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Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 45/87

TEXTILES: APPLIEDOWN, EAST MARDEN,
SUSSEX. ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY.

Elisabeth Crowfoot

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Summary

Textile remains from nine graves in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery were examined. They were garment fragments preserved by contact with corrosion products of metal grave goods. The material is typical of Anglo-Saxon domestic weaving, tabby and four-shed twills, one with possible traces of pile or decoration.

Author's address :-

Riverview
Big Row
Geldeston Beccles
Suffolk NR34 0LY

050271 7754



ARFLEDOWN, EAST MARDEN, Sussex.
ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY

Appendix : Textiles

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Textile material from this cemetery is scanty and deteriorated. With the exception of one area identified (SEM) as probably flax (Grave 14.46b), all fibres had been replaced by metal oxides from the grave-goods with which they had been in contact. There is evidence of insect damage, chewed threads and deposited pupae, before oxidisation had taken place.

With two possible exceptions the spinning in all fabrics is Z in both systems; the weaves preserved are tabby (plain weave) and four-shed twill. In one of the twills (Grave 14.41a) different directions in the diagonals indicate that this must have had a broken diamond or chevron construction, the most popular patterned weave for good quality Anglo-Saxon garment fabrics (Crowfoot G.M. 1951, 30-32; Crowfoot E. 1967, 21, 37; 1969, 51; 1978, 104; 1981, 97; 1983, 418-425, 468-469; 1985a, 52-53).

The textiles which appear to have had differently spun threads are unfortunately too deteriorated to show details. There are only traces of the probable Z and S-spun thread in one system of an unidentifiable weave (Grave 12a.25), insufficient to indicate if this was one of the striped weaves, with groups of Z and S threads on tabbies or twills, found in other Kentish cemeteries, Finglesham and Updown. The Sply threads in one system of the ?flax tabby from Grave 14 might indicate a weft stripe, or perhaps part of a selvedge.

One buckle in a man's grave (Grave 2.20) has remains of at least two Z-spun tabbies preserved together on patches of leather, one (b) lying next to the leather, a close evenly spun weave, with above it scraps (a) of a more open weave with possible remains of pile or pattern. The area clearly preserved is small, but shows coarse Z-ply threads lying on the surface of the tabby; at one end these perhaps lie free, at the other probably looping round or under threads of the ground weave. The coarse loose ply suggests perhaps a pile; it is reminiscent of plyed threads on a decorated weave from Valsgärde in Sweden (Arwidsson 1942, pl. 6c).

The thread counts and general appearance indicate weaving of good quality, though with material from only a few graves there is not the clear preponderance of tabby weaves so noticeable in larger Kentish cemeteries, Dover (Buckland), Finglesham, Updown and Broadstairs (St. Peter's Tip).

Costume evidence is naturally scarce. Something like the usual Anglian woman's arrangement of three brooches - a pair to fasten an over-gown on the shoulders, and a central one to pin the cloak, or the neck of the under-dress (Crowfoot E. 1981,99; 1985a,53-54; Crowfoot E. and Jones J. 1984,19) - is suggested by the saucer brooches of Grave 14, with the fairly solid twill on their underside a suitable weight for the gown, and the patterned twill on the central brooch from the cloak, with the flax tabby perhaps from the headveil. The possible pile weave in Grave 2 might come from the man's cloak, or a decorated blanket laid over the body. The fine tabby weave on the bucket fitting in Grave 12a was probably a cloth covering the bucket, as found in graves at Finglesham, Lucking (Essex), Morning Thorpe (Norfolk) and Portway in Hampshire (Crowfoot E. 1985d,102).

