

## Coptic Textile Epigraphy in Fayoum

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### Abstract

Fayoum is one of the most prominent centers of Coptic textile production, distinguished by its artistic skill and precision in design, in addition to the fact that it contains written inscriptions that were not just written decoration, but rather a means of expressing faith and protecting the person or place in which the textile was used, as well as identifying its identity, sometimes identifying the Coptic workshops in fayoum and it also reflects the language used and some linguistic and cultural influences through some of the religious supplications and texts used. Therefore, this research sheds light on the nature of these inscriptions, knowing their content and significance through a group of models, the most important of which is known as Tiraz style, which features Arabic inscriptions, along with a Christian Tiraz style, which features Christian-themed inscriptions, including crosses and Christian letters.

### Keywords

Coptic Epigraphy;  
Inscription;  
Textile;  
Tiraz Style  
Naqlun;  
Tutun.

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## 1- Introduction

Inscriptions on fine arts, especially on textiles, were among the main categories of the four major epigraphical materials in Fayoum. Despite their prevalence in Egypt, they were less well known due to the lack of interest in studying them, compared to inscriptions engraved on stone, which were widely known in the field of epigraphy. (Van der Vliet, 2006, pp. 23-24)

The textile industry itself represents one of ancient Egypt's oldest crafts, flourishing during the Pharaonic and Greco-Roman eras and reaching its peak during the Byzantine era, particularly in Upper Egypt, where these fabrics were known as Coptic textiles (in Arabic: القباطى) (Edwards & Farag, 2019, p. 75). Most ancient Egyptian textiles were made of linen for various purposes in daily life, as well as for burial shrouds and mummy wrappings. Some woolen pieces were also used, particularly those dating back to the Ptolemaic period, and their use continued into the Coptic era alongside linen. Silk was used rarely from the Ptolemaic and Roman periods onward. Although cotton was known in ancient Egyptian textiles, its use became widespread after the Arab conquest in the 7th century AD. (Rutschowscaya, Wipszycha & Du Bourguet, 1991, pp. 2210-13).

Muslims continued to develop the textiles industry, and the dry climate helped preserve a large number of these fabrics in amazing quantities, despite damage resulting from centuries of direct contact with human bodies in the tombs (McWilliams & Sokoly, 2021, p. 3). Archaeological discoveries have revealed thousands of decorated textiles featuring a wide range of colors and patterns, in Egyptian tombs dating back to late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. (Fluck & Helmecke, 2006, pp. xiii-xiv).

Copts adopted the Islamic style of decoration known as "Tiraz" textile (fabrics gifted by the Islamic Caliph as a token of appreciation for political support, most of them date back to between the 9th and 12th centuries AD.), which featured extensive Arabic texts adding a distinctly Christian character, in what may be called a Christian Tiraz style. (Van der Vliet, 2018, p. 104.). This was achieved through the use of various crosses for decoration to express Christian identity. (Winnik, 2025, p. 203).

Many of these textiles are fragmentary in nature, and the archaeological circumstances of their discovery are unknown. Furthermore, there is a lack of information about the owners, craftsmen, workshops, and scribes associated with them. However, their inscriptions reveal their religious and social roles, particularly in honoring the remains of Coptic saints since the fourth century AD, especially the bodies of martyrs. (Durand, 2002, pp. 77-81). They served as a means of communication and were also used to demonstrate social status or to display their donations. Around thirty-six examples of this type of textile have been found around the world, but most remain unpublished, making them largely unknown. (Winnik, 2025, p. 200).

Fayoum was famous for textile production from prehistoric times to the Islamic era (Fluck, 2005, p. 144) and was distinguished by what is known as "Fayoum textile," especially in its cities, which were famous for their wool and linen production. (Czaja-Szewczak, 1999, pp.135-142). Clothing items were often decorated with single and sometimes double lines on shawls, turbans, or jackets. Sometimes these patterns were sewn near the neck or at the end of the sleeves. In the case of double texts, this repetition takes the form of a real or fake line of Arabic in Kufic script. (Van der Vliet, 2006, p. 33).

## 2. Description of Coptic Fayoumic textiles

Most of the discovered textiles are fragmented and difficult to read. They feature a brown band decorated with twisted tassels, as well as a line of embroidered inscriptions, often followed by a row of crosses, as the tiraz style. (Winnik, 2025, p. 200). These pieces feature light motifs on a dark background, combining Coptic texts in the Fayoumi-Sahidic or purely Sahidic dialect and sometimes Arabic, giving them a bilingual character. Some Fabrics are found in Arsinoe when the African explorer Georg Schweinfurth traveled to the Fayoum region in 1884 and 1886 in quest of further textiles in the Arsinoe ruins. He gave the majority to the Egyptian Museum in Berlin in (1887), as well as the Altchristliche Abteilung of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in 1923 and 1934–1935 (now known as the Museum für Byzantinische Kunst). (Fluck, 2005, pp. 144-145).

