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High Medieval textiles of Asian and Middle Eastern provenance at Prague Castle, Czech Republic

Abstract

A total of 18 medieval textiles produced in Asia and the Middle East were found in the tomb of St Wenceslaus and the royal crypt in St Vitus Cathedral at Prague Castle, Czech Republic. For the most part, the fabrics correspond to contemporary classifications of Asian and Middle Eastern textiles and, with the exception of two, they were woven using the lampas technique from pure silk. Fabric patterns were woven with a main *liseré* weft, a silk pattern weft in various colours and a pattern metal weft, typically from a gilded strip of an animal substrate. Plant patterns dominate, in some cases accompanied by animals, geometric elements and inscriptions in Arabic script. Most of the fabrics were made in the 13th and 14th centuries. While the origin of one of the fabrics can be traced directly to northern China, the majority was woven in central Asia or northern China, with a smaller number in central Asia or the Middle East. The interpretation of the assemblage demonstrates the wealth of the medieval court and church dignitaries under the Přemyslid and Luxembourg rulers at Prague Castle which enabled them to acquire these highly luxurious goods from distant lands.

Keywords Prague Castle, tomb, St Wenceslaus, royal crypt, medieval textiles, lampas, Asia, Middle East, High Middle Ages

Introduction

The Prague Castle collections contain a valuable and relatively extensive assemblage of medieval textiles produced in Asia and the Middle East that was found in the tomb of St Wenceslaus (four fabrics) and the royal crypt in St Vitus Cathedral (14 fabrics).

Although the textiles were retrieved as early as the first third of the 20th century, their Asian origin remained unidentified for years, as the fabrics were mostly regarded as Italian (Gollerová-Plachá 1937, 12-13). The lone exception was a fabric with lotus blossoms, tendrils and Chinese birds (table 1, n7). Further progress came in 1993 (Bažantová et al. 1993) with the study of two double weaves - a fabric with Chinese dragons and clouds (table 1, n8) and a fabric with birds (table 1, n9). Their Asian origin was then confirmed during their conservation at Abegg-Stiftung in Switzerland (Flury-Lemberg & Illek 1995). A textile conservation workshop was built at Prague Castle in 2000 and the intensive conservation of textiles from archaeological contexts commenced. During this work, an Asian

origin was determined for a fabric with palmettes, a plant motif and blossoms with small diamonds (table 1, n12) (Bravermanová & Plátková 2016). The same provenance was attributed to a fabric with palmettes and a diamond mesh (table 1, n6) (Wetter 2016). Other fabrics of Asian origin were then tentatively identified in connection with the completion of the conservation of the collection from the royal crypt and its display in 2016 (Bravermanová 2016).

Historical contexts

Tomb of St Wenceslaus

St Wenceslaus, prince of the Přemyslid family, was murdered on 28 September 935 in Stará Boleslav, where he was initially buried. According to legend, Prince Boleslav I had the remains of St Wenceslaus brought to Prague Castle within three years and had them buried in the southern apse of St Vitus Rotunda, which was built before 930. Afterwards, Prince Wenceslaus began to be referred to as a saint. When



the rotunda was rebuilt as a romanesque basilica in 1060, the tomb of St Wenceslaus was left in its original place and a new chapel was built around it. The first report on the modification of the surrounding area comes from 1245, when the altar above the grave was repaired and newly consecrated. The cult of St Wenceslaus quickly expanded, and, by the 12th century, the prince had already become the patron saint of the Czech dominions.

A major change was made to the burial site from 1346 to 1348 during the reign of the Luxembourg kings. A lead chest containing a smaller lead case was deposited beneath the floor under a stone slab. Above the floor, a wooden box was placed on the altar. The gothic chapel of St Wenceslaus was founded in 1366 as part of the new cathedral, at which point a new altar with a tomb was established. A contemporary report makes it clear that this was an extraordinarily expensive undertaking. By the end of the 14th century, the tomb had begun to deteriorate, and, after 1425, only a bare container shrouded with covers stood in the St Wenceslaus Chapel. It was reconstructed in 1671.

A decision was reached in 1905 to renovate the chapel; work began in 1911. After the altar was opened, it was determined that it contained remnants of a trunk from 1671 on which textiles were placed. The chapel also contained a gothic chest with relics. The underground crypt contained a lead chest, two textiles and two inscription plates. The saint's relics were deposited in the cathedral treasury in 1911 (Podlaha 1911). A new altar was built from 1912 to 1913 on the remnants of the gothic altar table and tomb.

Otavská and Spittel conserved a total of 18 fabrics of various provenance and date from 2002 to 2003; their preliminary evaluation was conducted in 1996 (Bažantová 1996), followed by a detailed analysis from 2019 to 2020 (Bravermanová et al. 2020). Four of the textiles from this location have been identified as Asian or Middle Eastern and are described below (table 2, n2, n3, n14 and n15).

Royal crypt

The graves of most Bohemian kings from the Luxembourg dynasty and their family members are located in St Vitus Cathedral, which was founded in 1344 on the site of the romanesque basilica. The following individuals were progressively buried in the tomb built in front of the St Vitus Altar around 1350: Blanche of Valois (died 1348), Anne of Bavaria (died 1352), Anna von Schweidnitz (died 1362), Charles IV (died 1378), Joanna of Bavaria (died 1386), Elizabeth of Pomerania (died 1393), John of Görlitz (died 1386), Wenceslaus IV (died 1419), Ladislav Pohrobek (died

1457) and several small children.

The new royal crypt was built from 1566 to 1589 and the remains were transferred from the old crypt in 1590. The large sarcophagus of Rudolf II was set in the new royal crypt in 1612 and the contents of the coffins of Charles IV's wives, John of Görlitz, Wenceslaus IV, and Joanna of Bavaria were placed in a single chest. The crypt was subsequently opened in the years 1677, 1743, 1804, 1824, and 1851. Records report that the coffins were replaced several times and that the individuals entering the tomb often removed some of the funeral furnishings as "souvenirs".

Reconstruction of the crypt commenced in 1928 towards the end of the renovation of the cathedral, and on this occasion remains and the remnants of burial furnishings were removed. The reconstruction of the crypt was completed in 1935 and the remains were returned along with the coffin of Rudolf I of Hapsburg (died 1306), which until this time had been deposited in the Chapel of the Holy Cross. However, the grave goods were not returned to the new sarcophagi and they became part of the Prague Castle collections. Their state of preservation has degraded on account of the unfavourable deposition conditions, and many artefacts have also disappeared over the years. The greatest decline occurred in the 1930s, at which time, for example, some textiles were handed over to various institutions (especially to secondary textile schools) for the purpose of obtaining documentation and to weave copies. However, most of the originals were never returned to Prague Castle. Moreover, restoration work performed prior to 1989 was not always carried out at the highest professional level (Bravermanová 2005; Lutovský & Bravermanová 2007).

