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PRICELESS INVENTION
OF HUMANITY - **TEXTILES**
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Textiles from the Early Medieval Cemetery at Kałdus, Pomerania, Poland

During the excavation of a chamber grave at Kałdus a bronze bowl, with a diameter of 39.00 cm, was found lying on the feet of the skeleton [Chudziak 2001: 76]. Inside the bowl the remains of the iron, open-work fittings of a wooden bucket were found. The objects were removed, together with the surrounding soil (Fig. 1: 1), and were then handed over to the Conservation Laboratory for Archaeological Artefacts of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, where they were separated from the soil. After the bucket was removed the bowl was examined. The layers of soil were removed very carefully, because small, single fibres had been noticed to be lying in it. At the bottom of the bowl lots of different textile fragments were found. Differences in thickness and quality were clearly visible. After the bowl had been removed, textile fragments were found still adhering to its rear exterior side thanks to corrosion. A wooden plate was found under the bowl. The plate covered the feet of the skeleton. One foot was dressed in a leather shoe. Between the shoe and the plate another textile fragment was discovered. After the exterior of the bowl had been cleaned, the imprint of a textile of very loose twill was found on the top edge of the bowl during cleaning (Fig. 1: 2). Fragments of a mineralized fabric were also noticed on the top edges of the fittings of the bucket.

The characteristics of these various textile fragments were as follows

1. The textile found on the top edge of the bowl, and which had once spread into the inside of it, was made of very loose, linen twill. Microscopic analysis revealed that it was plant fibre textile, which had been stuck to the bowl's side by corrosion. During the time that it had spent in the soil the yarn had lost its resilience. The individual fibres were dried up, shrunk and stuck together. Empty gaps had appeared between the fibres of the warp and the weft as a result of all these transformations (Fig. 1: 2, 3).

2. We were only able to identify the textile stuck to the side and the edge of the bucket as a linen twill because of the form of its deterioration. Due to the complete percolation of the fibre by the produce of the corroded iron, its type could not be identified.

3. The textile found on the bottom of the bowl was a non-felted, brown woollen textile twill weave 2/2, the weft in Z-spun and the warp in S-spun, 17 threads of warp and 20 threads of weft per cm. The weft's threads are woven stronger. The fibres are deteriorated, so it is difficult to recognize their thickness. Microscopic examination revealed the yarn to be of very good quality (Fig. 1: 4, 5). It is coloured in various shades of brown. 151/00

4. The second textile also found on the bottom of the bowl, was made from a non-felted, woollen material, twill weave 2/2, the yarn in ZS-spun, the S-spun thread is thick and loose, the Z-spun thread is thinner. 8 threads per cm both thread system. The fragment discovered consisted of two pieces sewn together with thin Z spun yarn. The method of sewing may suggest it was a kind of a bag (Fig. 1: 6, 7). Brown colour. 157/00

5. The light brown textile also found on the bottom of the bowl was made of a fibre of plant origin. Twill weave 2/2, ZS-spun, 18 threads per cm, both thread system. The thickness of the warp and weft is similar. The fibres were dried up and stuck together (Fig. 2: 1).

6. The woollen, plaited textile found on the bottom of the bowl was made of 5 or 6 threads plaited together into one basic thread and completed with a fringe twisted from 5 or 6 threads, drawn together as one thread. The fibre was percolated by the products of corrosion (Fig. 2: 2, 4).

7. The textile found under the bowl, made of a fibre of plant origin. Linen weave 1/1, ZZ spun, 18 and 12 threads per cm. 153/00

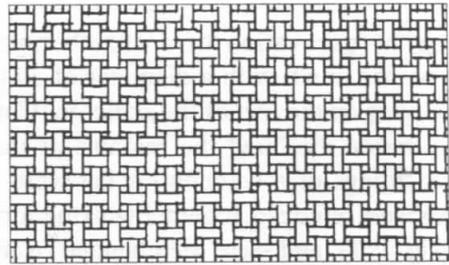
8. The fragments of textile found on the leather shoe were of a non-felted wool fabric, made of very loose weave 1/1 in ZS - spun. Microscope analysis revealed very serious level of destruction, making it difficult to describe the quality of the yarn (Fig. 2: 3). Brown colour. 154/00



