

TEXTILES FROM NAQLUN, 2004

Barbara Czaja-Szewczak

Fieldwork in 2004 concentrated on the graves found in Cemetery A and within the boundaries of Building G. Textiles were also found in the few tombs explored this year in cemetery C. All the finds were cleaned and disinfected with biocidal agents, straight-

ened and dried. They were provisionally protected with acid-free paper, tissue and envelopes. Apart from registration and protection of current finds, work on the conservation of woolen shawl Nd.00-082 was concluded successfully.

CEMETERY A (AS.1 AND AS.2)

Graves explored in sections AS.1 and AS.2 of the main cemetery on Kom A yielded most of the over 190 textile fragments discovered this season. Making up this number were textiles of typically burial nature – coffin shrouds, inner burial shrouds, pillows, burial tunics – and those used in life, like the everyday tunics, trousers, shawls, scarves, caps and cloth belts.

Three groups of textiles can be distinguished by state of preservation: practically intact pieces displaying the full dimensions, fragmentary pieces of known function but incomplete, and small fragments of textiles of indistinct function.

Most of the textiles were made of linen with ornaments executed mostly in silk. Balanced tabby weave was the most frequent technique, tapestry weave being also commonly encountered. The decoration on the burial shrouds was mostly embroidered [Fig. 2]. Raised brocade patterns were observed on the decorated tunics of everyday use [Fig. 3].

Most of the tunics, for adults as well as children, were of the *galabiyah* type.¹ Children's tunics repeated designs known already from previous fieldwork, the sole exception being tunic Nd.04.028 [Fig. 1]. Made of linen and silk in plain tabby, it was decorated with brown silk stripes. Above the shoulder, at the root of the sleeve, there is a hemmed opening 12.5 cm long, through which the arm passed allowing the sleeve to hang loosely at the side. The armpit part was constructed of a number of pieces of cloth permitting free movement of the sleeve also when the arm was through the shoulder opening.

Silk belt Nd.04.235 from grave T. 371 was plaited with ornamental tassels attached at either end [Fig. 4]. Originally the belt had been blue, but only residual remains of the color can be seen as a result of reaction with products of human body decomposition.

For the first time this year, the material from the graves in Cemetery A yielded

1 B. Czaja-Szewczak, "Burial Tunics from Naqlun", *PAM XIV, Reports 2002* (2003), 177-184.

a specific category of textiles featuring metal thread decoration: child's cap Nd.04.030 [Fig. 6] from grave T. 304, shawl Nd.04.237 from grave T. 371, fragment of textile Nd.04.195 from grave T. 355 and yet

another fragment of textile Nd.04.112 [Fig. 5], found in the fill south of grave T. 305. Unfortunately, the specific piece of clothing from which the last two pieces may have come could not be identified.

BUILDING G (ROOM 5)

Meriting interest are the pieces of woolen bag-shaped tunic Nd.04.301 found in Building G, under a mud floor just by the threshold in the entrance from room 5 to room 7. Found with the tunic were three fragments of woolen textile (Nd.04.290) in plain tabby weave, decorated by *lancé*

and embroidery. The ornament includes a Coptic inscription or pseudo-inscription. Woolen textiles predominate among the pieces recovered from Building G, but their fragmentary state precluded any determination of shape, size and possible function.