In light of the unsatisfactory situation described above, the Office of the President of the Czech Republic contacted the Abegg-Stiftung Textile Centre, Riggisberg, Switzerland, in the mid-1990s, where the burial outfits of Rudolf I of Habsburg and Wenceslaus IV were subsequently conserved. Restoration workshops were opened at Prague Castle in 2000 and the entire collection of 36 high medieval patterned fabrics from the royal crypt were gradually conserved. The fabrics were analysed by Mechthild Flury-Lemberg (Flury-Lemberg & Illek 1995), Karel Otavský (Flury-Lemberg & Otavský 1994), and subsequently by Milena Bravermanová (for example, Bažantová & Bravermanová et al. 1993; Bravermanová & Plátková 2016; Bravermanová & Brabcová et al. 2017). A total of 14 of the textiles retrieved from the burials in the crypt are now considered to be of Asian or Middle Eastern origin and are described and discussed below (table 1, n1, n4 to n13, n16 to 18).



No.	Inv. No.	Dimension (h x w; cm)	Technique	Characteristics			WARP				WEFT					
				ground	pattern	proportion	main (MW)	binding (BW)	thread count/cm	découpure	proportion /passée	ground (GW)	pattern (PW)	pattern i. (PW I.)	thread count/cm	découpure
1	PHA 120/3, HS 25848	49 x 29; 4 small fr.	lampas, double weave in ground	twill 2/1 S (MW+GW)	twill 1/3 S (BW+ wefts)	3 pairs MW to 1 BW	silkw z-twist	silkw twistless	36 MW 12 BW	2 pairs MW	2 GW to 1 PW to 1 PW I.	silkw twistless	lancé, silk, twistless	lancé (?), metal thread (?)	18 passées	1 passée
4	PHA 4/13, HS 25857A	78 x 36; 29 x 27	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	twill 3/1 Z (MW+GW)	twill 1/2 S (BW+ wefts)	4 pairs MW to 1 BW	silkw z-twist	silkw twistless	64 MW 16 BW	4 MW	1 GW to 1 PW	liseré, silk, twistless	lancé (?), gilded strip of an animal substrate		12 passées	1 passée
5	PHA 4/13, HS 25857B	68 x 46; 30 x 13; 57 x 41.5; 55 x 20; 63 x 32	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	twill 3/1 S (MW+GW)	twill 1/2 Z (BW+ wefts)	4 MW to 1 BW	silkw z-twist	silkw twistless	64 MW 16 BW	4 MW	1 GW to 1 PW	liseré, silk, twistless	lancé (?), gilded strip of an animal substrate		12 passées	1 passée
6	PHA 41/6, HS 25847	66.5 x 40; 35 x 29; 22 x 20; 29 x 20; 18 x 32; 33 small fr.	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	satin 4/1, <i>décoche-ment</i> 3 (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	3 pairs MW to 1 BW	silkw z-twist	silkw twistless	42 MW 14 BW	3 pairs MW	1 GW to 1 PW to 1 PW I. or 1 GW to 1 PW I.	silkw twistless	lancé, <i>interrompu</i> , silk, twistless	lancé, gilded strip of an animal substrate	12 passées	1 passée
7	PHA 4/6, HS 25804	78 x 29; 29.3 x 16; 3 small fr.	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	satin 4/1, <i>décoche-ment</i> 3 (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	5 MW to 1 BW	silkw z-twist	silkw z-twist	45 MW 8-9 BW	5 MW	1 GW to 1 PW to 1 PW I.	liseré, silk, twistless	lancé, <i>latté</i> , silk, twistless	lancé, gilded strip of an animal substrate	14-15 passées	1 passée
8	PHA 49, HS 13886	99 x 80; 200 x 92; 195 x 91.5; 141 x 78.4; 84 x 61.6; 84 x 61.6; 6 small fr.	double weave	tabby (warp A + weft A)	twill 2/1 Z (warp B + weft B)	2 warp A to 1 warp B	warp A silkw z-twist	warp B silkw z-twist	34 warp A 17 warp B	2 warp A	1 weft A to 1 weft B	weft A silkw, twistless	weft B gilded and silver-plated strip of an animal substrate		16 weft A 16 weft B	1 weft A

Table 1a: Prague Castle, Cathedral of St Vitus, royal crypt: Technical details of the fabrics



No.	Inv. No.	Dimension (h x w; cm)	Technique	Characteristics		WARP					WEFT																																	
				ground	pattern	propor- tion	main (MW)	binding (BW)	thread count/cm	décou- pure	proportion/ passée	ground (GW)	pattern (PW)	pattern I. (PW I.)	thread count/cm	décou- pure																												
9	PHA 49, HS 13887, HS 13888, HS 13889	55 x 40; 90 x 40; 30 x 40; 58 x 30; 68 x 25; 60 x 15; 60 x 22; 72 x 26; 45 x 28; 40 x 23; 1 small fr.	double weave (warp A + weft A)	tabby (warp B + weft B)	2 warp A to 1 warp B	warp A silk, s-twist	warp B silk, s-twist	32 warp A 16 warp B	2 warp A warp B	1 weft A to 1 weft B	weft A silk, twistless	weft B gilded and silver-plated strip of an animal substrate	16 weft A 16 weft B	1 weft A																														
															10	PHA 41/5, HS 25851	53.5 x 34; 20 x 20; 59.5 x 21; 20.5 x 15; 44 x 34; 36 x 21; 60 x 54; 47 x 28; 50 x 42; 51 x 26.5; 41 x 45; 6 small fr.	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	tabby (BW+ wefts)	4 MW to 1 BW	silk, z-twist	silk, z-twist	48 MW 12 BW	un- identif.	1 GW to 1 PW	silk, twistless	/ <i>lancé</i> , gilded strip of an animal substrate	12-13 <i>passées</i>	un- identif.															
																														11	PHA 41/7, PHA 41/8, HS 25850, HS 25868	85.2 x 60; 53.5 x 37.3; 50 x 35.2	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	twill 1/2 Z (BW + wefts)	4 MW to 1 BW	silk, z-twist	silk, z-twist	52 MW 13 BW	un- identif.	1 GW to 1 PW	silk, twistless	/ <i>lancé</i> , gilded strip of an animal substrate	20-23 threads	un- identif.

