found and acquired even today. During the Soviet occupation, when receiving packages mailed from abroad was restricted, packages with Swedish scarves were sent and declared at customs as handkerchiefs (FW Pukk 2015: V. Tšetšin).

Fringed scarves are worn over the coif and over the short blouse. Of the scarves worn over the coif, those with patterns that depict ships are deemed more valuable. On festive occasions, a fringed printed-pattern fine wool shawl is worn over the short blouse and matched with a red or a half-red skirt. The shawl is folded into a triangle so that the broader corner is on the back and the edges are thrust under the belt in front (Kaarma, Voolmaa 1981: 286). Many shawls worn today have been



Photo 5. A Riga scarf. Mare Mätas’s private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*



Photo 6. A fine wool scarf. Alma Täll’s private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*



Photo 7. A scarf made at the Sindi factory. Mare Mätas’s private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*



Photo 8. A scarf from the Sindi factory with the cookie pattern design. Alma Täll’s private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*



Photo 9. A scarf made at the Sindi factory. Alma Täll's private collection. Photo by Mari Pukk.



Photo 10. A Swedish headscarf with the *agad* pattern design. Collection of the Kihnu Museum. Photo by Mari Pukk.

produced in Russia, for example, at the Pavlovo Posad factory.

Small **woollen headscarves** are worn in winter, and sometimes they are tied over a cotton headscarf; larger scarves are worn on the shoulders over an overcoat. Woollen headscarves have been called a 'small thick'.

The division given by Mätas did not mention **Bemberg headscarves**, which are not used anymore. These scarves are decorated with patterns that the islanders love, but they do not sit well on the head and do not hold the shape (FW Pukk 2015: Täll). "In the Russian time [the Soviet regime], when you could not get printed cotton scarves, there were many Bemberg headscarves on Kihnu. People wore them, but did not like them!" (FW Pukk 2015: V. Tšetšin).

Today, headscarves are acquired on the principle "whenever possible and from wherever possible". Scarves are searched for on foreign travels,



Photo 11. A Swedish headscarf. Veronika Tšetšin's private collection. Photo by Mari Pukk.

friends and relatives are asked to bring them as a favour, and they are bought from webshops. At present, many headscarves originate from Sweden and the Czech Republic. The headscarves printed in America, Japan and Russia with patterns resembling those of the *kallisseltsi* scarves and sold in webshops under the name “Russian Collection” (in Russia, such scarves are also called the Baranovski⁴ chintz) are the most sought-after scarves today. Such headscarves are worn on festive occasions instead of the *kallisseltsi* scarves. The main shortcoming of these scarves is their low variety of patterns – several members of the community may thus be wearing similar scarves.

Wearing the headscarf

Unlike in other Estonian regions, the tradition of wearing headscarves is alive and continues even today on Kihnu Island. The headscarf is considered to be the oldest traditional women’s headwear (Manninen 1927: 45), but married women from Kihnu have, like married women in other regions, worn a coif in earlier times. In the early 19th century, the Kihnu coif had almost no embroidery, but in the second half of the century, people started to decorate the coif with embroidery after the example of coifs brought from the mainland. Until the end of the 19th century, women wore the coif every day, but starting from the early 20th century, it was worn only on festive occasions. The headscarf tied below the chin was used for everyday headwear; later it was also adopted for festive wear (Kaarma, Voolmaa 1981: 286–287). When Kihnu women wear their traditional clothes today, they use the headscarf as headwear; girls of all ages also wear headscarves. The tradition of wearing the coif has gradually faded away. Women can be seen wearing coifs only on some exceptionally festive occasions, (weddings, state receptions, important performances of folk music and dance), and tying a headscarf over the coif is even rarer. The disappearance of the tradition of wearing the coif can be explained by changing fashions as well as by the fact that the number of officially registered marriages is decreasing – many people cohabit without registering their marriage, but according to the rules of the community, only married women have the right to wear the coif. Even on outstanding and landmark occasions, people wear their best and most valuable headscarves – the *kallisseltsi* scarves.

