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The textile from Tvis in Denmark

Introduction

In 1955 Margrethe Hald from the National Museum of Denmark presented in an article the textile from Tvis (C37919, Journal No. 556/55) which was found in a bog in western Jutland in Denmark (Hald 1955). The textile had the same year been given to the museum by Jens Jensen from Holstebro who had found the textile during a walk in a bog belonging to a farm called Villemosegård some 20 years earlier. As Hald was familiar with all the Iron Age textiles recovered in the Danish bog, it was clear to her that this textile had a slightly different design, and therefore she was not fully convinced that this in fact was a prehistoric textile.

During the work with all the Danish Iron Age bog textiles the piece was at first also included in the analysis, until a ^{14}C -dating confirmed the suspicion that Hald had already expressed, that the textile was not prehistoric. The dating now shows that the textile in fact belongs to the Early Modern Period (AD 1700–1800) (fig. 1). Thus, with this secure dating, the textile was moved from the Danish Prehistory collection to the Modern History department (it is now labelled 1721/2017).

To my knowledge, this textile has never been on display in the museum, but with this short presentation the textile will hopefully become available and interesting to a wider audience.

The textile

In 1955 Hald wrote about the textile: “Nearly 20 years ago cutting of peat in Tvis Mose, the western part of Jutland, revealed a piece of cloth, which is rather torn and of irregular shape. It measures up to 60 by 65 cm. The threads, which are rather thick and hard, are two-ply, s-spun, and twisted to the right (Z-twisted) in both

warp and weft. Counting of the threads in a square of 10 by 10 cm gave 55 warp threads and 46 weft threads. The colour is brown, but of different shades, the fabric having a checkered pattern formed by reddish brown stripes on a yellowish brown bottom. Threads with a greyish tinge also occur, but apparently more irregularly. The weave is that of twill, which, strangely enough, is broken in the way that the longitudinal system gives crystal twill, i.e. with irregular meeting of the diagonals, whereas the weft threads meet in regular points, as seen in bird-eye twill. Part of the natural edge is preserved, but of no special arrangement. The weft bends normally in the lateral border, and the pattern continues right out to the edge. One transverse edge is likewise closed, but this seems to be a secondary phenomenon. Unfortunately analysis of the edge is practically impossible owing to weakness

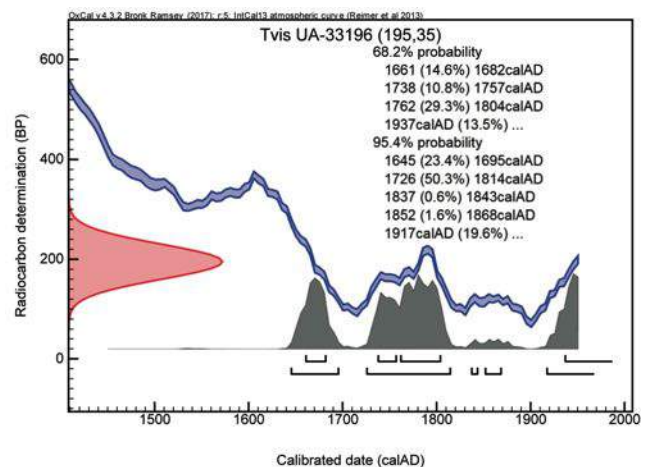


Fig. 1. ^{14}C -dating of the textile from Tvis (UA33196). The calibrated date indicates a production time between AD 1700 and 1800 (Image: Marie Kanstrup).



Fig. 2. The textile found in a bog near Tvis in Western Jutland in Denmark (Image: Ulla Mannering).

of the threads. However, a thickening is seen in the edge, formed of several thick threads and oversewn with rather coarse over-cast stitches. We shall at present have to leave open the question of dating.”

To this description can be added that the dark brown wool textile today measures 60 x 62 cm. The textile

has two torn and two finished edges. One of these edges preserves parts of a simple selvedge in a length of approximately 50 cm (fig. 2). A transverse edge is hemmed in coarse over-cast stitches while the other is badly torn.

A nice detail of this textile is that it has a regular



checkered colour pattern, which is probably also why it was originally placed together with the other Danish bog textiles. The now brownish pattern may at first glance be difficult to discern but consists of an originally yellowish ground with narrower red and greenish sections (fig. 3). In the warp direction the preserved part of the pattern counts from left to right > 9 cm ground, 4.5 cm red, 4 cm greenish, 9 cm ground, 4.5 cm red, 4 cm greenish, 8.7 cm ground, 4 cm red, 4.5 cm greenish, 8.5 cm ground. In the weft direction the pattern counts from bottom to top 1.5 cm ground, 6 cm red, 17 cm ground, 5.5 cm red, 17.5 ground, 5.5 cm red, > 9.5 cm ground. All yarns are made in a quite thick 2-ply, Z2s yarn in both thread directions and all colours. Even though there is a minor difference in the thickness of the three yarns, the surface appears homogeneous with an average thread density of approximately five threads per cm in both thread directions.

