

Castle Acre PrioryTextiles

Medieval

Elisabeth Crowfoot

Fibres: H.M.Appleyard, F.T.I. Dyes: Penelope Walton

In the small fragments of textile preserved in the well the combinations of weave and spinning are typical of known medieval fabrics, as in the City of London deposits of the 13th to 15th centuries and 15th century finds from Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1), - remains from two probable flax tabby weaves, with the usual European Z-spinning, good undyed linen, a medium grade suitable for shirts and caps, T/1, and rather coarser shirts or sheeting, T/2; small fragments of coarse S-spun wool tabby, blanket or coat quality, T/3; and pieces of fine Z-spun worsted twill, from good garments, T/4,5. Z-spun tabby, T/6, and

Catalogue. JAP.80/98. SF 29. A.M.Lab.801520.

- T/1. Strip medium fine textile, c.10.0 X 2.2 cm overall, the best preserved end folded over, ?cut edge. Vegetable fibre, ?flax; thread slightly uneven, Z-spun both systems, undyed; tabby weave, count c.17/16-17 threads per cm, originally good quality. One coarse Z-spun thread in the middle, possibly a stitch.
- T/2. Numerous fragments, vegetable fibre, ?flax, all Z/Z spinning, thread slightly variable, weave tabby, close and solid, counts variable -
 (a) c.4.2 X 2.3, strip folded double, count c.10/12-13; holes from missing stitches along fold.
 (b) 4.4 X 2.0, long edge, possibly selvedge but loops not clear, overstitched with Sply thread, count c.9/10-11.
 (c) 2.5 X 4.5, very similar quality to (b), count c.9/13; marks from iron ?wrapped in end.
- T/3. Small fragments ?wool, S-spun in both systems, tabby weave: best, (a) 2.5 X 2.5 cm, count 7-8/7-8, (b) 1.8 X 1.7, count 9/9 per cm. Brown, both probably from same fabric.
- T/4. Fragment ?wool, light brown (?stained with iron), thread Z-spun both systems, probably worsted, variable; weave 2/2 diagonal twill, counts 28/22, 23-4/22. 2.8 X 2.0 cm overall.
- T/5. Fragments probably from same weave as T/4, but darker brown, Z/Z, very fine 2/2 twill, counts 30-32/22-24. Best areas 0.8 X 1.0, 2.5 X 2.2, 2.5 X 1.8, 2.5 X 2.7 cm.
- T/6. Carbonised fragments, ?wool, best 2.5 X 1.1 cm; Z/Z, slightly uneven thread, tabby weave, count c.18/15.

Dye Tests Penelope Walton

Samples 3,4,5. No dye detected.

Fibre Tests H.M.Appleyard

- T/2. Vegetable, bast fibre; too poor state to say if this is flax.
 T/3. Badly degraded animal fibres, some very fine, some medium diameter.
 T/4. Very similar to 3. From general profile wool.
 T/5. General profile wool, some evidence of scale structure, badly degraded.
 T/6. Black, degraded, but profile suggests animal origin.

(1) P.Walton, "The textiles" in B.Harbottle & M.Ellison, "An Excavation in the Castle Ditch, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1974-6", Arch.Ael.IX.1981.190ff