Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report 45/87

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

Elisabeth Crowfoot

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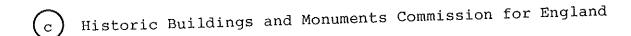
Summary

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.

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ArresDOWM, MAST MARDEM, 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 With the exception of one area identified (SEM) as probably flax (Grave 14.46b), all fibres had been replaced by metal oxides from the grave-goods with which they had been in contact.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 <u>spinning</u> in all fabrics is Z in both systems; the weaves preserved are <u>tabby</u> (plain weave) and <u>four-shed twill</u>. In one of the twills (Grave 14.4la) different directions in the diagonals indicate that this must have had a <u>broken diamond</u> or <u>chevron</u> construction, the most popular patterned weave for good quality Anglo-Saxon garment fabrics (Growfoot G.M. 1951,30-32; Crowfoot E. 1967, 21,37; 1969,51; 1975,104; 1981,97; 1983,416-425,466-469; 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 tatby; 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 Valsgårde in Sweden (Arwidsson 1942, pl.66).

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).

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 (Growfoot E. 1981,99; 1985a,53-54; Growfoot 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 tably perhaps from the headveil. The possible gile weave in Grave 2 might come from the man's cloak, or a decorated blanket laid over the body. The fine tably weave on the bucket fitting in Grave 12a was probably a cloth covering the bucket, as found in graves at Finglesham, kucking (assex), Morning Thorpe (Morfolk) and Portway in hampshire (Growfoot E. 1985d,102).

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