Table 1b: Prague Castle, Cathedral of St Vitus, royal crypt: Technical details of the fabrics



No.	Inv. No.	Dimension (h x w; cm)	Technique	Characteristics		WARP				WEFT						
				ground	pattern	proportion	main (MW)	binding (BW)	thread count/cm	déco-pure	proportion /passée	ground (GW)	pattern (PW)	pattern I. (PW I.)	thread count/cm	déco-pure
12	PHA 4/9, HS 25807	105 x 93.5; 56 x 14; 51 x 23; 32 x 18; 17 x 12; 45 x 28	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	twill 3/1 S (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	4 MW to 1 BW	silks, z-twist	silks, twistless	60 MW 15 BW	4 MW	1 GW to 1 PW to 1 PW I.	silks, twistless	lancé, silks, twistless	lancé, gilded strip of an animal substrate	14 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>
13	PHA 120/7, HS 25852	59 x 49; 15 x 20	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	twill 3/1 S (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	4 MW to 1 BW	silks, z-twist	silks, twistless	64 MW 16 BW	4 MW	1 GW to 1 PW	liseré, silks, twistless	lancé, gilded strip of an animal substrate		10 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>
16	PHA 5/1, HS 13639	120 x 80; 90 x 80; 58 x 77; 32 x 56; 22 x 35; 10 small fr.	lampas, double weave in ground; 2 systems of main warps and 2 systems of ground wefts	tabby (MWa+ GWa or MWb+ GWb)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	2 MWa to 2 MWb to 1 BW	silks, z-twist	silks, z-twist	56 MW 14 BW	4 MW	1 GWa to 1 GWb to 1 PW	silks, twistless	lancé, gilded strip of animal substrate S-wound around a flax core		20 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>
17	PHA 120/9, HS 25854	51 x 22; 5 small fr.	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	satin 4/1, <i>déco-cherment</i> 3 (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	5 MW to 1 BW	silks, z-twist	silks, z-twist	100 MW 20 BW	5 MW	1 GW to 1 PW	liseré, silks, twistless	lancé, gilded strip of animal substrate S-wound around a flax/cotton core (?)		20 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>
18	PHA 4/10, HS 25808	6 x 12.5; 5 x 5.5; 16 x 12; 36.5 x 46.5; 8.5 x 12.5; 6.5 x 6	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	tabby (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	3 MW to 1 BW	silks, twistless	silks, twistless	48 MW 16 BW	3 MW	1 GW to 1 PW or 1 GW to 1 PW to 1 PW I.	silks, twistless	lancé, silks, twistless	broché (?), metal thread	22 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>

Table 1c: Prague Castle, Cathedral of St Vitus, royal crypt: Technical details of the fabrics



No.	Inv. No.	Dimension (h x w; cm)	Technique	Characteristics		WARP				WEFT						
				ground	pattern	proportion	main (MW)	binding (BW)	thread count/cm	décounture	ground (GW)	pattern (PW)	pattern I. (PW I.)	thread count/c	décounture	
2	PHA 2/1e, HS 25785	12.5 x 31.8; 12 x 3; 2 small fr.	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	satin 4/1, déco-cherment 3 (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	5 MW to 1 BW	silk, z-twist	silk, twistless	75 MW 15 BW	5 MW	1 GW to 1 PW	/iseré, silk, twistless	lancé, gilded strip of an animal substrate		17-18 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>
3	PHA 2/1f, HS 25786	26.3 x 13.5; 25.6 x 14	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	twill 3/1 S (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	4 MW to 1 BW	silk, z-twist	silk, z-twist	68 MW 17 BW	4 MW	1 GW to 1 PW I.	silk, z-twist	lancé, silk, twistless	lancé, gilded strip of an animal substrate	15-16 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>
14	PHA 2/1b, HS 25782	26.8 x 4; 27.4 x 23; 11.6 x 26.8; 11.7 x 15; 10 small fr.	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	twill 2/1 S (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	3 pairs MW to 1 BW	silk, z-twist	silk, twistless	33 MW 11 BW	3 pairs MW	1 GW to 1 PW I. or 1 GW to 1 PW	silk, twistless	lancé, silk, twistless	lancé, <i>interrompu</i> , silk, twistless	9-10 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>
15	PHA 2/1a, HS 25781	5.5 x 8.5; 2.5 x 5; 6.2 x 9; 9 x 5; 16 small fr.	lampas, BW interlaces in ground and in pattern <i>par passée</i>	satin 4/1, déco-cherment 3 (MW+GW)	tabby (BW+ wefts)	4 pairs MW to 1 BW	silk, z-twist	silk, z-twist	96-100 MW 24-25 BW	4 pairs MW	1 GW to 1 PW	silk, twistless	lancé, silk, twistless		28-35 <i>passées</i>	1 <i>passée</i>

Table 2: Prague Castle, Cathedral of St Vitus, the tomb of St Wenceslaus: Technical details of the fabrics

Textile analysis

The basis of the professional processing of textiles was the implementation of research, which included technical analysis and detailed documentation. This was followed by an evaluation, the collection of contemporary analogies and the placement of the specimens in the overall framework of period textile production. Relevant historical reports were also incorporated into the final interpretation. If the fabric was originally a garment, in addition to the collection of period iconographical sources, the existing cut and tailoring traces of preserved and similarly dated garments were compared.

The main focus was on finding analogies to textile techniques. One factor was the character of metal patterning wefts, with the methodology described in Wardwell (1988 to 1989) being used as the basic work. The next step was the reconstruction of the pattern, with similar decorative motifs or their individual elements again being sought. An evaluation of the monitored parameters was the basis for determining the date and provenance.

From the perspective of the original use of fabrics, it was assumed that the textiles from the tomb of St Wenceslaus were reliquary fabrics, while those from the royal crypt were the remains of burial robes. The interpretation was complicated by the fact that the archaeological textiles had degraded as the result of long-term storage in unsatisfactory conditions. The royal crypt in particular was problematic, as coffins were exchanged here over the centuries and thus the remains and burial furnishings were transferred, and the contents of several coffins were even moved to a common chest at the beginning of the 17th century. Efforts to connect textiles with specific historical figures were therefore only partially successful. The evaluated fabrics (tables 1 and 2, n1 to n18) were then sorted based on the areas in which their source of production was established: northern China, central Asia or northern China, central Asia or the Middle East, and the Middle East. More precise locations, such as individual countries, were not possible, with minor exceptions, as a sufficient quantity of comparative material is missing for such conclusions.

Northern China

Lampas with octopuses and dragon fish (n1; table 1; fig. 8)

Lampas refers to a figured textile with a pattern composed of weft floats added to a ground fabric (a main warp and a ground weft) with a binding



warp (CIETA 2006, 45). The fabric can be identified as northern Chinese from the second half of the 13th century to the 14th century. Besides the sea dragon/*makara* motif, a Chinese origin can also be determined on the basis of the type of metal threads. As nothing was preserved on the fragments of fabric, it could be a silver or gold-plated strip of paper, which was used in Chinese workshops.

Although the fabric has retained traces of tailoring (folding and needle marks), its original shape and function can no longer be determined. It is also not known from which coffin in the Royal Crypt the fabric originally came.

Analogies to fabric 1: A similar technique, albeit without a double weave base, is found on a Chinese lampas with dragons and phoenixes from the 14th century. The side selvedge here consists of a strip of multiple warp threads and a strip of single warp threads, both of which are interlaced by the ground weft (Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; Watt & Wardwell 1997, 153, catalogue number 42). Similarly, a selvedge is present on a Chinese lampas with a bird motif from the mid-13th to mid-14th century (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg; Otavský & Wardwell 2011, 203-204, catalogue number 71).