Headscarves are always matched with skirts to express different moments and emotional states in the wearer’s life. The **red skirt**, worn on festive occasions, is usually matched with the *kallisseltsi* headscarves. When the wearer

4 Referring to the patterns printed at the Baranov Manufactory in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

does not own such a scarf from the historical ‘pre-revolutionary Russian time’, she wears a scarf with a red background and the brightest pattern colours. With the **half-red skirt**, the woman may wear scarves with a background of white or some other colours, and the pattern can include red. When wearing **dark skirts with a few red or pink stripes**, which mark the transition from full mourning clothes, the rules that apply to wearing headscarves are more or less similar to those concerning the half-red skirt, but only very small amounts of bright colours (red, pink) are allowed in the pattern of the headscarf. With the **blue skirt**, headscarves with a blue or black background and a modest pattern without any red colour are worn; black, blue, green, grey, yellow and white are the allowed colours. Together with the **black mourning skirt**, only an absolutely black headscarf without any pattern can be worn during full mourning. Towards the end of the mourning period, small white patterns may emerge on the headscarf, and still later, a grey headscarf can be worn together with a black skirt.

Headscarves are worn in a triangularly folded form (see Figure 1). Such a way of wearing the scarf was described by Manninen (1927: 61):

The wearing of a scarf on the head and fastening it with a brooch on the chest or under the chin seems to be a tradition originating from the far-away past. [...] Later, it became customary to wear the headscarf in the way it is still generally worn today: it was triangularly folded and tied under the chin. At least, this is the way that headscarves were generally worn at the end of the 18th century. Girls often wore only headscarves, but as often they tied the scarf over a wreath or a cap; women wore them with or without other items of headwear. The scarf was often used to protect the coif or cap from rain, wind, dust or even the bleaching sun rays.

In Kihnu, women mostly wore square headscarves with a side measurement of 80–90 cm. Usually, the scarf was not folded exactly on the diagonal but in such a way that the upper corner was slightly longer than the lower one. This way of folding headscarves corresponds to the description given by Manninen (1927: 63):

There is an accurate report about the folding of the headscarf from Karja. It was done by placing together the corners so that the fabric took the shape of a triangle. Of the two corners that were placed one on the other, one was left shorter than the other. The shorter

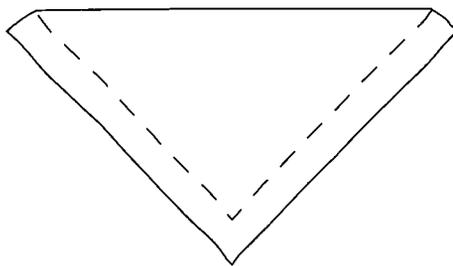


Figure 1. A headscarf folded into a triangle.
Drawing by Mari Pukk.

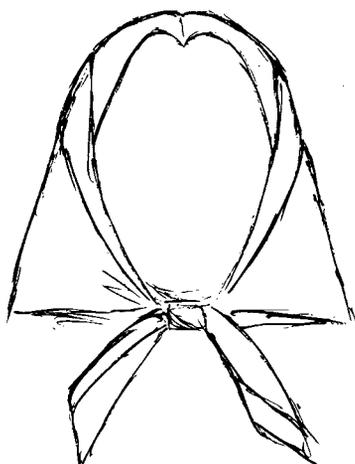


Figure 3. When donning a headscarf, two folds are shaped with fingers on both sides of the scarf. Drawing by Mari Pukk.

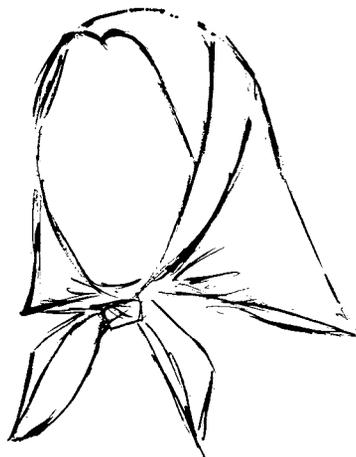


Figure 2. When donning the scarf, the sharp edge of the fold, called *nipp*, is placed against the head. Drawing by Mari Pukk.

triangle was called “pisike hilp”, the longer one – “suur hilp”; the latter corner lies on the former one. Such a manner of folding the headscarf has, without doubt, been familiar and spread over wider areas.

