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**Report to the Ministry of Antiquities on a study season on the Gurob Textiles**

A short study season helped to resolve a number of outstanding issues relating to the textiles recovered from the South Tombs (STB1 and STB2) in 2012, and added to the understanding gained during our brief season in 2014. The presence of textile specialist Janet Johnstone was particularly helpful in identifying and analysing the material. Ivor Pridden was responsible for the comprehensive photography and micro-capture using a new Dinolite USB microscope, which will permit much further in-depth analysis of the textiles.



Figure 1: *Photomicrograph of Gu12/SF313*

The contents of the two tombs had been gathered together by the looters so it is difficult to provide a definite context for most of the material. Using pottery dating it has been established that the tombs were originally used for 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty burials and re-used in the Third Intermediate Period. Nothing found during our current work has changed this dating.

The third and final sack of roughly collected textiles was sorted. Additional pieces of the rare child's tunic identified in 2014 were found. An almost complete adult *mss* tunic was also found, of which more below. In addition to this, we re-sorted the previously sorted sacks, and the type categories, in a search for further missing pieces and any other items of particular interest. The type categorisation used to roughly sort the textiles in 2014 proved useful in helping us locate further pieces.



Figure 2: Janet Johnstone, archaeological textile specialist, sorting fragments.

As a result of the current work we can say that we have:

40 pieces of the coloured selvedge fragments, both blue banded and blue and red banded which have been fully recorded, photographed and micrographed and will provide material for further study as to the production methods, dyes used, and the potential for identifying workshops or domestic production in the variety of styles used. (Series 300)

Series 400+ - plain selvedge fragments, 66 pieces await further work.

Series 500+ - of the weave samples, and darned and mended pieces identified in 2014, 12 pieces which answer or contribute to research questions were fully recorded.

Series 600+ - wide torn strips provided missing pieces of the child's tunic and the adult *mss* tunic and reinforce the New Kingdom trend to re-use old domestic textiles for funerary purposes.

Series 700+ - fine white linen, possibly pleated. This category was abandoned on the advice of Janet Johnstone, who identified natural creasing and pleating.

Series 800+ - large fringed textiles. Again, this category provided missing pieces of the two tunics and indicated the presence of a number of other tunics torn up for re-use (see opening quotation).

Series 900+ - A quantity of coloured selvedge fragments were identified in this category. The strength of a well-made selvedge – even in an ‘old’ garment is demonstrated in the quantity present among our material. It is assumed from the twisting of the fragments, and the presence of loops and knots that these bindings were used to tie funerary wrappings, and probably to lower (and later raise) objects into and out of the tomb.

The quality of the fabrics in our sample demonstrates the full range of New Kingdom elite domestic textiles, both as garments and utilitarian cloths from the very finest white linen to heavier-duty fabrics made from much coarser fibres. There has been considerable degradation, staining and insect activity post deposition but it is impossible not to realise the overall quality of these textiles.

GU12/SF247. Identified in 2014 was a very fine child’s tunic (much degraded) which supports the presence of child burials in the area as suggested by Loat during his 1904 season’s work at the site. We originally suggested an age range of 6-8 years for the wearer of this tunic but further experiments with a replica suggests a more realistic age of 3-4 years. We have located additional pieces of the tunic during this season so that it is now almost complete and would be a good candidate for conservation and reconstruction. The Egyptian Textile Museum in Cairo showed some interest in acquiring this textile in the past. They may be more interested now that we can offer an almost complete garment.



Figure 3: *Child’s tunic, almost complete. Replica reproduced from photographs in 2016.*

The quality of the fabric is demonstrated by the blue and neutral vertical bands woven into the selvedge and the horizontal blue bands along the transverse edge of the tunic above the fringe, which also incorporated the blue thread to decorative effect.

To the 17 pieces of blue banded textile, and one red and blue banded textile, identified in 2014 we can now add considerably more. Blue banding appears to be a feature of the linen in these tombs as there are a number of decorated vertical selvedge pieces and also a few pieces with transverse decorative banding. The variation in the banding will form the basis of a future research project.

