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The Early Migration Period Textile and Leather Finds from the Chieftain's Grave in Poprad-Matejovce, Slovakia: Discovery, Retrieval, Conservation and New Results of the Laboratory Examination

A unique double-chambered chieftain's grave dated to the late 4th and early 5th century AD was discovered in 2005 in Poprad-Matejovce (Northern Slovakia). In the course of excavations held within four months in 2006 a unique wooden construction consisting of outer log-build chamber and sarcophagus-like inner chamber, both with their own roofs, was retrieved. Due to an ancient robbery, the grave lacked most of the artefacts, but still it yielded much organic material like wooden furniture, textiles, leather, bast and basketry objects. Metal, glass, pottery as well as human and animal bones were not so abundant. The finds point to the princely status of the deceased and can be compared with other graves of the highest social class of Germanic tribes all over Europe during the Late Roman Period and the beginning of the Migration Period. The challenging excavation process in a waterlogged environment brought together specialists from the interdisciplinary fields of archaeology, conservation, archaeobotany, geophysics, geology, palynology and dendrochronology. The excavation was done under the guidance of three institutions: Archeologický ústav Slovenskej akadémie vied in Nitra, Podtatranské múzeum in Poprad and the Archäologisches Landesmuseum in der Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen, Schloss Gottorf in Schleswig.

Directly after excavation all wooden, leather and textile finds were transported to Schloss Gottorf for further treatment. The wooden parts of the two chambers as well as the furniture are at the moment in the process of conservation and documentation with 3D scanning and GIS. Due to their condition, textiles and leather finds were taken as *in situ* blocks during excavation and afterwards kept frozen at -20° C. In autumn 2008 the laboratory examination has started within the European project entitled "Clothing and Identities – New Perspectives on Textiles in the Roman Empire (DressID)".

The paper deals with organisation of the laboratory work, processing methods of selected *in situ* blocks containing textiles and leather, the connection to the grave and other finds through GIS and it introduces up to day results. So far, it has been proved that textiles were the least preserved organic finds within the grave. They were found in several layers not only in the inner chamber, but also thrown away by the robbers outside. The analyses have shown tabby, twill or tablet-woven fragments made of wool. Fragments of gold threads occurred here as well. The leather objects were found in a stable condition. They also occurred all over the grave, displaced after the robbery. The majority of them consists of loops or ornamental stripes with stitches

all over, which leads us to the assumption that they were applied to another underlying material.

A project for the demanding processing of the grave and its contents has been designed for the forthcoming period of the next 5 years.

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