There are no reports from Kihnu about naming the corners of the headscarf differently. Only if the scarf had by mistake been worn upside down, it was said the *small edge was on the top* (FW Pukk 2015: Mätas). In a case in which the sides of the headscarf were not of equal length, (with a difference of up to 10 cm), it was folded so that the edge of the fold on the top of the head would be exactly in the middle, running down to the tip of the longer triangle.

Very large headscarves, with a length of one side over 1 meter, are folded diagonally from corner to corner. There is also some information that larger and more valuable scarves were cut into two triangles on the diagonal (FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Tapp).

When the headscarf is donned, the sharp edge of the fold, the *nipp*, goes against the head (Figure 2). Two folds are shaped with the fingers on both sides of the scarf (Figure 3). There is also a special method for tying the scarf under the chin. First, the left-side corner of the scarf is positioned over the right-side corner, the edge is pulled straight, and another knot is made in the opposite direction. The corners of the scarf must point downwards; they cannot be directed towards the wearer’s eyes.

During the day, it might be necessary to adjust the position of the scarf, depending on its material and on how well the knot under the chin has been

tied. When the scarf tends to slide to the back of the head and hair falls out from under it, the scarf is pulled first over the forehead and then is pushed back to its right place. The scarf is usually not taken off, and only the knot is tightened. The scarf is tied over the coif by following the same rules as when tying it on one's head. The headscarves worn over the coif are larger; fine wool headscarves are also worn over the coif.

The correct ways of wearing the headscarf are watched over by community members, but their supervision is getting more relaxed. The rule that a woman's hair cannot be seen from under the headscarf has become more lenient; this is also caused by changes in hair styles, as when, for example, the fringe cut became popular (FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Tapp; FW Pukk 2015: Täll). A woman wearing a neckscarf was considered to be bad mannered only a couple of decades ago (the islanders use an extremely rude expression, 'with both a penis and a vagina' (*kahtede riistadega*), since the neckscarf was an item of men's clothing), but now, again, the attitude is more lenient. Women born in the early 1970s have said that wearing the scarf around one's neck became a fashion when people started to bring new scarves to Kihnu during the "new" Estonian Republic (FW Pukk 2015: Aav; FW Pukk 2015: V. Tšetšin).

Women of this generation have, in their younger years, worn the headscarf in a way in which, after having folded the scarf into a triangle, the edge that will frame the forehead is folded over once again (FW Pukk 2015: Aav), or they have even worn the scarf tied under the back of the head. However, these ways are neither traditional nor festive. The general opinion in the community is that it is still better when younger community members wear the scarf at least around their neck than if they did not wear it at all. (FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Tapp). At the same time, there are very tradition-aware young community members who feel that wearing the headscarf together with the striped skirt is natural and the only way of living, and they are very active in acquiring new headscarves (FW Pukk 2015: Michelson; FW Pukk 2015: T. Tšetšin).

Storage and care of printed cotton headscarves

The characteristic feature of the Kihnu headscarves is the *nipp*, or a sharp edge of the fold on the top of the head. A unique way of folding the scarves for storage ensures the sharpness of the edge of the fold. The scarf, already folded into a triangle, is folded again, with the right side inside the fold and the wrong side on the outside of the fold. Then the scarf is folded by 1/3 using an accordion fold and folded once again, starting from the upper edge (Figure 4). This is done by holding the scarf against one's chest. Folding is oriented by the folder's hands – the fold edge forming the *nipp* is on the left-hand side. If the scarf is

folded the other way round, it is said that it was folded by the wrong-hand side.