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Textile Catalogue										Location	
Grave no.	Box	Gr. no.	A. Lab. no.	Object	Position on object	Measurement	Fibre	Spin	Wove	Thread count	Comments
9	L	30	823735	Fe bud 1 -	upper side, on patches leather, (i) one end of ring protruding under (c)	0.9 X 0.8 1.3 X 0.7	(a)replaced (b)replaced	2/2, 2/2	tabby, ?file	est. 211/10 (ground) est. 14/12	weave variable; coarse silly threads on surface ?file on decoration (. fine even spin, regular weave two layers, coarse warp possibly ground cover three layers or folds; even spin, slightly irregular weave
					(ii) other end ring	0.8 X 0.6	(c)replaced ?(a)	2/2	tabby	c. 10/10, c/o	
					(iii) above tongue	1.0 X 0.7	(c)replaced ?(a)	2/2	tabby	10/8 (5/4 on 5mm)	
					single layer beneath	-	(b)replaced	2/2	tabby	14/12-14 (7/6-7 on 5mm)	
10	F	9	823755	Ae saucer brooch(S)	underneath front	-	replaced	2/2	2/2 twill	-	some of layers or folds, fine threads, coarse knarled, pupal
		19	823761	Ae saucer brooch(W)	underneath	-	replaced	2/2	twill	-	as on 9
		51	823742	Fe knife	on leather, ?sheath	-	replaced	2/?2	twill	c. 12/?	threads protrude, surface slanted over
12a	E	23	823754	bucket fitting?	traces on curve	-	replaced	2/2	?tabby	c. 20/20 (10/10 on 5mm)	fine threads, regular weave
		25	823758	square-head brooch	on back	-	replaced	2/2, ?S	-	-	threads, fine threads
13	F	29	826418	Ae Roman coin	on both sides	-	(a)replaced	?2/2	?tabby	-	threads under ?dress and ?hair fibres
		30	823752	Gilded saucer brooch	all over back	0.9 X 0.6	(b)replaced	2/2 2/2 twill	14-16/8-0 (7-8 on 5mm)	-	close folds, 5-6 layers as pinned; very fine regular spin, coarse ?worsted. Lower layers ?finer weave
		37	823739	Ae buckle	back and front	0.5 X 0.7 1.0 X 0.4	?(b)replaced	2/2 2/2 twill	c. 22/9-10 (11 on 5mm)	-	fine yarns, folds, surface deteriorated

Group	Sex	ST no.	Alt. Lab. no.	Object	Position on object	Measurement	Fibre	Spin	Weave	Thread count	Comments
14	F	41	823753	Jutish brooch	back of head, and on broken pin	c.2.0 X 1.5	(a)replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill,	c.20/20	fine threads, mass of broken diamond (10/10 on layers, pattern not clear) or chevron 5mm clear) folds on pin
		44	823757	Buckle	on leather fragments	-	replaced	Z/?	-	-	threads adhering
		46	823760	Ae saucer brooch	scrap front, mass pin end of pin	- c.0.9 X 0.5	(b)replaced (c) ?flax	Z/Z Z/4, ?tabby	- Sply	- c.10/12	fine threads, no reverse open weave; (fibre SEM) (6 5mm)
		47	823756	Ae saucer brooch	back along front edge	- c.0.8 X 0.5	(b)replaced (c)replaced	Z/Z Z/8, cr	- Sply	- est.10/12	fine threads, insect pupa confused (3 on 2.5mm)
		88	823747	Fe strip	with leather	-	replaced	Z	-	-	threads
15	P.C.	91	823751	?brooch	on back at edge	c.1.7 X 1.0 -	replaced	Z/Z	twill	12/? (6 on 5mm)	fine threads, mixed with leaf matter coarser threads
18	F	65	823762	ivory and Ae purse mount	on loose fragments, leather and Fe	1.1 X 1.1	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	12/10 (6/5 on 5mm)	leather folding round, textile stained Fe
22	M	90	823749	Fe buckle	front, near tongue	-	replaced	-	-	-	leather of belt
		91	823750	Fe plate	under leather, 6n studs	-	replaced	Z/Z	-	-	surface damaged
23	F	86	823746	Fe knife	along edge to tip on knob	1.1 X 5.0 0.8 X 0.5	(a)replaced (b)replaced	Z/ Z/Z	?tabby 2/2 twill	- -	damaged, curling round surface damaged
		92	826468	?Fe nail	patch	0.8 X 0.6	? (b)replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	c.12/12 (6/6 on 5mm)	solid weave