

Karl Schlabow, *Textilfunde der Eisenzeit in Norddeutschland*. Göttinger Schriften zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 15. Karl Wachholtz Verlag, Neumünster 1976. 100 Seiten, 261 Abbildungen, 2 Farbtafeln.

A book from the pen of the acknowledged Altmeister of textile studies in North Germany is welcome – especially so when it represents the fruits of 40 years' research. After a brief introduction the author discusses the circumstances in which ancient textiles survive (chapter I). He pays particular attention to conditions in the peat bogs of Northern Europe, to which we owe most of our knowledge of Iron-Age textiles. In the second chapter he relates the story of how each find or group of finds came to light, through a mixture of luck and the perspicacity of individual peat-diggers.

The technical discussion proper begins with chapter III in which Schlabow reviews the use of flax and wool fibres in prehistoric Germany. His account is full and authoritative. Particularly interesting are his comments on why linen (flax) is so rarely found in Iron-Age contexts. In chapter IV on the natural pigmentation of wool and on early dyestuffs Schlabow provides a useful list of textiles which were certainly dyed and a brief note on dyeing with natural materials. In his account of spinning (chapter V) the author gives a straightforward description of early spinning methods, without special reference to the Iron Age. The next chapter (VI) on weaving has as its centrepiece an examination of the warp-weighted loom, on which Schlabow has long made his views known. He discusses at length the structure of this loom, emphasising its flexibility and the superb craftsmanship of the weavers, attested by the extant 'Prachtmäntel'. On a small point: his doubts about the Bronze-Age date of the Gerumberg cloak are justified and may lead to a more cautious approach in future in debates on the origin of diamond twill.

The seventh and final chapter is a detailed catalogue of surviving Iron-Age textiles in North Germany, viewed first as articles of wear and second as evidence for weaving techniques. Some remarks on the evidence for Germanic clothing in Roman art lead directly into the main survey which deals first with mens' clothing – cloaks, shirts, trousers – and then with female attire. The plates and diagrammes are an integral part of this catalogue and Schlabow's own informative drawings make the technical commentary reasonably easy to follow. We are given for the first time a conspectus of the textiles in the famous votive deposit at Thorsberg: in many ways the rest of the catalogue merely serves to highlight the technical accomplishments revealed in this material.

As a catalogue which aims at completeness there can be no doubt of the value of Schlabow's volume. While much of the material has been published already (often by Schlabow himself), there is much that is new. The volume has, however, a number of serious flaws, both as a catalogue and as a study of the significance of these textiles. Schlabow does not seem to be familiar with the work of M. L. Ryder, whose research into the development of the sheep's fleece is fundamental to textile studies (*Agricultural History Review* 12, 1964, 1 ff.; 65 ff.). Nor does he appreciate the archaeological significance of M. Hoffmann's descriptions of how the warp-weighted loom is still operated in the North. We know more than he thinks about the introduction of the horizontal loom into Europe, which took place before the end of the Roman period. His disregard of the possibility of a two-beam loom in Northern Europe (p. 47 ff.) must be put down to his belief that the Huldremose skirt, a tubular weave, could be woven on the warp-weighted loom (p. 95 f.). In the catalogue a number of weaving drafts are missing (e. g. for the Bernuthsfeld textiles [p. 73] and the Thorsberg trousers [p. 76]). Weaving faults, a potentially useful source of information on weaving procedures, are mentioned (p. 71 f.; 86; 88), but not described precisely.

Schlabow treats the textiles of the Iron Age in North Germany in total isolation, with hardly a reference to the well-known Iron-Age material from the Hallstatt saltmines or to the textiles of the Roman world or to those of the Völkerwanderungszeit. One begins to wonder if he realises that there are any other preserved textiles at all. The 2-over-1 twill weaves which he casually mentions (p. 81), for instance, are of exceptional interest; for they are without parallel in the Iron Age. The Anglo-Saxons, who wove 2-over-1 twill cloth in England, can now be seen to have learnt the technique, not from the Romans, but in their old homeland before they migrated. The book is written in a rambling and repetitive style, redeemed by the clarity of its illustrations. Editing and production, however, are first rate.