Headscarves are never ironed, and this was confirmed by all informants. Even today, the folded scarf is put under the pillow to keep the folds (FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Trapp; FW Pukk 2015: Umb). For the *nipp* to remain extra sharp, the scarves were beaten between two stones in older times; on some occasions, holes were even beaten into the scarves (FW Pukk 2015: Täll). The folded headscarves are commonly stored in a

clothes chest in the clothing storehouse. Today, the scarves are stored in the dwelling house, and younger people store them in their wardrobes.

Customarily, the valuable headscarves are not washed. If a *kallissetsi* scarf is washed even once, it loses its value, becomes an “old” everyday item, and it is then worn only at home, for example, on Sundays. If absolutely necessary, the scarves are rinsed in weak vinegar solution or in cool soft rain water (FW Pukk 2015: V. Tšetšin; FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Tapp). Two conclusions can be drawn from this: first, the scarves were carefully preserved and worn rarely so that they would not get dirty; second, women needed to have a large store of scarves to be able to change them often and only rarely wear each scarf. Rosaali Karjam explained in her letter to Kärt Summatavet:

It is not talked about how many scarves one or another person has, but it is only noticed that they did not have too few of them. [---] Mother gave our neighbour's daughter a scarf with such a pattern, and I got one too. I have kept it until today, I wear it now and then, but it has not yet been worn out. I tell you, they are used once a year or even more rarely, once in several years. (Summatavet 2010: 122.)

“Old” and “worn out” scarves are used at home when doing housework, but they are not worn when going out of the house.

A girl was given the first valuable headscarf of her own when she was still very young. Parents bought their child a headscarf for the “tooth money” given to her at the christening; if possible, they acquired the *kallissetsi* scarf (FW Pukk 2015: Täll). Rosaali Karjam said that she had been given her first headscarf when she was three years old (Aavik 2009: 180). Mothers

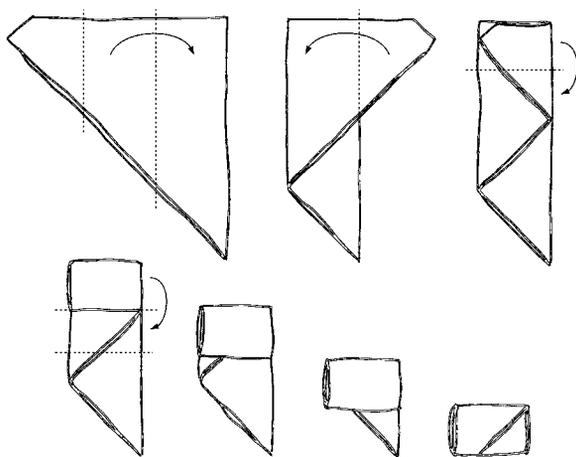


Figure 4. Folding a scarf. Drawing by Mari Pukk.

and daughters used a common chest for storing their headscarves until the daughters grew up and got married or when they started to independently go out of the house more often.

It is practically impossible to state the number of headscarves a person owns – the islanders say “many”, and an uninitiated mainlander would probably interpret this as “very many”. Every family has a store of new headscarves, which they collect and keep folded in the bottoms of their clothes chests. The *kallisseltsi* and churchgoing headscarves are counted separately, and there are still more headscarves for everyday use (FW Pukk 2015: Mätas).

***Kallisseltsi* scarves and their meaning in the Kihnu cultural space**

It has already been mentioned that the headscarves called *kallisseltsi* or *kallissitsi* scarves mostly originated from pre-revolutionary Russia; these are scarves with a red background that are worn with a red skirt. The meaningful name, *kallisseltsi* scarf, was given to printed cotton headscarves in the Kihnu cultural space, and it has persisted there – this is a term used by community members. An outsider cannot entirely perceive the “power of printed cotton”, the less so because elsewhere, cotton fabric is perceived more and more as an everyday material of lesser value, and even the printed patterns are not sought after today. Mare Mätas explained in her interview in the newspaper *Eesti Päevaleht*:

Kihnu islanders think that the paisley pattern is beautiful on the fabric used for aprons and cotton headscarves. As the Kihnu traditional clothes are alive, and we wear them all the time, it is important that a married woman should all the time change her apron and not go to different celebrations wearing one and the same apron. Everybody also notices the scarves a woman wears. This is something that makes the islanders’ eyes sparkle. Neither the ethnologists nor folklorists, who study the spiritual culture, understand this. For ethnologists, the headscarf and apron are imported articles, and that is why they think that they are not genuine; but for a Kihnu woman, the way her headscarf and apron look has for more than 100 years been the most important thing. (Saare 2006.)

For the Kihnu islanders, the importance and meaning of the *kallisseltsi* headscarves have not changed with time – their preferences about colours, patterns and material have persisted up to the present day. The Kihnu community has regarded as most valuable the printed cotton scarves produced by the factories of the Aleksandrov County in the Province of Vladimir in Russia at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century. The quality of their material and prints gives them the highest value: these scarves were made of

tightly woven cotton fabric, and they sit well on the head. The scarves have been handed down from generation to generation, and they have remained usable for more than a century. The durability of the printed patterns, which do not bleach or fade with washing, is also valued:

Pieces of old kallisseltsi headscarves were used for sewing baby bonnets, and when they were washed, then the caps made from some newer cotton fabric disintegrated and lost their colours, but the pieces of old kallisseltsi scarves still kept their colour (FW Pukk 2015: Aav.)

The *kallisseltsi* scarves which were no longer suitable for wearing were still used as much as possible; they were cut into pieces for sewing baby caps, or they were used for hemming clothes. In all conversations, the islanders stressed that although it has been possible to acquire fine wool printed scarves and silk scarves, people still love and value the cotton headscarves most.

The right shade of red is a very important characteristic of the *kallisseltsi* headscarves. Determining the right shade of the colour is difficult, and it can only be done by comparison with other, “not right” shades of red. Together with Kai Maser, who has copied in drawings a considerable number of the Kihnu *kallisseltsi* headscarves, we found, based on the shades of colour on the scarves and the drawings, that the closest to the “right red” were the colours 186 and 187 on the Pantone Colour Chart. The terms “Turkey red” and “alizarin red”, adopted into common use from the terminology of the printing industry, were not known to the Kihnu islanders, and they also do not use the term “madder red” for the *kallisseltsi* scarves. Through a close examination of the headscarves, it was possible to ascertain that the patterns of some of the scarves had been printed on a yellow fabric, and the white colour found in the pattern was not the main colour of the fabric, but it had been printed on it as a separate layer.

Pattern and composition are the common characteristics of the *kallisseltsi* headscarves. The pattern of a scarf consists of a wider border pattern decorated with flowers and vines (Photo 12 and 13), feathers or *agad* (Photo 14), paisley shapes (Photo 15) or, in some cases, with unique “horns” (Photo 16) and flanked by a thin geometrical pattern line, and the background pattern. Of the background patterns, a large wheel made of paisley motifs, leaves or geometric patterns is considered to be the most beautiful.

The names of the headscarves are mostly derived from the patterns on the background of the scarf. During my fieldwork, I photographed three scarves with the wheel motif (Photos 2 and 3), three scarves with the stallion eye pattern (Photo 4), three scarves with *mõrtsipulgad* (Photo 17) and one scarf with *agad* (Photo 14). A scarf with a pattern of strawberry leaves was only mentioned in a conversation. Among all the examined and photographed



Photo 12. Border pattern with flowers and vines.
Copy drawing by Kai Maser.



Photo 13. Border pattern with flowers and vines.
Copy drawing by Kai Maser.



Photo 14. Border pattern with *agad*. From Ulvi Umb's private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*

kallisseltsi headscarves, it was possible to identify, by discovering the factory marks, ten scarves as the production of the Baranov Manufactory.