Some shawls originated from Tutun, where workshops for Tiraz type were established and developed in the Fayoum by the Tulunid dynasty from the second half of the ninth century to the beginning of the tenth century AD. The Tiraz workshop (Private workshop, tirâz al-khâssa that produced textiles for the court or Caliph. Durand, 2009, p.173) was recently discovered in Tutun. Two fragmented shawls bearing Arabic-inscribed textile bands were found, reminiscent of this workshop. The first, now in the Islamic Museum in Cairo (Inv. MIC 9061), it bears the inscription: "ونعمة كاملة لصاحبة مما عمل في طراز الخاصة بططون؟ من كورة الفيوم" (Durand, 2002, pp.167-170). This was achieved in the private Tutun workshop, in the Fayoum region." The second, is woven on another fabric, now in the Apostolic Library of the Vatican (inv. 6970), it bears the inscription "بسم الله مما عمل في طراز الخاصة بططون بسم" (Durand, 2009, p. 173), (Durand, 2002, pp.168-170).

During the campaigns of the Polish mission, a cemetery was discovered in El-Naqlun that produced examples of inscribed textiles both in the Arabic-Islamic and in the typically Christian Tiraz styles. (Godlewski, 2002, p. 103). One of the most important pieces of Naqlun is the distinctive ecclesiastical robe, which is one of the few pieces of Coptic textile made from undyed cloth (Tunic with inscription on the sleeves and its hood). However, it is similar to many other ecclesiastical garments in the Fayoum. It is quite different from the items intended for Tutun, and this tunic was probably produced in another textile center in Fayoum. (Van der Vliet, 2000, pp. 239–244). In addition to a wonderful garment that has Psalms 46:2-3 written on it in Sahidic Coptic (Inv. No. 00.083), there is a very great difficulty in reading this text. (Van der Vliet, 2006, Appx. I, no.7; Czaja-Szewczak, 2005, pp. 209-210).

## 3. The Texts

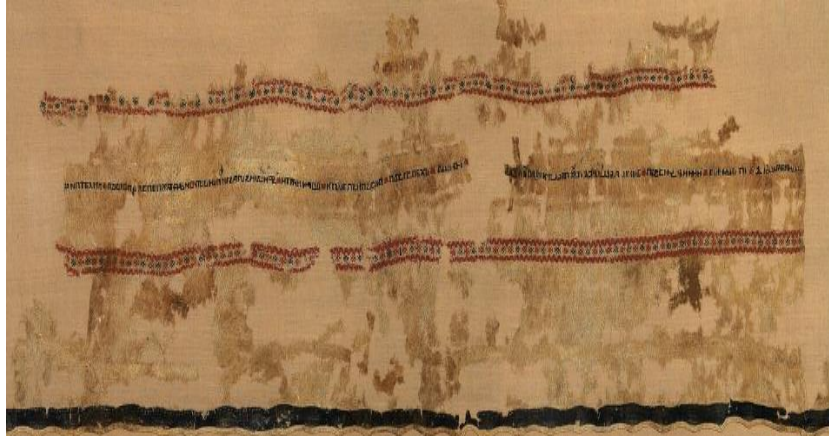
Coptic Fayoumic textile pieces often contain short prayers mentioning the invocation of the name of God, the names of the owners or beneficiaries for protection, sometimes referring to titles and lineages. Furthermore, quotations from the Greek or Coptic Psalter can be found. The advanced Christian tirâz-inscriptions served an apotropaic purpose, warding off evil. (Van der Vliet, 2018, p. 104; Van der Vliet, 2006, pp. 36-37).

(1) Fragment of a shawl with inscribed decorative bands (Inv.E26793, Louvre Museum, 10<sup>th</sup> Tutun, Fig 1). The inscription consists of a long line of a few Coptic letters. The piece is sewn with silk or wool and embroidered with wool or linen. In the center, there are double wool-embroidered letters of the inscription, interspersed with red crosses that are also large and arranged with regularity:

ⲡⲞⲢ ⲓⲚ ⲡⲉⲗⲥ ⲛⲱⲓⲑⲓ + ⲛⲱⲓⲑⲓ + [ⲉⲡⲉⲕⲗⲙ]ⲉⲗⲗ ⲡⲁⲡⲁ ⲛⲓⲕⲧⲱⲣ + ⲡ? ⲡⲁⲓⲁ ⲓⲱⲉⲁⲛⲛⲛⲥ+ ⲡⲁⲉⲤⲘ ⲉⲁⲙⲙⲛⲛ+ ⲉⲤⲉⲩⲟⲡⲓ + ⲁⲓⲱ ⲕⲗⲉ? ⲛⲱⲥ(ⲁⲓⲟⲕⲗⲛⲧⲓⲁⲛ)

βοηθῆιν || διάκονος|| ἀμήν || ⲁⲓⲱⲉⲁⲛⲛⲥ/ διοκλητιανός

“Oh God, Lord Jesus Christ, protect your servant the Apa Victor...deacon John, Paesee. Amen. So be it! Diocletian”. (Cat. Lattes, 1999, pp. 253-254, fig. 269 no. 77; Boud'hors & Calament, 2004, pp. 447-476, 468, no.31.)



**Figure 1**

(© The Louvre Museum <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010048362> Accessed 22/6/2024, at 7 pm.)

(2) Shawl with Coptic and Arabic inscriptions (Inv. E 25405, Louvre Museum, 9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup>, Tutun, Fig 2).

The inscription is bilingual (Arabic and Coptic). The Arabic text is similar to pieces found in the Cairo Islamic Museum marked as Inv. MIC 9061 and the Biblioteca Apostolica in the Vatican, Inv. 6970 .

ⲡⲚⲥ ⲓⲚ ⲡⲉⲪⲥ ⲡⲱⲓⲉ ⲣⲁⲡⲡⲁⲛⲗ Ⲯ Ⲓⲁⲛⲁⲣϫⲟⲩ Ⲓⲁⲙⲙⲏ

βοηθείν| γ(υιός)| Γεναρχης| ἀμήν

“Lord Jesus Christ protects Raphael, the son of Genarches. Amen!”. (Rouen (2002-2003):198-199 no.165; Boud'hors & Calament, pp. 2004, 468, no.33; Durand, 2009, pp. 173-174, pl.11, fig.16.)

Ⲓⲁⲛⲁⲣϫⲟⲩ: from Γεναρχης, it is not documented in the Coptic language before.



**Figure 2**

(© The Louvre Museum <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010048355> accessed 22/6/2024 at 7:15 pm).

(3) Shawl fragment (Inv. 15343, Benaki Museum, Athens, 10<sup>th</sup>, Tutun, Fig 3) The name Thoter, followed by the Bible quotation, is taken from Psalms (22:1):

ⲡⲃⲥ ⲓⲄ ⲫⲥ Ⲡⲟⲓⲛⲓ ⲡⲁⲡⲁ Ⲟⲩⲧⲉⲣ ⲒⲐⲠⲠⲛⲉ: ⲉⲥⲉ ⲟⲩⲱⲡⲉ ⲡⲓⲄ ⲡⲉⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲓⲙⲁⲓ ⲉϥⲧⲣⲁⲧⲁⲟⲩⲧ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲛⲗⲁⲟϥⲉ

+

βοηθῆιν|| ραμην|| νημα, νημα|| ετραφωτ|| (ε)νλαογε - νλααγ|| ϣθ= ἀμήν

“Lord Jesus Christ, help the Papa Thoter. Amen, so be it. It is the Lord who is my shepherd, and he makes me need nothing”. (Cat. Lattes, 1999, p. 254; Cat. Rouen (2002-2003): no.166; Boud'hors & Calament, 2004, p. 468, no.32; Durand, 2009, pp. 174-175).

(The name Thoter is a form of Theodoros, used particularly in the Fayoum and Ashmunain (see: Boud'hors & Calament, 2004, pp. 464-465).



Figure 3

(Cat. Rouen, 2002-2003, no. 166).

(4) The ends of the shawl, (Inv. E 26792, Louvre Museum, 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup>, Tutun? Fig 4). The text is from Psalm 133:1 and seems to have a prominent position as a place for supplication during the night hours. Judging by the liturgical character of the text, it is likely that this shawl was made for a clergyman, most likely a monk.

The Upper part ⲛⲟⲩ ⲉⲡⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲓⲒⲒⲉⲙⲓⲒⲁⲗ ⲧⲏⲣⲟϥ ⲉⲛⲧⲏ ⲡⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲧⲁⲒⲒⲓⲣⲁⲧⲧⲟϥ Ⲓⲉⲙ ⲡⲏⲓ ⲉⲙⲡⲓⲟⲥ  
ⲒⲈⲘⲛⲁϥ:

The lower part +{ⲛ}ⲥⲙ[ⲟϥ] ⲉⲡⲓⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲒⲒⲉⲙⲓⲒⲁⲗ ⲧⲏⲣⲟϥ ⲉⲛⲧⲏ ⲡⲓⲟⲥ <ⲛ>ⲉⲧⲁⲒⲒⲓⲣⲁⲧⲧⲟϥ Ⲓⲉⲙ ⲡⲏⲓ  
ⲉⲙⲡⲓⲟⲥ ⲒⲈⲘⲛⲁ<ϥ>ⲗⲏ ⲉⲙⲡⲏⲓ.