The sea dragon/*makara* motif from Buddhist mythology appears on Chinese fabrics at least from the 10th century (Kuhn and Zhao Feng 2012, 288) and can be supplemented with additional elements, for example, lions, as in the case of two samite fabrics, one of which is dated to the 10th or 11th century, the second to the 11th to the early 13th century (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg; Bayer & Sue-ling Gremli 2007, 151-168, catalogue number 2). Along with phoenixes and flowers, a similar creature also appears on a Chinese or central Asian lampas dated to the 13th century (Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; Watt & Wardwell 1997, 152, catalogue number 41).

Central Asia or northern China

Lampas with vertical stripes with palmettes, rosettes and heart-shaped motifs (n2; table 2; fig. 1 and fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century. No traces of tailoring were preserved on the fabric, which could have been part of the original furnishings of the Chapel of St Wenceslaus as an older cloth over the tomb or a vestment that was placed in the interior of the tomb during renovation of the saint's grave in the 14th century.

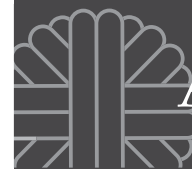
Analogies to fabric n2: The same binding technique and pattern arranged in stripes is found on the lampas of the so-called "Saint Himerius toga", which is identified as Turkestani from the 14th century (Kloster Mariastein: Schmedding 1978, 149-151, catalogue number 119). It is also similar, for example, to the fabric of a dalmatic with a pattern of oblique lotus blossoms and small flowers. The fabric is interpreted as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 72-91, catalogue number 1/II). A similar pattern composition with slightly different elements is also found on the fabric from the St Servatius assemblage identified as Chinese or Turkestani from the turn of the 14th century (St Servatius, Maastrich: Stauffer 1991, 180-181, catalogue number 106).

Lampas with lanceolate leaves and medallions (n3; table 2; fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century. A weft from a gilded strip of an animal substrate was used, which is characteristic of central Asia. A motif



Fig. 1: Fabric n2 - fragments on panel (Image: © Prague Castle Administration, Jan Gloc)



reminiscent of a stylised symbol of longevity set in a round medallion is also a typical Chinese element. No tailoring traces were preserved on the fabric. According to the find context, this is a remnant of fabric that was to have covered the outside of the gothic container found inside the altar. It apparently reached the tomb of St Wenceslaus during renovation of the saint's grave in the 14th century.

Analogies to fabric n3: A very similar binding technique is found on fabric with a plant motif from which a maniple was sewn. The fabric is interpreted as central Asian from the first half of the 14th century (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 92-95, catalogue number 2). Several elements of a similar pattern, especially lanceolate leaves and small medallions filled with plant ornament, are found on a lampas interpreted as Persian or from the western part of central Asia from the end of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg: Otavský & Wardwell 2011, 250-251, catalogue number 94).

Lampas with palmettes, tendrils and small leaves (n4; table 1; fig. 2 and fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century. Part of a sleeve, originally with a hanging sleeve, was sewn from one fragment of fabric. On the front part at the level of the elbow is an arch-shaped cut-out; the hem is faced with a strip of unpatterned fabric. The hanging sleeve has not survived and may have been made from a different material. The second symmetrically-cut fragment was a gore used for widening the skirts to the hemline. The fragments are apparently the remains of a woman's gown. Given the similar pattern, it is possible to consider a connection with fragments of fabric with palmettes and small leaves (table 1, n5) from the lower part of a woman's gown. It could also be one garment sewn from two fabrics. The garment evidently belonged to one of the first two wives of Charles IV: Blanche of Valois or Anne of Bavaria, a determination made possible by the dating of the fabric and a description of the character of the garment.

Analogies to fabric n4: A dalmatic and a tunicella were made from a central Asian lampas from the first half of the 14th century woven using a similar technique (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 206-221, catalogue numbers 17, 17a/II). Similar elements and compositions are found on two central Asian or Chinese lampas fabrics from the first half of the 14th century (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 72-91, catalogue number 1/I, II).



Fig. 2: Fabric n4 - fragments on panel; gore (left); sleeve (right) (Image: © Prague Castle Administration, Jan Gloc)

Lampas with palmettes and small leaves (n5; table 1; fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century. The fragments are from the lower part of a woman's gown, evidently the back part with a slight extension into a train. Given the similar pattern, it is possible to consider a connection with fragments of fabric with palmettes, tendrils and small leaves (n4), which are the remains of a sleeve and a gore. It could also be one garment sewn from two fabrics. Hence, the assignment of the gown to either Blanche of Valois or Anne of Bavaria is the same.

Analogies to fabric n5: The closest analogy to the technique and pattern is the lampas with palmettes, tendrils and small leaves (n4).

Lampas with palmettes and a diamond mesh (n6; table 1; fig. 3 and fig. 8)

The fabric can be interpreted as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century. The largest fragment of fabric was apparently once a long and wide sleeve, while another larger fragment is possibly a remnant of a wide gore. It is not possible to identify the garment part to which any of the other fragments once belonged. Given the characteristics



Fig. 3: Fabric n6: detail of interlacing of patterning wefts (Image: © Prague Castle Administration, Jan Gloc)

of the sleeve and the find context, it is probable that this was part of a ceremonial royal garment, likely a dalmatic from the coffin of Charles IV. Early written reports support this interpretation.

Analogs to fabric n6: A similar technique was used to make, for example, the lampas of a dalmatic from Stralsund interpreted as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century. There are also oblique palmettes in rows offset by half their spacing (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 72-91, catalogue number 1/II). The meander ornament against the background of a larger pattern occurs, for example, on a damask with a pattern also woven with a strip of gilded paper identified as Chinese from the 13th to 14th century (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg: Otavský & Wardwell 2011, 201-203, catalogue number 70).

Lampas with lotus blossoms, tendrils and Chinese birds (n7; table 1; fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century. Cuts and the remains of vertical pleating in a length of roughly 10 cm are visible on the larger fragment. This was apparently one of the trapezoidal segments of a cloak on which the upper edge was pleated around the shoulder. In addition to a decorative effect, the pleats reduced the edge to the required dimension for the neckline. Given the characteristics of the garment and the find context, the item can be attributed to Anna von Schweidnitz.

Analogs to fabric n7: A similar technique was used to make, for example, the lampas of a dalmatic from Stralsund interpreted as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century

(Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 72-91, catalogue number 1/II). A very similar pattern is found on the lampas of a dalmatic; the composition is identical and differs only in the details of individual motifs. The fabric is interpreted as central Asian or northern Chinese from the first half of the 14th century (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 72-91, catalogue number 1/III).

Double weave with Chinese dragons and clouds (n8; table 1; fig. 8)

The fabric can apparently be identified as central Asian or northern Chinese from the late 13th to early 14th century, even if an analogy to the weaving technique has not yet been found. Four vertically placed stripes of fabric and several other smaller fragments were sewn into an unlined half-oval cloak with a train. Two trapezoidal segments and several smaller fragments are interpreted as part of a pair of long hose. An arched cut-out for the instep was preserved on one segment. The cloak had a maximum length of 200.8 cm and a maximum width of 342 cm. The reconstructed length of the hose (from the instep to the upper hem) is about 73 cm; the upper circumference is 61.6 cm. Based on the poor craftsmanship of both garment components removed from the coffin of Rudolf I of Habsburg, they were evidently made for his funeral.