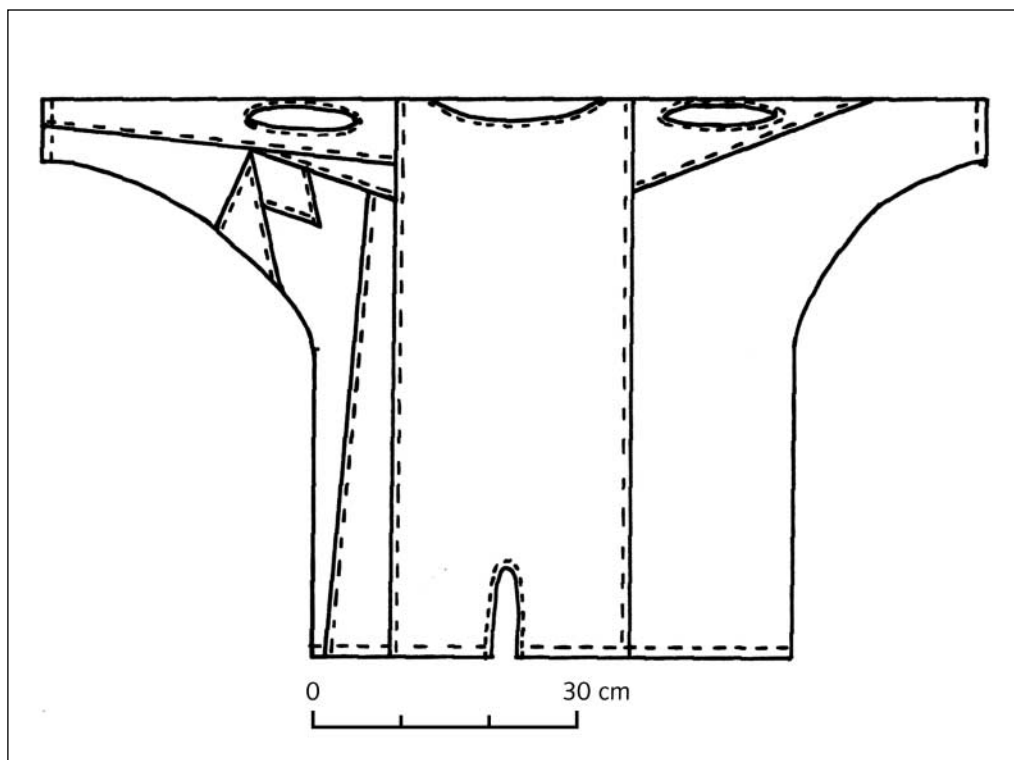


Fig. 1. *Child's tunic* Nd.04.028
(Drawing B. Czaja-Szewczak)

