

SECTION IV.—THE TEXTILE RELICS OF L.C.

The observations already recorded, as to the condition in which the human remains were found here and at the other Chinese burial-places above mentioned, make it clear that we owe the abundance as well as the variety of the textile fabrics recovered from L.C. to the custom of bandaging the dead in closely wound rags of old clothing. The fact that in some cases, e. g. L.C. iii. 017; vii. 07, several pieces of silk of different patterns were found sewn together in the same garment, suggests that these materials had been subject to prolonged wear even before their last use as wrappings for the dead.

Dead
bandaged
in rags of
old clothing.

To trace the history of that custom and its original meaning I must leave to competent Sino-logist research. But whatever its explanation may be, it is certain that without it we could not have hoped to recover so multifarious a collection of the fabrics in use among those who, during Han times or in the century immediately after, frequented the ancient route of Chinese expansion into Central Asia or had settled down along it. It is true that these tattered remnants but rarely give a clue to the character of the particular garments to which they once belonged. But this matters little when compared with the technical and artistic interest which so many of the fabrics offer, or with their remarkable state of preservation.

If we classify the textile remains described in the List below according to the materials used, we are at once struck by the predominance of silks, whether plain or decorated. Before proceeding to discuss the manifold points of interest which the technique of these silks and still more the methods and motifs of their ornamentation offer, we may first refer briefly to the other materials found among the textiles of L.C. They comprise wool, cotton and felt.

Materials
of L.C.
textiles.

The woollen fabrics are the most numerous after the silken, and may, in view of the important part which the production of wool has at all times played in the Tārīm basin, be assumed to be largely, if not wholly, of local manufacture. It is therefore of special interest to note the variety of weaving techniques and of methods of decoration represented among them. The descriptions given in Mr. Andrews' valuable notes on the technique of the Ch'ien-fo-tung textiles enable me to deal very briefly with the different weaves among our woollen fabrics from L.C.¹ Apart from 'plain cloths', such as L.C. i. 04, 012, 024, in some cases recalling canvas in strength (L.C. 06. e; v. 028), we have several fabrics which must be described as 'repps' (L.C. v. 011, 018, 025; x. 03). A fine strong texture of the 'cord' kind is presented by the pieces, L.C. i. 01; ii. 05. e, 016; v. 010, to which Mr. Andrews' descriptions in the List below assign the character of 'boxcloth' and a velvety touch.

Woollen
fabrics
from L.C.

In view of what will be explained below as to the total absence of 'twill' weave among the L.C. and other Lou-lan silk remains, it is of importance to note that the woollen fabrics of L.C. comprise at least two specimens of ordinary twill, L.C. 037-8, besides two pieces of 'damask', L.C. v. 02. b, 026, in which the pattern, composed of lozenges, is due to the use of a variation of 'twill weave'. It is equally interesting to find tapestry work used in quite a number of fine woollen textiles, L.C. iii. 010. a-b; v. 01, 02. a, 03-5, 06. a, 07, 09, 019 (Pl. XXX-XXXII). The decorative motifs of these tapestry pieces will best be considered below in their relation to those exhibited by the polychrome figured silks. But it should be pointed out at this stage that the style of this woollen tapestry work differs strikingly from that of the latter by being of non-Chinese, and in some pieces of distinctly Hellenistic character. It is obvious that this difference in decorative style strongly supports what has been suggested above as to the local origin of the woollen fabrics in general.

Weave of
woollen
fabrics.

Style of
woollen
tapestries.

With the tapestry fabrics in wool may be classed also, on account of their material and kindred

¹ Cf. *Serindia*, ii. pp. 897 sqq.