Analogs to fabric 8: The double weave with completely separate layers is unique for the High Middle Ages. The closest analogy is a central Asian fabric with birds from the same grave inventory (table 1, n9). A Persian fabric with falconers in octagons comes from an earlier period (11th century) (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg: Otavský & Salím 1995, 122-125, catalogue number 75). A small gold pattern on the background of a natural colour composed of diverse motifs is found on the central Asian fabrics of a dalmatic and cloak of Pope Benedict XI from the second half of the 13th century to the early 14th century (Basilica di San Domenico, Perugia: Ludovica Rosati 2016). The dragon motif appears on a central Asian fabric from the first half of the 14th century used for a dalmatic and tunicella (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 207-220, catalogue number 17, 17a/II), and a cloud motif is found, for example, on a central Asian fabric from the 13th century (Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar: Denney 2016, 130-131, fig. 5).

Double weave with birds (n9; table 1; fig. 8)

The fabric can apparently be identified as central Asian or northern Chinese from the late 13th to early 14th



century. Compared to other fabrics identified in the same way, this fabric has a different weave structure, as was the case with fabric n8. The fabric was used for a garment with sleeves, and the identification of fragments of silk lining helped determine its shape. It could have been a surcoat with three-quarter sleeves, either completely or partially quilted and hanging freely from the shoulders, or it could have been a cotte with long sleeves. Approximate dimensions of the reconstructed garment are an assumed length of 130 cm; lower circumference 260 cm; width of the front and back segment 40 cm; circumference of the armhole 80 cm. The garment was removed from the coffin of Rudolf I of Habsburg. Given that it was lined and its overall tailoring was quite precise, the king could have worn the garment during his lifetime. It was supplemented for the burial with a cloak and hose from fabric with Chinese dragons and clouds (n8).

Analogies to fabric n9: The weaving technology is nearly identical to the fabric with Chinese dragons and clouds (n8).

Lampas with palmettes and small plant motif (n10; table 1; fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as central Asian or northern Chinese from the late 13th century to the first half of the 14th century. A garment whose form corresponds to a tunicella was made from the fragments. The front part was cut from two trapezoidal segments and featured a deeper neckline. The back part was from three segments, the middle of which had a shallower neckline. There were trapezoidal segments on the sides reaching up to the shoulders; the sleeves were not preserved. The total reconstructed length of the garment was 148 cm. Given the characteristics of the garment and the find context, it is probable that this was part of a ceremonial royal garment from the coffin of Charles IV. Early written reports support this interpretation.

Analogies to fabric n10: A similar technique is found, for example, on two silk lampas fabrics deposited in the Church of St Servatius in Maastricht. Dated to the 13th to 14th century, the fabrics come from central Asia (Stauffer 1991, 180-181, catalogue number 106). Identically arranged palmettes with an undivided perimeter line and with small plant ornament between them are found on the lampas-woven textile used for a cloak and surcoat with sleeves forming part of the burial garments of Cangrande della Scala, the overlord of Verona (died 1329). The fabric was woven in central Asia at the beginning of the 14th century (Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona: Frattaroli 2004, 289-291, catalogue numbers 29 & 30). Similarly arranged

palmettes, albeit without other plant motifs between them, are also found, for example, on a central Asian lampas from the 13th to 14th century (Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland: Watt & Wardwell 1997, 160-161, catalogue number 46).

Lampas with vertical stripes and a gold pattern (n11; table 1; fig. 4)

The fabric can be dated from the late 13th century to the first half of the 14th century; it was probably produced somewhere in central Asia or northern China, but because the appearance of the pattern remains unknown, a more detailed interpretation is not possible.

The composition of fabric with stripes and a gold pattern is created with the use of two colours in the main warp and the metal weft covers most of the fabric. The actual pattern cannot be reconstructed, since the metal weft was preserved only in fragments, with the only recognisable detail probably being a wing. Compared to the group of striped fabrics presented below, the thread count here is lower; there is greater distance between the lengthwise stripes and there are probably differences in the dimensions of individual



Fig. 4: Fabric n11: fragments on panel (Image: © Prague Castle Administration, Jan Gloc)



pattern motifs, so that an assignment to this group set in the eastern part of the Middle East is problematic.

One of the fragments of a rectangular shape was once a pillow. Other fragments still stitched together form a nearly entire leg of hose (one large fragment remained from the other leg). Both legs were made from two segments, with the larger piece folded on the bias to form the calf and the heel, the smaller piece the instep and sole. The original length of the hose was about 50 cm, with an upper circumference of 37 cm.

The hose and pillow are specifically mentioned in the contemporary description of the clothing of Charles IV on the funeral catafalque, which would support the interpretation that the pillow and hose come from the emperor's burial.

Analogies to fabric n11: A similar technique is found, for example, on a central Asian lampas with a plant motif dated from the end of the 13th to the middle of the 14th century (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: Watt & Wardwell 1997, 146-147, catalogue number 37). Fabrics with densely ordered stripes of different colours in which various small geometric patterns, animals and plant motifs appear are interpreted today as Middle Eastern (from Iran or Iraq) rather than central Asian (Wardwell 1988-1989, 97-102; Ritter 2016; Fircks 2016; Borkopp-Restle 2016; Dode 2005, 273-277). The fabrics are characterised by a high thread count and densely ordered vertical stripes filled with small ornaments.

Central Asia or Middle East

Lampas with palmettes, a plant motif and blossoms with small diamonds (n12; table 1; fig. 5 and fig. 8)

The fabric can be dated to the first half of the 14th century. Although it was apparently woven in central Asia, a Middle Eastern origin also cannot be ruled out, mainly due to the composition of the pattern. A large part of a woman's surcoat with three-quarter sleeves could be composed with the fabric fragments. The front and back segments were cut from one piece of fabric, and an armhole was simply cut into the curve on the side. The garment was widened from the waist to the bottom by the insertion of four gores - in front, in the back and on both sides. One of the other preserved fragments was a slender sleeve with a tip reaching to the elbow. The original length of the garment was not preserved; the width across the chest was about 93 cm. The garment evidently belonged to one of the first two wives of Charles IV - Blanche of Valois or Anne of Bavaria, a determination made possible by the dating of the fabric and a description of the character of the garment.

Analogies to fabric n12: A nearly identical technique is also found on the fabric of a maniple interpreted as central Asian from the first half of the 14th century (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 93-95, catalogue number 2). An analogy to this pattern is found on a lampas with lotus blossoms in wide and pointed ovals identified as Middle Eastern from the first half of the 14th century. The lotus blossoms are presented from a front view (Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum: Wilckens 1992, 53, catalogue number 86).