Older informants believed that the name *kallisseltsi* originated from the fact that, due to the quality of these headscarves, they were priced higher. Unfortunately, none of the informants could recall even the approximate price of these scarves. About the acquisition of these scarves, I was told that the sailors and crew members of the ships transporting building stones brought scarves back from Riga and Russia; scarves were brought as gifts and as favours to people who had asked for them (FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Tapp). The most accurate description of how the scarves arrived on Kihnu island was given by Ulvi Umb:

A ship captain from the Tolli farm was a good man and often went to the sea, perhaps he hauled stones, and he brought headscarves to his daughters. They went to Riga most often, Jakob went on his ship, Riga has been most talked about. They had money and they brought [the scarves], that is why. These were beautiful scarves! (FW Pukk 2015: Umb.)



Photo 15. Border pattern with paisley motifs. *Copy drawing by Kai Maser.*



Photo 16. Border pattern with horns. *Copy drawing by Kai Maser.*

We can read in Rosaali Karjam's memories that travelling salesmen also visited Kihnu and sold the *kallisseltsi* headscarves (Summatavet 2010: 112). The *kallisseltsi* scarves were also acquired from the Ruhnu islanders in exchange.

When the inhabitants of Ruhnu island escaped from the war to Sweden in 1944, they thought that they would not need the headscarves in their new environment and gave the scarves to their relatives on Kihnu or sent them back to Kihnu later (FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Tapp; FW Pukk 2014–2015: V. Tšetšin; FW Pukk 2015: Täll).

Owning *kallisseltsi* headscarves is a kind of status symbol in the Kihnu community – people who have more headscarves are considered to be richer and prouder, and the circulation of headscarves is very attentively observed (Mätas 2005). In the course of the traditional three-day-long Kihnu weddings, besides the bride, the guests also change their aprons and headscarves. During church holidays, people very carefully observe the headscarves worn by other people. Used scarves are still bought today, and newer and less-used scarves are held in storage. Each mother takes very attentive care to have headscarves to leave to her daughters, and mothers of sons keep headscarves for future daughters-in-law. In earlier times, it was customary that the mother-in-law gave the prospective bride a sack of wool so that she could start spinning yarn for making her dowry; today, the so-called sack of wool includes also the gift of a headscarf (documentary film *Kihnu kosjad* (*Kihnu Wooing*), Muhu 2009).

The *kallisseltsi* headscarf is a valuable item of inheritance and the equivalent of money even today. Scarves are inherited in the family mainly by the female line. Scarves are used to pay for help and favours; they are given to



Photo 17. Scarf pattern with *mõrtsipulgad*. Veronika Tšetšin's private collection. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*



Photo 18. *Kallisseltsi* headscarves, Baranov Manufactory, collection of the Kihnu Museum. *Photo by Mari Pukk.*

younger relatives when it is not deemed suitable for their owners to wear them because of advanced age – older women do not think it is suitable to wear the red skirt themselves anymore, and therefore, they do not need red scarves either. Scarves are also kept and collected to give to helpers in the wearer's old age (Mätas 2005).

Conclusion

The headscarf as headwear is not a fashionable item of clothing today, let alone as festive clothing. The tradition of wearing headscarves has persisted in Kihnu, but the related rules have been simplified. Traditionally, married women wore a headscarf tied over a coif on the most important occasions. Today, still following the traditions and customs of the community, both married and unmarried women mostly wear only the headscarf on festive occasions. Community customs determine the shades of colour, which have to match the colours of skirt stripes, the ways of setting the scarf on the head and the ways of folding it. Adherence to the rules is supervised by older and more knowledgeable members of the community who keep the continuation of traditional ways of dressing close to their hearts.

Printed cotton headscarves have been an inseparable part of Kihnu traditional clothing since the late 19th century up to the present day, when access to headscarves that would match other clothes has become a problem. More active Kihnu women devote much time, effort and resources in searching for suitable headscarves, and their activities have even been worthy of publication in a daily newspaper. Headscarves are classified by their material, origin and purpose. Of all the types of headscarves used by Kihnu women, seven are known at present. The names of the scarves, which are based on their origins and patterns, form a part of the oral tradition, and these names are used from generation to generation. An important custom of Kihnu women is to keep and collect headscarves for the future generations. The Kihnu tradition of wearing headscarves and the related rules form a unique community-level phenomenon that can be called a collective aesthetic taste.

