

Heading Abbey. MedievalTextiles

Elisabeth Crowfoot

SF 536. Wiltm.C 820164 (AML.826281)

Small fragments textile, together making up a piece c.9.0 X 7.0 cm overall, one curved cut edge from a garment. Wool (App.1), Z spun warp and weft, even spin, hard threads, near worsted in appearance, mixed dark and light fibres to the eye, but originally dyed red (App.2); weave 2/2 (four-shed) twill, no selvedge preserved, count 13-14/14-15 threads per cm, now slightly matted, but probably not originally fullled or napped.

SF 186. Wiltm.C 820160 (AML.826282)

Three scraps, (a) two adjoining, cut edges, together 4.0 X 1.5, (b) 1.7 X 0.6 cm, folded. ?Bast fibre (App.1), now black, as far as can be seen Z-spun in both systems, heavily matted, weave and count impossible to see, though the length of occasional visible threads suggests twill rather than tabby weave. Piece (b) is slightly paler than (a).

SF 205. Wiltm.C 820162 (AML.826283)

Small cut strip, length 6.1, width 0.35, thickness 0.15-0.2 cm. ?Wool (App.1) spin direction and weave impossible to see, heavily felted and flattened, dark brown.

SF 430. Wiltm.C 820163 (AML.826284)

Fragment string, c.14.0 cm long, unspun grass stems, loosely Z-twisted, and then S-plyed.

The only clearly identifiable textile among these fragments (SF 536) is ^{probably} ~~clearly~~ a scrap from a garment, from its curved cut edge perhaps the rounded top of a sleeve, in an originally respectable medium weight woollen twill, dyed red with madder. Though now matted, this fabric was probably not fullled or napped, which agrees with the treatment of the majority of Z-spun four-shed twills from other medieval deposits. Numerous rather similar examples were found in both the 14th and 15th century docks at Baynard's Castle, London (TA/76-98, TB/131-160), in some of which madder has again been identified; a few come from 14th century levels at the Custom House excavations in the City of London (Pritchard, 1962, 204) and from 16th century levels of the Castle Ditch, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Walton, 1961. T/126, 137, 172, 175-8). Madder is the most generally used of red dyes, and can produce a wide range of shades with different strengths and different mordants.

The other woollen fabric (SF 205) appears to the eye to be a felt, but n.m.Appleyard considers it to have been originally a woven cloth. The bast fragments (SF 430) are badly deteriorated, but could perhaps come from something like a sacking of hemp or flax. The last item (SF 430) is the type of hand-twisted string of grass stems made by hand in the field to tie a bundle of hay or straw.

Appendix 1. Fibres

H.M.Appleyard, F.T.I.

- SF 536. Wool fibres, dyed, badly degraded with a lot of bacterial damage.
- SF 186. Some kind of bast fibre; there is very little detail, but the fibres are splitting longitudinally in the same manner that bast fibres do, i.e. into long fine filaments.
- SF 205. Animal fibres, but because of the surface damage it is impossible to say what type. This is a woven felt; there is certainly some yarn structure, but the face of the fabric seems to have been felted.

Appendix 2. Dye.

Penelope Walton

- SF 536. Wool twill madder.

Sample extracted with solvent and spectra measured with Ultra-violet/Visible spectrophotometer.

references.

- Fritchard, F. 1982. "Textiles from recent excavations in the City of London", Textilsymposium Neumünster, Archâologische Textilfunde ed.L.B.Jørgensen & K.Tidow.
- Walton, P. 1981. "The Textiles" in D.Harbottle & M.Ellison, "An Excavation in the Castle Ditch, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1974-6", Archaeologia Aeliana Fifth Series, IX.