

# Research of archaeological and historical textiles in the Czech Republic

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Klecany, textile fragment on a bronze jingle bell, Early Middle Ages



Mikulčice, textile remains on an iron razor, Early Middle Ages



Prague Castle, textile gloves of St. Adalbert, end of 12th to 1st third of 14th century

Textile production represented an important component of the economy, and textile material, as well as all products made from it, formed a significant part of the material culture of all periods of historic development. When examining the historical development of textile production, finds of textile remains and tools and equipment that were used in the lengthy process of making textiles – from acquiring the raw materials to the final product – provide a good source of information.



Microscopic examination of detailed textile fragments



Medieval woollen fabric seen through an electron microscope

Two specialised workplaces exist in the Czech Republic that focus on the research and specialised processing of archaeological textiles: the Restoration Workshops of the Art Collections Division of Prague Castle Administration (M. Bravermanová) and the Restoration Workshops of the Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague (H. Březinová). Information on preserved textiles from the prehistoric period to the High Middle Ages, which come from various archaeological contexts, is systematically collected at these workshops.

The territory of the Czech Republic does not offer too suitable conditions for preserving archaeological organic material, therefore, fabric remnants are scarce, but appearing finds. Small textile scraps from medieval town waste layers and objects, remnants of fabric structure in corrosive products of metal objects coming from grave finds of the younger prehistoric age and early middle ages can be encountered most frequently of all. Relatively well preserved fabrics also appear together with human remains in tombs and crypts of the medieval as well as modern age. Imprints of textiles on ceramic or puddle are rare, finds of carbonized textiles are unique.

Archaeological textile finds represent a unique and, thanks to their organic nature, a rare source for learning about an important component of material culture, that was part of the daily life of people in the past. Thorough research, analyses, processing and the evaluation of preserved textiles provides an overview of the development of used materials and their working, as well as of the method, level and organisation of textile production and all related crafts.



Prague Castle, funeral surcoat, pants and cloak of Rudolf II. († 1612)



Prague Castle, lady's bodice from the well at the Church of All Saints, ca. 1580



Prague Castle, fabric with birds in medallions from the grave of Otakar II. of Bohemia, ca. 1270



Chrudim, textile fragment of fabric with coloured pattern, 15th century



Prague Castle, replica of funeral dalmatic of Charles IV. († 1378)



Prague Castle, funeral dalmatic of Wenceslaus IV. († 1419)

The detailed processing of preserved prehistoric and medieval textiles provides valuable information on the growing of cultural crops containing textile fibres, on the level of technical advancement of equipment and tools, the level and organisation of textile production, variability of textile techniques, the diversity of products, distribution, trade and the share of domestic production and imported goods.

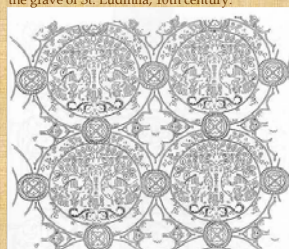
The professional processing of archaeological textile fragments is based on a study of textile technology and detailed documentation, which provide technical information on the method of processing and production of textile products. Optical microscope and SEM, are used to track and evaluate the following parameters: textile type; the number and dimensions of fragments; current colour; utilised textile materials; fibre morphology; weave; thread count on a 10 mm area of fabric; surface finish by fulling; the direction of thread twisting; thread thickness; another description recording decorative elements, faults, fixed edges, stitches, etc. Along with an evaluation of the find circumstances and an analysis of analogies and historical contexts, the textile technology study is the basis for interpreting the original function and method of use of the individual textile fragments.



Prague Castle, christening garment of a new-born from the tomb of Břetislav II., ca. 1270



Prague Castle, depiction of a model with birds in medallions on fabric from the grave of St. Ludmila, 10th century



Prague Castle, linen fabric with embroidery work from the grave of St. Ludmila, 10th century



Prague Castle, open graves with remains of clothing of Ferdinand I, Anna of Bohemia and Hungary, and Maximilian II.



Přízeň, woollen band made on a tablet, 15th century



Břevlav Pohansko, imprint of fabric on a lump of daub, Early Middle Ages



Prague Castle, band with added gold and silk weft thread woven on a tablet loom, 14th century



Chomutov, carbonised fragment of a band made on a heddle loom



Prague, fragment of woollen fabric, 14th century



Microscopic detail of interwoven weft and warp in mineralised fabric