Searching for factory markings on the edges of the *kalliseltsi* scarves during my field observations and comparing the printed patterns with published literature, I confirmed my hypothesis that a number of *kalliseltsi* scarves as well as “Riga headscarves” were actually made in Russia, mainly in the Trekhgornaya and Baranov Manufactories, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A large majority of the *kalliseltsi* headscarves which were examined and photographed on Kihnu island, and of the patterns of the *kalliseltsi* scarves in Kai Maser's collection of copy drawings, can be identified as the production of the Baranov Manufactory.

While it was questionable in the early 2000s whether the tradition of Kihnu clothing would survive, as it was very difficult to find these accessories that are so important for the islanders, it is no longer a problem today. The *kallisseltsi* headscarves cannot entirely be replaced by other types of scarves, but as such, headscarves also cannot be omitted without ruining the integrity and perfection of the set of clothes, so the younger generation is ready to adopt new types of headscarves. For example, headscarves produced by Russian textile firms which reproduce the patterns of the Baranov Manufactory have been accepted and approved by the islanders. These scarves are quite readily accepted for everyday wear, although they are not as valuable as the older *kallisseltsi* headscarves. A major shortcoming of these scarves, as well as of other scarves produced by copying or reproducing the older patterns, is that the quality of the fabric is much lower and the shade of red is not exactly right. As the chances of acquiring used headscarves which were produced in pre-revolutionary Russia are gradually lessening – the prices are very high, and the condition of the scarves is questionable – people have started to value and respect modern scarves, the visual beauty of which is quite similar to the old and valuable headscarves. Kihnu women are smart and full of initiative – if they cannot locate suitable headscarves, they can find fabrics with matching shades of colour and patterns, and they make their own scarves by sewing borders cut from other fabrics to pieces of patterned fabric. More enthusiastic members of the community are busy searching for new sources for finding and buying headscarves. Wider possibilities for travel, as well as modern online shopping, have made it much easier for the Kihnu community to keep their traditional way of dressing alive. The number of old and valuable headscarves a woman has in her clothes chest is a well-kept secret even within the community. However, the community members have agreed that the *kallisseltsi* headscarves have a special role in emphasising the status of their owners.

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Copy drawings

Maser, Kai 2004–2005. 20 copy drawings of headscarves and aprons from the private collections of Kihnu women. Drawings are held in Kai Maser's private collection.

Item sources

The collection of objects held at the Kihnu Museum was used in preparing this article.

The author's fieldwork materials

FW Pukk 2015: Aav, Täll = Mari Pukk's conversation with the Director of the Kihnu Museum Maie Aav (b 1973) and Alma Täll (b 1927). Recorded in April 2015. The recording is in the possession of the author.

FW Pukk 2015: Michelson = Mari Pukk's correspondence with Maria Michelson (b 1987) in April 2015. The correspondence is in the possession of the author.

FW Pukk 2014–2015: Mätas = Mari Pukk's correspondence and conversations with the Director of the Kihnu Cultural Space Foundation Mare Mätas (b 1975) in April 2014–April 2015. The sources are in the possession of the author.

FW Pukk 2015: T. Tšetšin = Mari Pukk's correspondence with Triinu Tšetšin (b 1992) in April 2015. The correspondence is in the possession of the author.

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FW Pukk 2015: Tamm, Tapp = Mari Pukk's conversation with Linda Tamm (b 1940) and Leida Tapp (b 1930). Recorded in April 2015. The recording is in the possession of the author.

FW Pukk 2015: Umb = Mari Pukk's conversation with Ulvi Umb (b 1963). Recorded in April 2015. The recording is in the possession of the author.



Photo by Albert Kerstna.

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