Lampas with palmettes and plant motif (n13; table 1; fig. 8)

The fabric can be dated to the first half of the 14th century. Although it was apparently woven in central Asia, a Middle Eastern origin also cannot be ruled out, mainly due to the composition of the pattern. Given the preserved traces of tailoring and the right-angled fabric cuts, it can be assumed that the article was a pillow, evidently from the grave inventory of Blanche of Valois or Anne of Bavaria.

Analogies to fabric n13: A similar technique is found on the fabric of a maniple interpreted as central Asian from the first half of the 14th century. (Kulturhistorisches Museum der Hansestadt Stralsund, Stralsund: Fircks 2008, 96-99, catalogue number 3). An analogy to this pattern is found on a lampas with lotus blossoms in wide and pointed ovals identified as Middle Eastern from the first half of the 14th century. The placement of the palmettes in the pointed ovals is the dominant element here (Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum: Wilckens 1992, 53, catalogue number 86).

Middle East

Lampas with obliquely inscribed eight-sided stars and rosettes (n14; table 2; fig. 8)

The fabric can be dated to the 13th to 14th century with an origin in the Near East, in Egypt or perhaps the Islamic part of Spain. Although the fabric has retained traces of tailoring (three fragments are sewn together), its original shape and function can no longer be determined. It could have been part of the original furnishings of the Chapel of St Wenceslaus, either as an older cloth placed over the tomb or a former vestment that was placed in the interior of the tomb during renovation of the saint's grave in the 14th century.

Analogies to fabric n14: A lampas with a cross-star motif from the Middle East or Spain from the 14th century was produced using a similar technique (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg: Otavský & Salím 1995,



Fig. 5: Fabric n12: fragments on panel (Image: © Prague Castle Administration, Jan Gloc)

224-225, catalogue number 128). The eight-sided star motif is found, for example, on the silk lampas of a cap from the Middle East from the turn of the 12th century (Victoria and Albert Museum, London: Wilckens 1991, 66, fig. 66) and on the fabric of the “St Wenceslaus” casula and toga interpreted as a lampas from the second half of the 13th century to the first half of the 14th century produced in the Near East, in Egypt or the Islamic part of Spain (Metropolitan Chapter of St Vitus, Prague: Bravermanová 2012, catalogue number 7).

Lampas with ogival framework and an Arabic inscription (n15; table 2; fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as Syrian or Egyptian from the 14th century, also due to the Arabic inscription

“sultan” inside circles. Although the fabric has retained traces of tailoring (folds and needle marks with minute remnants of sewing thread), its original shape and function can no longer be determined. It could have been part of the original furnishings of the Chapel of St Wenceslaus, similar to n14.

Analogies to fabric n15: A lampas patterned in metal thread with a double-hare motif enclosed in an ogival framework from Egypt or Syria from the 14th century was made using a similar technique. The composition of the pattern on this fabric is also similar (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg: Otavský & Salím 1995, 214-217, catalogue number 124). This composition and the identical Arabic inscription inside the oval are found on a fabric with pointed ovals and lotus blossoms from Egypt or Syria from the 14th century



(Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin: Wilckens 1992, 60, catalogue number 99).

Lampas with phoenixes, peacocks and tendrils (n16; table 1; fig. 6 and fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as Middle Eastern from the 13th to early 14th century. A lined dalmatic was assembled from the preserved fragments. The foundation was formed by straight segments with shaped arm holes and neckline and triangular gores at the sides. The garment had sleeves to the elbows, and both shoulder seams were covered with a thin tablet-woven band. Dimensions of the garment: length 148 cm; lower circumference 240 cm; width of the front and back segment 60 cm; circumference of the armhole 78 cm, sleeve length 49 cm. Given the characteristics of the garment and the find context, it is probable that this was part of a ceremonial royal garment, probably a dalmatic originally from the coffin of Wenceslaus IV. Analogies to fabric n16: The same technique and



Fig. 6: Fabric n16: three-dimensional display (Image: © Prague Castle Administration, Jan Gloc)



Fig. 7: Fabric n17: detail of interlacing of patterning wefts (Image: © Prague Castle Administration, Jan Gloc)

pattern are found on a Persian lampas from the 13th century to the beginning of the 14th century except that it is woven in a different colour combination of light blue and dark violet (Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg: Otavský & Wardwell 2011, 230-232, catalogue number 84).

Lampas with an ogival framework including Arabic script (n17; table 1; fig. 7 & fig. 8)

The fabric can be identified as Middle Eastern from the second half of the 14th century, as suggested by the character of the metal patterning weft with a flax/cotton (?) core, a selvedge with ends of different colours and metal wefts extending to the edge. No traces of tailoring are preserved on the fabric and its original shape and function cannot be identified today. It is no longer possible to determine which coffin the fabric originally came from.

Analogies to fabric n17: An almost identical technique and pattern is found on a Middle Eastern lampas from the second half of the 14th century. The pattern differs only in the motifs enclosed in the ogees (Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich: Durian-Ress 1986, 118-119, catalogue number 41; Wardwell 1988-1989, 106-108).

Lampas with palmettes, peacocks and gryphons (n18; table 1; fig. 8)

The fabric can be dated to the end of the 13th century or the first half of the 14th century and was made either in the Middle East (Syria) or in Italy. It belongs to a group of fabrics called *diasprum* in medieval inventories. The fragments were assembled into the lined upper part of a gown with small buttons made from loops of silk threads. The buttons ran down to the chest, and gores