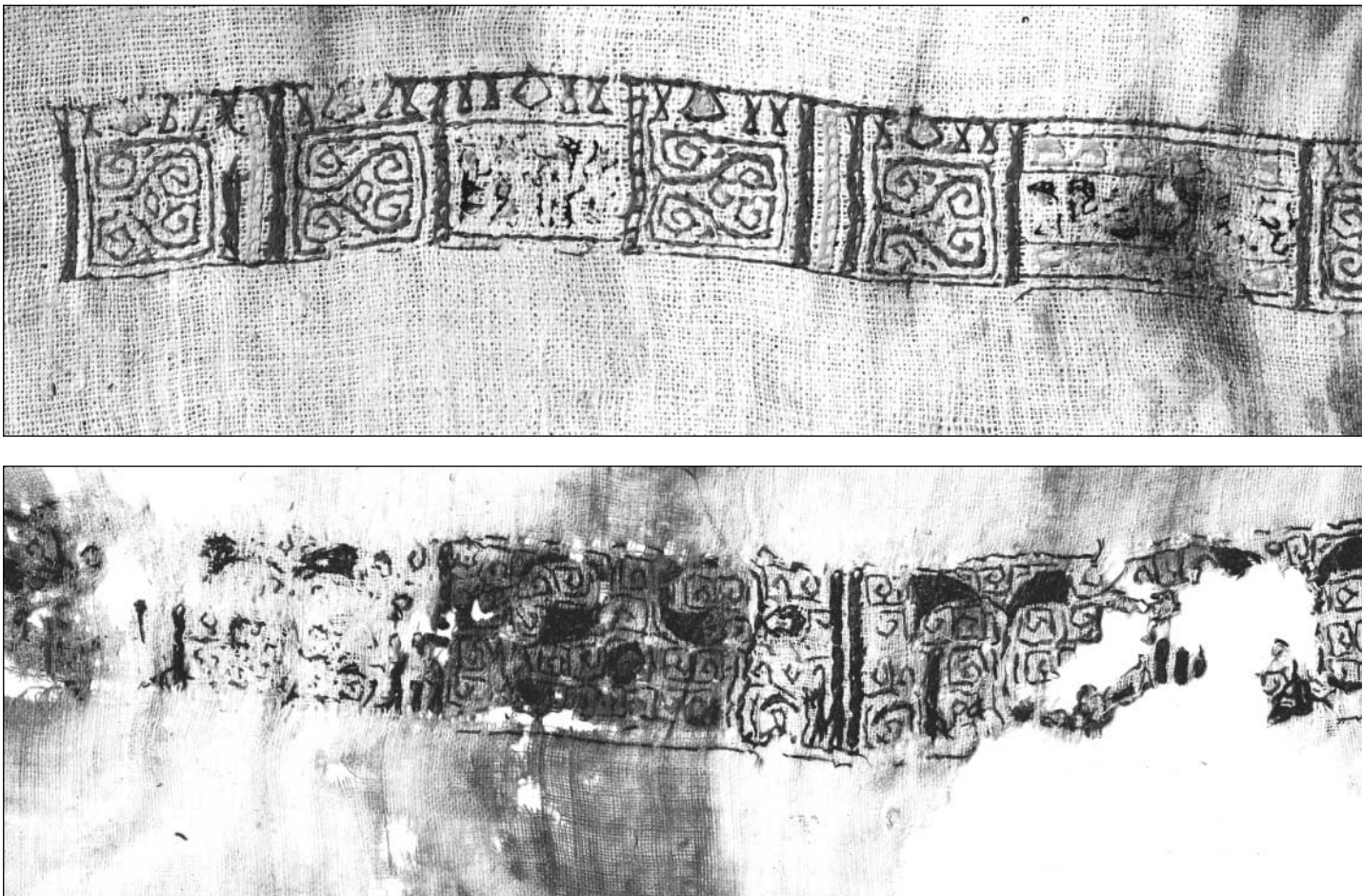


Fig. 2. Ornaments on burial shrouds Nd.04.055 (left) and Nd.04.075
(Photo W. Godlewski)



Fig. 3. *Cuff ornament on a tunic sleeve (Nd.04.223)*
(Photo W. Godlewski)



Fig. 4. *Belt Nd.04.235 with ornamental tassel at one end*
(Photo W. Godlewski)



*Fig. 5. Fragment of textile Nd.04.112
(Photo W. Godlewski)*



*Fig 6 . Child's cap Nd.04.030 with metal thread decoration
(Photo W. Godlewski)*



Fig. 7. *Fragment of robe. Silk*
(Photo W. Godlewski)



Fig. 8. *Fragment of robe. Wool and linen. Nd.04.321*
(Photo I. Zych)

CEMETERY C

The textiles from cemetery C are different just as the cemetery itself, of earlier date than cemetery A, differs from the latter in terms of the burial surroundings and burial ritual.² The bodies were wrapped in a number of linen shrouds, but instead of being placed in coffins, they had wooden boards and a construction of *jerid* branches inserted under the fabric to impart an appropriate mummiform shape. The *jerid* construction projected above the head and face to protect it, hurds of grass and reeds and wads of linen cloth being inserted into the hollow space under two layers of burial shrouds held in place by a net of elaborately plaited bands.

Apart from the commonplace burial shrouds in plain weave (1:1 strands) there occurs a sizable group of shrouds featuring a concentrated plain tabby weave. Some bear uniform striped broché decoration executed with woolen thread. Others are textured, having a linen weft of bigger diameter introduced at every second shed. The outer as well as inner shrouds were

both held in place by colorful linen bands woven in tapestry weave, carefully wrapped around the body and interweaving to form various geometrical designs (see *Fig. 7* on p. 185 above).

Among the fragments of dress textiles coming from rock-cut tombs C.T 002 and C.T 005, which were disturbed in unknown circumstances, it is possible to distinguish linen tunics Nd.04.359 and Nd.04.321.1, both made of a fine thin fabric. The cuffs and neck opening of these tunics were finished with silk trim executed in *samit façonné* technique [*Fig. 8*]. The ornament is similar in these two cases. Preserved fragments of sleeves also feature a woven tapestry monochrome decoration in woolen thread, representing a vegetal scroll.

Other fragments included pieces of linen tunics with colorful inserts: geometric elements, *orbiculi* and stylized leaves, all executed with woolen thread in tapestry technique [*Fig. 7*]. The finds have been stored for exacting analysis in the coming season.

