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Textiles from the Nile Valley Conference

Antwerp, October 7.-9. 2011

The meeting at Katoen Natie 'HeadqARTers' arranged by Cécilia Fluck, fulfilled the expectations of researchers and museum colleagues, and proved very interesting. The participants at the conference formed the audience at the reception, celebrating the opening to the public of the private collection of Coptic Textiles at Katoen Natie. The new grand room of tunics was truly breathtaking and the latest acquisition, a beautiful wall-hanging in tapestry technique picturing the Amazons and the Greeks, was impressive both in terms of motive and state of preservation. Sabine Schrenck delivered an illuminating discussion of this stunning new piece at the conference, which generated great positive debate.

The first conference day started with excavation reports. Dominique Cardon presented textiles with piles from the *praesidia* of the Eastern Desert (see her reports in *ATN* 50 and 52). Béatrice Huber presented recent finds from Qarara. Fleur Letellier-Wilemin gave an in-depth review of the embroidered tunic from Douch at the Kharga Oasis. John Peter Wild presented the first Indian pile carpet from Berenike and showed a reconstructed sample (produced by Lena Mårtenson), providing his paper with a stimulating tactile experience. Frances Prichard surveyed Egyptian textiles in the UK from 1913-14 excavations, based on the materials of the Egypt Exploration Society. Amandine Mérat could unfortunately not be present, but her paper on late antique and early Islamic embroideries was read out. Antoine De Moor enlightened us on radiocarbon dating of leather shoes and Chris Verhecken-Lammens gave a wonderful paper on the technical features of "flying threads" in Late Roman textiles. New scholars are always welcome, and at this conference we enjoyed Julia B. Krug-Ochmann

from Universität Bonn, who made a very convincing presentation of trousers in late antiquity and how we can use them to interpret the social status of the wearer, based on iconographic material from mosaics. More trousers came around when Anne Kwaspen presented her study of pattern cutting. Graham Sumner showed his brilliant hand again in the illustrations and observations of Roman military clothing together with Elaine Nobury. Petra Linscheid then covered the topic of early Byzantine headcoverings (see new publications in this issue for her recent book on the topic), and Kirstin South gave an outline of the changes in mummy ribbons, from which she intend to establish a chronology. The second day of the conference included a number of papers relating to the world of museums and iconography. Claudia Nauerth gave a presentation on 'Vergoldung', and Renate Rosenthal-Heignbottom spoke of nail- studded sandals, with particular emphasis on when not to wear them. We heard of maths and inscriptions in Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin from Giesela Helmecke and the latest computer technology was used to challenge the conventional ways of looking at textiles by Julia Galliker. Tineke Rooijekkers discussed crosses in Coptic garment decoration and Maya Müller presented her interpretation of the many and varied 'Dionysos in the tree' motifs. Two presentations from Russian museums followed, one on the *tabulae* with the ascension of Alexander (in the Great Pushkin State Museum) by Olga Lechitskaya, and another on the textile motifs of 'Coptic riders' (in the Hermitage Collection) by Olga Osharina. From Spain we were presented with the fruitful results of intensive registration of (all) Coptic textiles within Spain, a great task performed by Laura Rodríguez and Ana Cabrera.