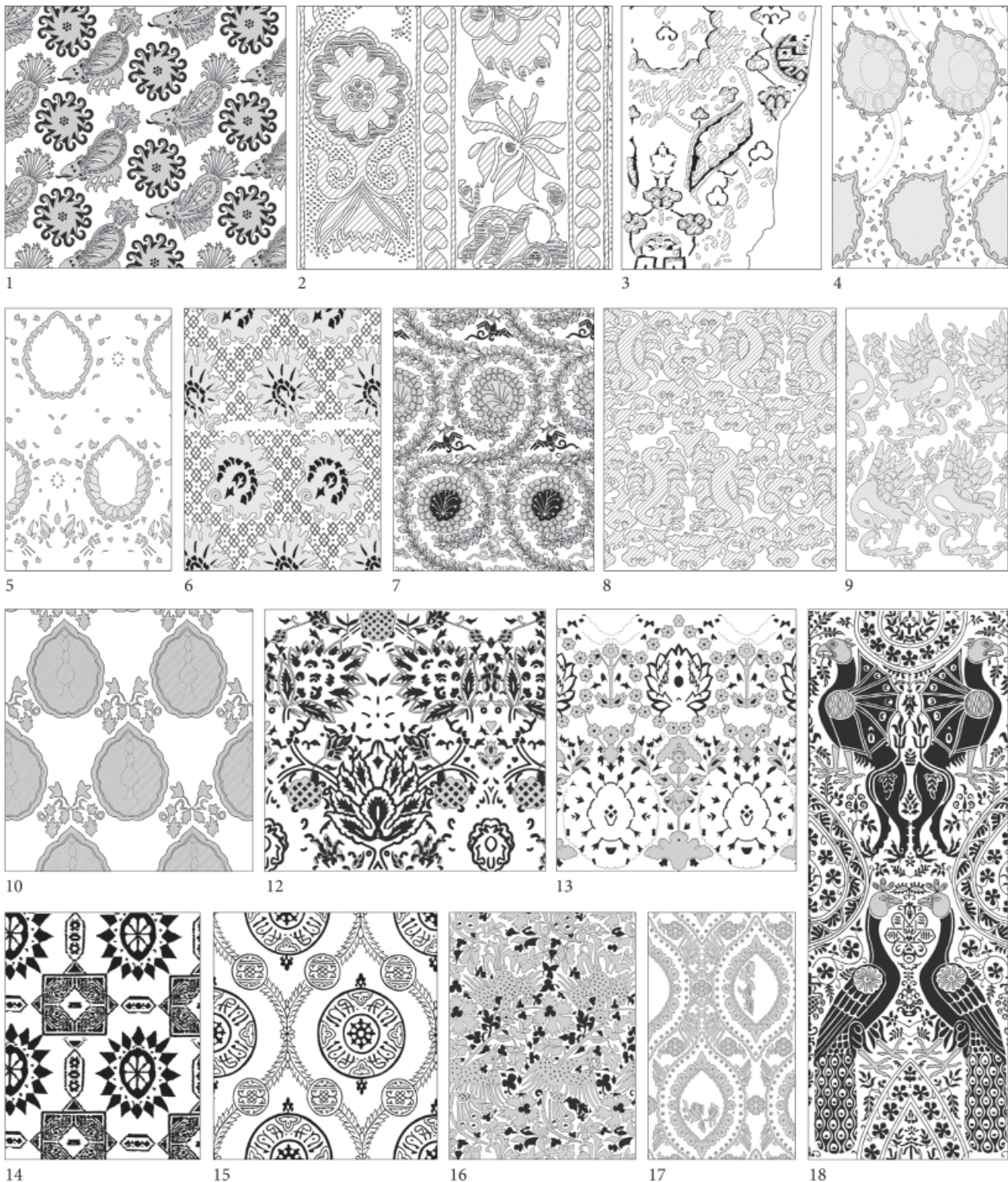


Fig. 8: Drawings of patterns (repeat h x w in cm): Fabric n1 (18 x 32); n2 (w 13.5); n3 (24.2 x 8.5); n4 (37 x 11); n5 (32 x 16); n6 (25 x 12.6); n7 (33 x 10.5); n8 (13.8 x 9); n9 (15.3 x 5.2); n10 (12 x 22); n12 (27 x 32); n13 (27 x 14); n14 (23 x 23); n15 (22.6 x 13.6); n16 (18.5 x 10); n17 (78 x 48); n18 (60 x 22). Note that the pattern for n11 cannot be reconstructed (Images: © reconstruction of pattern: Prague Castle Administration – Department of Art Collections; graphic editing: Kateřina Vytejšková)



widened the gown towards the waist. The original length is not known (the preserved length is about 36 cm). Given the characteristics of the garment and the find context, the item can be attributed to Anna von Schweidnitz, the wife of Charles IV.

Analogies to fabric n18: The same technique appears on a Syrian (?) lampas (*diasprum*) with palmettes, gazelles and (probably) birds from the 13th century (St Mariä Himmelfahrt, Hildesheim: Brandt & Schorta 2018, 43-44). A nearly identical pattern is on an Italian lampas (*diasprum*) from the first half of the 14th century (Deutsches Textilmuseum, Krefeld: Tietzel 1984, 202-205, catalogue number 45; Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin: Germanischen Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg: Wilckens 1992, 110, 112, catalogue number 226).

Interpretation

A total of 18 fabrics made in Asia and the Middle East in the High Middle Ages were preserved in two find contexts at Prague Castle. The first is an assemblage of four fabrics retrieved in 1911 from the tomb of St Wenceslaus, where they were likely deposited during the renovations of the saint's grave in the 14th century. The fabrics were a covering over the tomb or a vestment and were part of the original furnishings of the Chapel of St Wenceslaus (n2, n14, n15) or covered the gothic casket with relics placed inside the altar (n3).

The second assemblage is composed of 14 fabrics retrieved from the royal crypt in 1928. Despite the fact that traces of tailoring were preserved on the majority of these fabrics their fragmented condition, makes it no longer possible to determine the original shape and function of some of them (n1, n17). Men's garments were sewn from several of the fabrics, including a ceremonial robes (n6, n8, n10, n11, n16) and a garment of a secular nature (n9). Women's gowns could be reconstructed from other fabrics (n4, n5, n7, n12, n18), while pillows were apparently made from two fabrics (n11, n13).

Given the find contexts linked to the royal crypt, it was not always possible to attribute the garments to a specific individual. This process is simpler in the case of men's garments. A tunicella and dalmatics were evidently placed in the coffins of King Charles IV (n6, n10) and King Wenceslaus IV (n16), a surcoat and cloak (part of n8, n9) in the coffin of Rudolf I of Habsburg, and hose in the coffin of Rudolf I of Habsburg (n8) and Charles IV (n11). Attributing women's garments to individual Bohemian queens is far more complicated, mainly because their remains were deposited in a common coffin in 1612. The nature of the garment is helpful in making a more precise determination, not the dating of the fabrics, since the majority of them

are approximately dated to the first half of the 14th century, and the deaths of the first three wives of Charles IV are not far apart.

All of the fabrics, with the exception of double weaves n8 and n9, are woven using the lampas technique in pure silk. Their background is composed of a simple, sometimes paired (n1, n6, n14, n15) main warp with a z-twist and a binding warp either with a z-twist or without a twist. The ratio of the main and binding warps is mainly four main warp ends to one binding warp end; three fabrics (n1, n14, n18) have three main warp ends to one binding warp end, while three others (n2, n7, n17) have five main warp ends to one binding warp end. One fabric has two systems of main warps in the background (n16). The basic weft is always without any twist.

In six cases, the patterns of the fabrics were woven with a basic *liseré* weft (n2, n4, n5, n7, n13, n17), in eight cases with a different coloured silk patterning *lancé* weft without a twist (n1, n3, n6, n7, n12, n14, n16, n18). With the exception of two fabrics (n14, n15), a metal pattern weft occurred on the other fabrics (nearly always *lancé*, only once *broché*). Minute remnants of this metal weft were preserved, sometimes only as dark imprints. In most cases, this was a gilded strip of an animal substrate; in two examples, the strip was gilded on one side and silver-plated on the other (n8, n9). In only two textiles was the gilded strip of an animal substrate wound around a core of either flax (n16) or flax/cotton (n17). No traces were preserved on the fragments on one fabric (n1), not even a black crust as remnants of an animal substrate. This could be explained by the use of a metal-plated strip of paper. In the environment of the royal crypt, the cellulose base of paper probably decomposed entirely, which would also have led to the degradation of the metal coating.