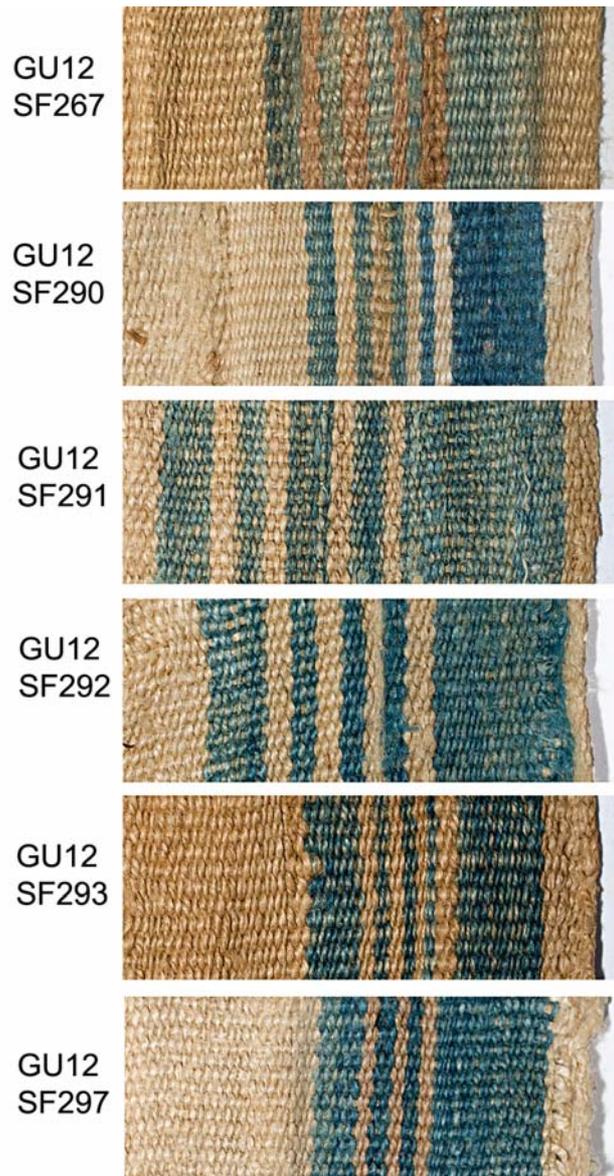


Figure 4: *Examples of colour banding*

The previous research season produced one piece of polychrome banding. To this we can now add at least six more pieces. Unfortunately, the red dye is extremely fugitive so it will be very difficult to identify it. The red colour could have been produced using either safflower or madder: only scientific analysis will confirm which is correct.

Adult *mss* tunic. GU12 /SF314

This garment for a very tall individual measures 1.45m from shoulder to hem, and was of the finest creamy-white linen. The tunic tells an object story of its own. This textile's life as a garment was extended by skilled couching-stitch repairs to the shoulder of the tunic. When it reached an unwearable stage it seems to have been discarded for funerary use. It was ripped from the hem upwards in wide bandage widths (c. 15-20cm) which would have been used to wrap the body. Some pieces were used to wipe clean a brush or stick carrying a black bitumen-like substance which has subsequently burned through the

fabric. The neck area does not survive, but the arm-holes do, and we have been able to reconstruct a large percentage of the original garment.

Figure 4: *Laying out the mss tunic for photography.*

The discoveries we have made from a collection of salvaged textiles from a looters spoil-heap shows what priceless information remains to be recovered from the most unpromising material.

‘As soon as my letter reaches you, you shall send some old cloths in the form of many strips ... And don't let them go to waste (?), for they shall be made into bandages with which to wrap up men’, from ‘the general of Pharaoh’ to the scribe Tjaroy (Cerný 1939b, 36-7; Wente 1990:182).