1



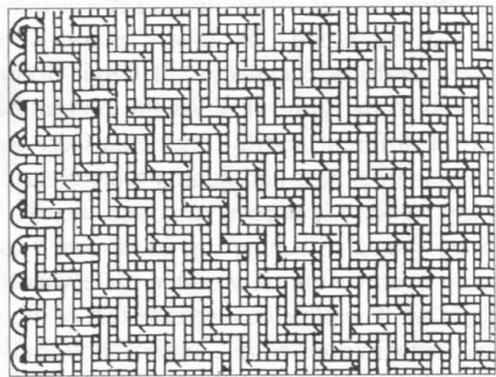
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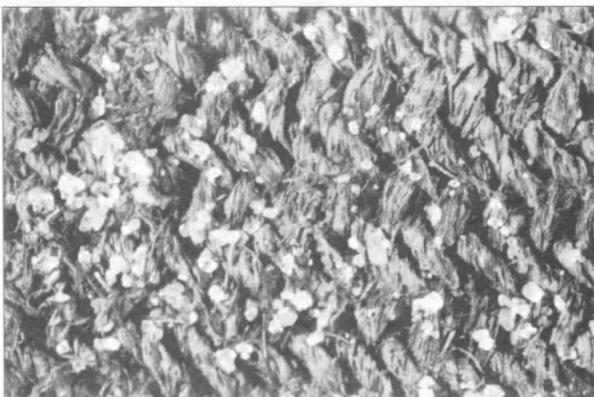
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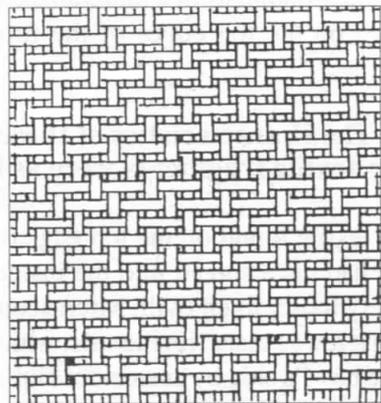
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Fig. 1. 1 – the bowl as delivered to the Conservation Laboratory for Archaeological Artefacts of Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the University in Toruń; 2 – the textile fragment from the top edge of the bowl; 3 – a drawing of the linen weave 1/1 of the textile from the edge of the bowl; 4 – the woollen textile in twill weave 2/2; 5 – a drawing of the twill weave 2/2 textile; 6 – the woollen textile in twill 2/1; 7 – a drawing of the twill 2/1 textile.