The background of the fabric employed a tabby weave (n16, n18), twill weave (n1, n3, n4, n5, n10, n11, n12, n13, n14) and satin weave (n2, n6, n7, n15, n17), in the pattern a tabby weave (n2, n3, n6, n7, n10, n12, n13, n14, n15, n16, n17, n18) or twill weave (n1, n4, n5, n11). One fabric has a double weave in the background (n1), as does fabric n16, on which two systems of the main warps and basic wefts create a specific type of binding. Two similar double weaves (n8, n9) are technically exceptional and thus far without known analogies. This may be a possible regionally specific characteristic accepted for central Asian fabrics (Wardwell 1988-1989, 97-102).

Selvages were preserved on 11 fabrics. Their width is 0.4 cm to 0.6 cm (n5, n6, n8, n9, n10, n11, n12), in three cases 0.8 cm to 1.3 cm (n1, n3, n16, n17). Selvedge warp



ends/threads are mostly of a different colour from the main warp. If the fabric is patterned with a metal weft, this weft is cut off before the selvedge or is turned back, though fabric n17 is an exception. A bundle of heavier warp ends is found on the outer side of the selvedge in six cases (n5, n6, n10, n11, n12); on one fabric this bundle is on the inner side of the selvedge (n1), in another example on both the inner and outer side of the selvedge (n16). Where the selvedge was preserved on both sides of the fabric, the width of the fabric could be established: 60 cm (n11, n16) or 90 cm to 93.5 cm (n8, n9, n10, n12).

Patterns are mostly plant motifs (n4, n5, n10, n12, n13), sometimes together with animals (n7, n16, n18) or geometric elements (n2, n6). An animal motif appears alone on a fabric in two cases (n1, n9), while geometric elements appear alone in one case (n14). Animals and clouds are found on one fabric (n8), Arabic inscriptions appear on two fabrics (n15, n17), while in one case a plant pattern is accompanied by a motif reminiscent of a stylised Chinese symbol of longevity (n3). Fabric n11 is decorated with vertical stripes in two different colours and was covered with a pattern or inscription that cannot be reconstructed.

The majority of the fabrics were made between the end of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century. A broader date range applies to fabric n14, that is, in the 13th to 14th century, and fabric n15 (the entire 14th century). Three fabrics are somewhat older and can be dated at best to the beginning of the 14th century (n8, n9, n16). In contrast, one fabric is younger - from the second half of the 14th century (n17).

Only one fabric can be traced directly to northern China (n1). The majority of fabrics were woven in central Asia or northern China (n2, n3, n4, n5, n6, n7, n8, n9, n10, n11), two fabrics in central Asia or in the Middle East (n12, n13) and two in the Middle East (n16, n17). One fabric comes from the Near East, Egypt or the Islamic part of Spain (n14), one from Syria or Egypt (n15) and one from the Middle East or Italy (n18).

Conclusion

A detailed analysis and comparison with analogies in terms of weaving technique and pattern makes it possible to conclude that Prague Castle has a unique collection of 18 high medieval fabrics from Asia obtained through archaeological excavations. The fabrics mostly correspond to contemporary classifications of Asian textiles (Fircks 2008, 78-87; Fircks & Schorta 2016; Kuhn & Zhao Feng 2012; Wardwell 1988-1989, 95-173). Three similar and technically extraordinary fabrics feature Chinese dragons and clouds (n8), birds (n9) and tendrils, phoenixes and peacocks (n16).

Four fabrics from the tomb of St Wenceslaus mostly dated to the 14th century, which corresponds to the construction modifications of the tomb carried out at that time, during which the textiles were probably added to the remains. The fabrics from the royal crypt are mostly dated to the first half of the 14th century, although the first burials here began around the middle of the 14th century. Therefore, older fabrics were mostly used for funeral robes. The assemblage of textiles from the coffin of Charles IV, who died in 1378, is especially interesting in this regard (n6, n10, n11). In contrast, contemporary fabrics were used in the funerary apparel of Rudolf I of Habsburg (n8, n9), who died in 1306 but was not transferred to the royal crypt until the 20th century.

As silk textiles were not produced in the kingdom of Bohemia in the Middle Ages, they are all imports. They were bought mainly through specialised markets and some probably came from the dowries of Bohemian queens of foreign origin, or were gifts. The wealth of the Czech dominions since the second half of the 13th century derived mainly from silver mining in Jihlava, Havlíčkův Brod and, later, Kutná Hora. Initially, this silver was exported as a raw material, from about 1300 in the form of coins - Prague groschen. In return, goods flowed into Bohemia and Moravia that were not produced there, including silk textiles. In the last third of the 13th century, direct contacts were maintained with merchant houses in Florence, Venice and Genoa, and some Italian merchants remained in Prague; in addition, Prague merchants settled in Venice and bought goods directly in the city. In northern Italy, both locally produced and Asian textiles were available. In the Czech dominions, the main market for luxury textiles was in Prague; warehouses were established in the capital city and the goods were distributed to other towns and areas. Fees were paid on all transactions relating to sales. In the Luxembourg period (after 1310), this revenue gradually provided a significant source of income, as the wealth resulting from the ownership of natural resources slowly diminished (Jacoby 2016; Musílek 2012; Zaoral 2006). There was thus a surplus of funds at the Luxembourg court, which could also be invested in the purchase of a stock of luxury textiles, which were then used for ceremonial occasions.

The presence of fabrics of Asian provenance in the milieu of the Bohemian elite is also documented in other sources, for example, they are recorded in medieval inventories of the treasury of St Vitus Cathedral (for example, Bravermanová & Plátková 2016; Wetter 2016) and they are depicted in panel paintings by one of the most important Czech medieval painters, Master Theodorik (Bravermanová 2003).



In addition, imported Asian fabrics have been identified in the collection of archaeological textiles for the earlier period from the 10th to the 13th century: a samite with an eagle from the grave of Boleslaus II (Bravermanová 2001), a proto-lampas fabric from the reliquary grave of St Ludmila (Bravermanová & Otavská 2001), a samite with a braid, palmettes, a pearl roundel and animals from the grave of St Wenceslaus (Bravermanová, Březinová & Bureš Víchová 2020), and textiles from the graves of the Prague bishops (Bravermanová & Březinová 2013; Bravermanová, Foltýn & Sliwka 2010).

This assemblage of archaeological fabrics of Asian and Middle Eastern provenance related to Prague Castle, the seat of Bohemian monarchs and church dignitaries, is unique; such textiles are not found anywhere else in the Czech Republic, with the lone exception of several fragments of Chinese damask from the medieval waste dump in the centre of Prague (Březinová et al. 2016, 134-138).

Acknowledgements

This work was undertaken with support from the grant project by the Czech Science Foundation GA ČR 19-00166S *Textiles from archaeological contexts at Prague Castle - relics of Czech rulers, their family members and Church dignitaries*. The detailed analysis of the fabrics from the royal crypt, including a determination of provenance, was performed in connection with a grant for processing textiles from archaeological contexts at Prague Castle (2019 to 2022).

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