The textile is woven in a 2/2 diamond twill which is broken in one direction and has a point repeat in the other (fig. 4). Thus, the regular diamond weaving pattern does not underline the colour pattern but is still clearly visible on the surface due to the change in light and dark yarns. Further, it is clear from the reoccurring weaving mistake that this was a locally home-made textile. Judging by the overall appearance it is most likely that the textile was originally

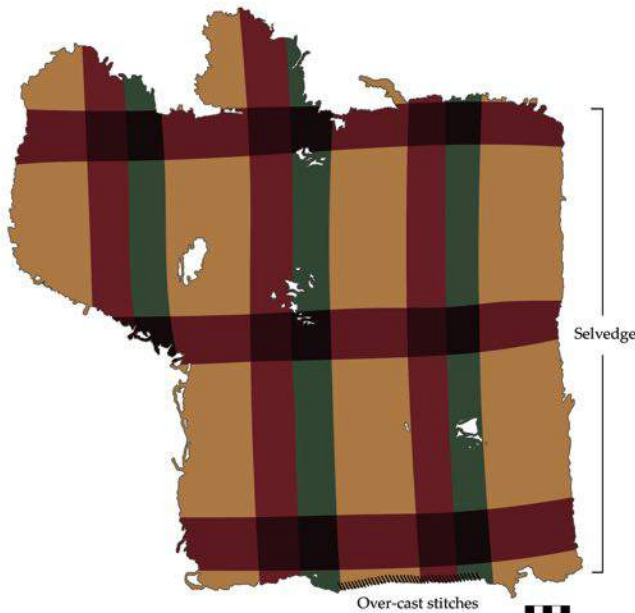


Fig. 3. Drawing of the textile from Tvis indicating the warp and weft directions, edges and the colour pattern (Image: Sidsel Frisch).

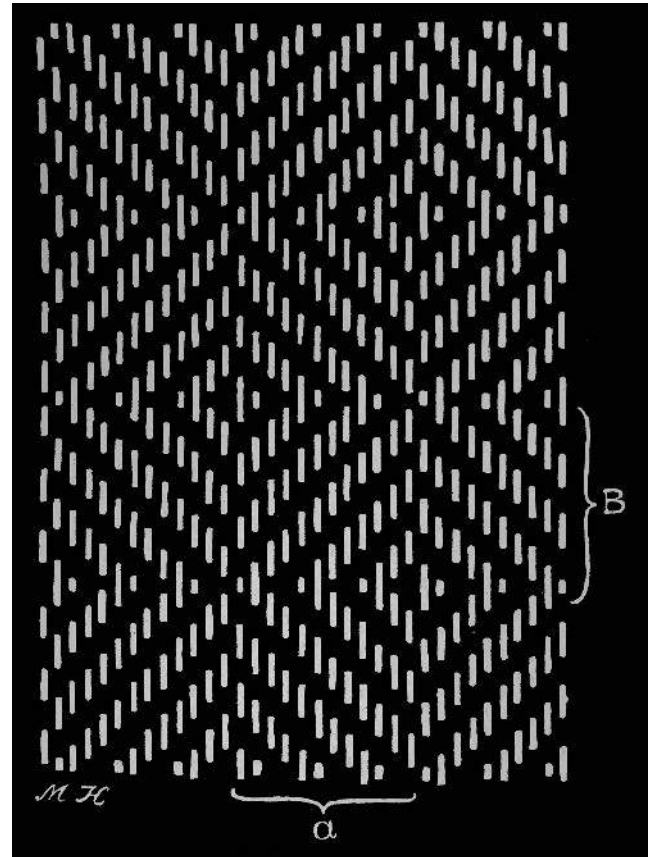


Fig. 4. Analysis of the twill weave pattern in the Tvis textile (After Hald 1955, fig. 23).

a scarf. But, as the textile has been in the bog at most for just over 300 years, the damage seen most likely represents what it looked like when it was lost. Especially the roughly hemmed edge seems to support this interpretation. Possibly the textile was in its secondary use, maybe as a kind of wrapping, lost or forgotten by a local peat cutter sometime in the 18th or 19th century. We can only guess about its life story, and even though the National Museum of Denmark contains many much more complete, beautiful and exotic textiles from this period, it represents an interesting and important link to our farming and peat cutting history which we should not forget.

References

- Hald, M. (1955) *Olddanske Tekstiler. Fund fra aarene 1947-1955. Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1-60.

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