TEXTILES FROM THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CEMETERY

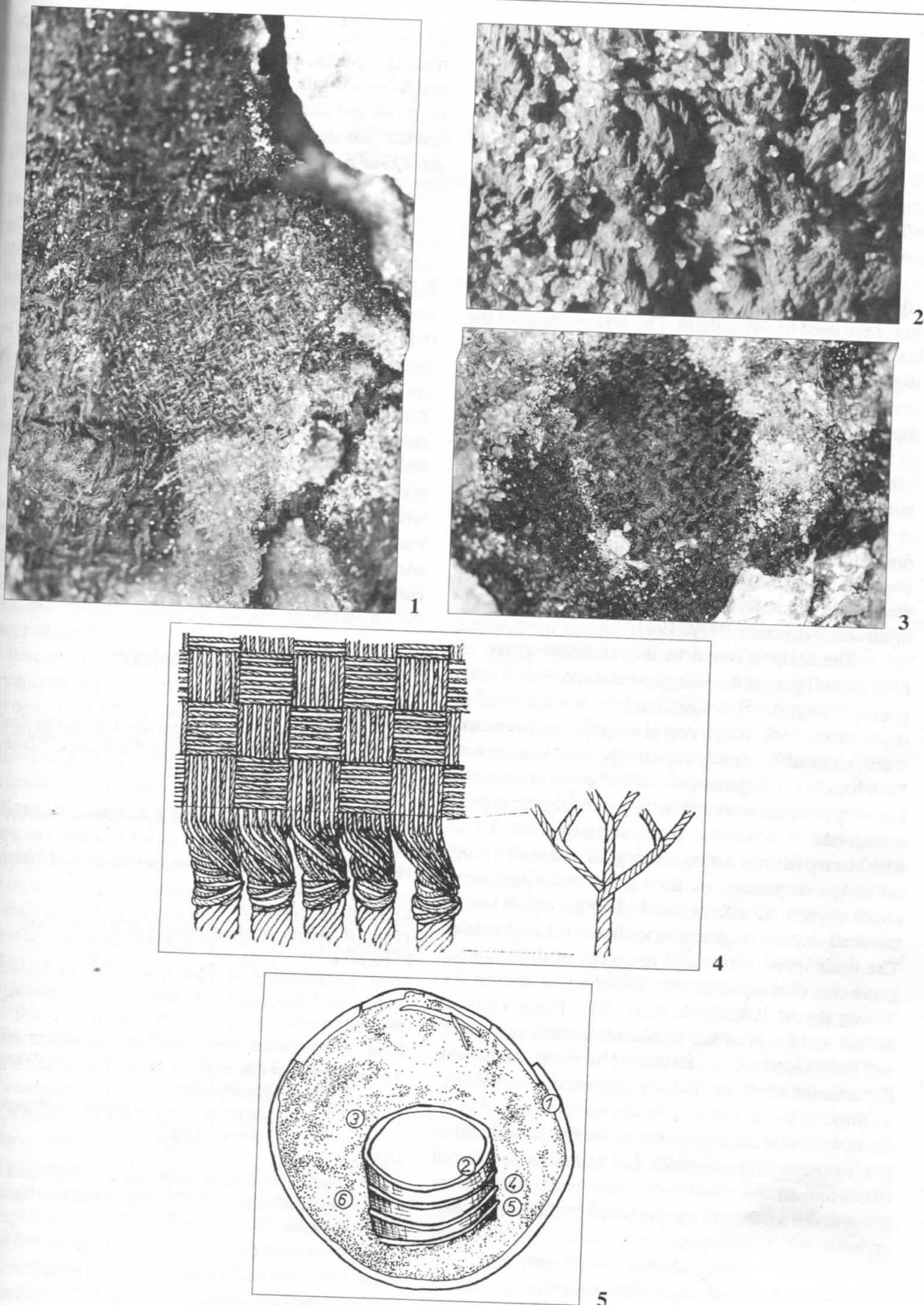


Fig. 2. 1 - the textile of plant origin in twill 2/2; 2 - the non-felted woolen, plaited textile; 3 - the woollen textile in weave 1/1; 4 - drawing of the plait; 5 - the layout of the textiles inside the bowl and the bucket: 1 - the textile from the edge of the bowl; 2 - the woolen textile from the bowl of the bucket; 3 - the woolen textile in the diagonal twill 2/2, from the bottom of the bowl; 4 - the woolen textile in the diagonal twill 2/1, from the bottom of the bowl; 5 - the plant textile in the linen twill 1/1, from the bottom of the bowl; 6 - the woolen plait, from the bottom of the bowl.

The fact that we were able to excavate 8 different types of textiles in different locations within one grave is a very interesting phenomenon, giving us the possibility to interpret the burial. We usually find reports of the occurrence of textiles in graves and this is all the information given. They were deposited with some aim, not just as clothing. The location of the different textiles in the Kałdus grave gives us some insight into the burial ceremony.

The fact that the textiles were found on the edges of the vessels and under the bowl indicate that they were used to cover them. The arrangement of the textiles on the bottom of the bowl may suggest they were used to wrap food, deposited in the grave. The textile fragment found on the top of the shoe could be a piece of a garment, or a shroud covering the body.

Confirmation that armour, clothing, food and coins were deposited in the grave are given us not only by archaeological sources, but by written sources as well. Ibn Rosteh in his travel notes *About the East Slavs* writes "they put (into the grave) the personal clothing and gold bracelet that the dead used to wear during his life, and also lots of food and jugs of drinks. ..." [Labuda 1999: 121].

The textiles found in this chamber grave are only a small part of the complete assemblage of grave goods. The grave also contained the bronze bowl already mentioned, an iron ring clasp of horseshoe shape, a leather double sheath containing two knives with horn handles, a fragment of a silver coin, the wooden bucket with open-work iron fittings already mentioned, a fragment of a wooden plate, a wooden bowl with four bronze fittings decorated in gold and with a dragon badge, a quantity of gold wire, and some other minor objects [Chudziak 2001: 78-82], which served the dead man on his journey to the world of the dead. The finds listed above and the form of the chamber grave are characteristic for Scandinavia during the Viking period [Chudziak 2001: 83]. These kinds of burials and the presence of Scandinavians in present-day Polish territory is confirmed by many finds from Pomeranian territory. The circulation of Scandinavian imports in our territory in the early medieval period as well as recurring elements such as the chamber graves preserving evidence for Scandinavian burial rites confirm the constant contact with the cultures lying to the north, and the presence of their representatives is Slavic societies.

Spindle whorls of various weights and sizes were also found all over the domestic quarter in Kałdus. They confirm that the people of this ancient settlement engaged in the processing and preparing of yarns to make textiles. It is difficult to establish which fabrics were made in Kałdus or its surrounding area. Textiles 1, 3, 4, 5, 7; 8 have features similar to

textiles made within the territory of Pomerania [Kamińska, Nahlik 1958; Maik 1988], Greater Poland and Silesia [Maik 1991], and also from Russia [Nahlik 1964] and Scandinavia [Geijer 1938]. Textile nr 2 has the features similar to those found at Birka [Geijer 1938: fig. 8 - 2, 4]. Fragment no. 6 is a totally different kind of textile made in sprang plait technique. Five threads were interwoven as one. This gives a very special effect of plasticity to the textile. The only similar example is a fragment of Coptic textile published by M. Hald [Hald 1980: 268]. The author mentions textiles from Scandinavia and East Europe (Ukraine), which have similar features to the Egyptian example. She points out that they were made in sprang technique. Who made this textile fragment from Kałdus? Was it brought there by the person buried in the chamber grave? Did it arrive there through trade? Was the technique of plaiting together such beautiful textiles known locally? These are the questions to which we have no answer at the current state of our knowledge. This example of such a beautiful textile completed with a fringe is the only one known from early medieval Polish archaeological sources.

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