PRESERVATION OF SHAWL ND.00.082

Woolen tunic Nd.00.083 and shawl Nd.00.082 were extracted from a roll of textiles excavated in 2000 during work on kom A. Both bear woolen decoration in the form of an inscription, which is legible on the tunic, but was most likely only a pseudo-inscription on the shawl. The tunic was preserved in 2003,³ and the shawl was the object of work this season.

The woolen fabric of the shawl had suffered considerably from long burial in unfavorable conditions. Upon discovery, it

was cleaned mechanically using a mini-vacuum. All pieces were soaked in a lanolin solution in order to restore as much of the flexibility and resilience of the woolen fibers as possible. Systematic immersion of the scraps in a water bath containing PRETEPON G was combined with gentle tamponing in order to remove the soiling from between the fibers. The last stage was disinfection with biocidal PREVENTOL added to the last bath. After straightening on a pane of glass, the pieces of shawl were left to dry.

2 For a description of the work on this burial ground, see the main excavation report by W. Godlewski in this volume.

3 B. Czaja-Szewczak, "Naqlun 2003. From Scraps to Tunic", *PAM XV, Reports 2003* (2004), 159-164.

Reconstruction of the scraps was attempted in 2004 and a provisional preservation of the shawl was completed [Fig. 9]. The surviving scraps were now doubled on plain-weave linen, maintaining the continuity of the stripes and inscription. The waft and weft were arranged parallel to that of the doubling linen in order to eliminate the two fabrics straining against

one another. Then all the scraps were basted to the ground with silk thread. This protection, which prevents any further destruction to the fabric, has stabilized the textile and will preserve it for future conservation. It was rolled onto a cylinder measuring 7 cm in diameter, wrapped in acid-free tissue and protected with plastic wrap.

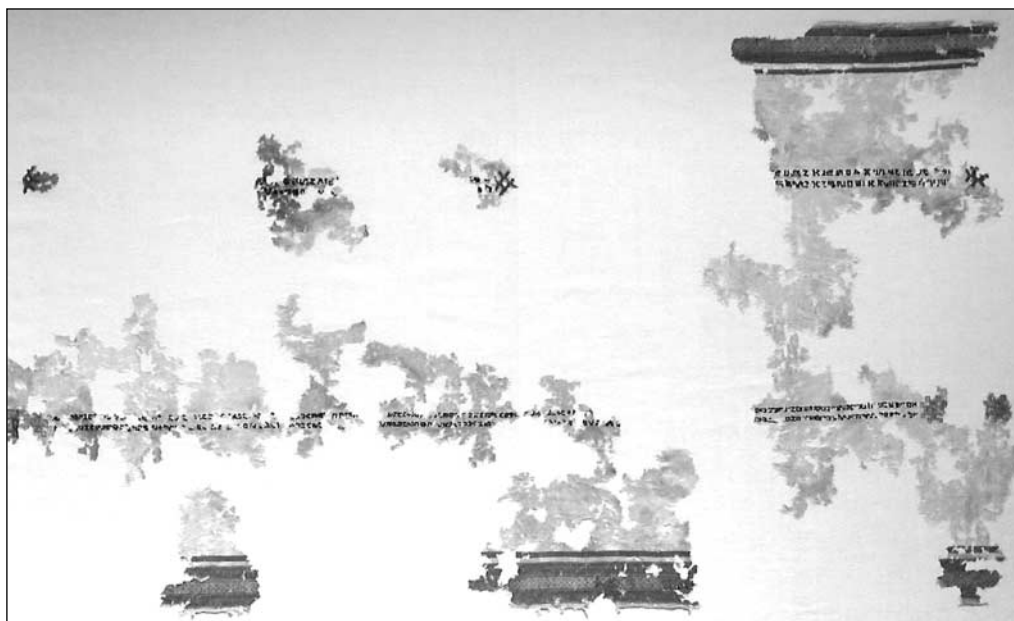


Fig. 9. *Shawl Nd.00.082 after preservation and reconstruction*
(Photo W. Godlewski)