ⲒⲉⲙⲓⲒⲁⲗ|| ⲉⲛⲧⲉ|| ⲛⲉⲧⲁⲒⲒⲓⲣⲁⲧⲟϥ

“May the Lord bless you, all (you) servants of the Lord, who stand and serve by night in the house of the Lord, in the house of (our) the Lord?” (Boud'hors & Calament, 2004, p. 134, no.31; Cat. Lattes, 1999, p. 155, no. 60; Van der Vliet, 2006, pp. 52, 55-57, figs. 7 and 8).



Figure 4 A, B

(© The Louvre Museum <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010048361> accessed 29/9/2024 at 6:20 pm

(5) Two ends of a shawl with Coptic and Arabic inscriptions, Inv. 31.19.13 and 31.19.15, Metropolitan Museum, 10<sup>th</sup>, Tutun, Fig 5.

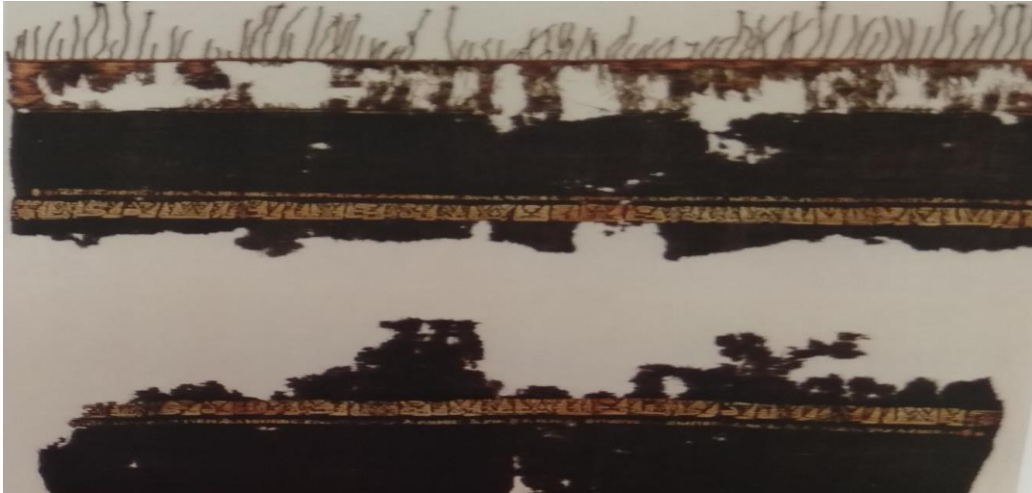
The inscription has four lines of bilingual Coptic and Arabic inscriptions. The Coptic inscription contains phrases similar to Islamic blessings. This garment is similar to pieces in the Louvre Museum, sharing the same decorative, technical, and epigraphic components.

ⲡⲔⲞⲥ ⲓⲚ ⲡⲉⲗⲚⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲁⲓⲑⲓⲛⲟⲥ :ⲉⲛⲟⲩⲧⲓ :ⲥⲓⲟⲩⲩ ⲁⲗⲱ ⲃⲟⲓⲑⲓ ⲁⲗⲱ ⲩⲁⲣⲉⲩ ⲉⲡⲱⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲙⲡⲉⲕⲩⲙⲩⲁⲗ  
ⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲩⲗⲉⲟⲥ ⲡ? [ⲩⲟⲩⲙⲓ]

ἀληθινός || βοηθῆιν

“Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, bless, protect, and guard the life of your servant Pantouleos, (The name Pantouleos is rare in Coptic but appears on a stele in the Louvre Museum, erected in memory of: “our deceased brother, Pantouleos the deacon, son of the deceased Thoter, from Tutun”, who died in 925 (Inv. E 25091 Louvre Museum), and it also appeared in Dipinto from

Tebtunis: (see: Soldati, 2017, pp. 23-32; Stauffer, 1995, pp. 42 and 48, no. 61; Cat. lattes, 1999, pp. 260-261; Boud'hors & Calament, 2004, p. 468, no.34; Durand, 2009, p. 174).



**Figure 5**

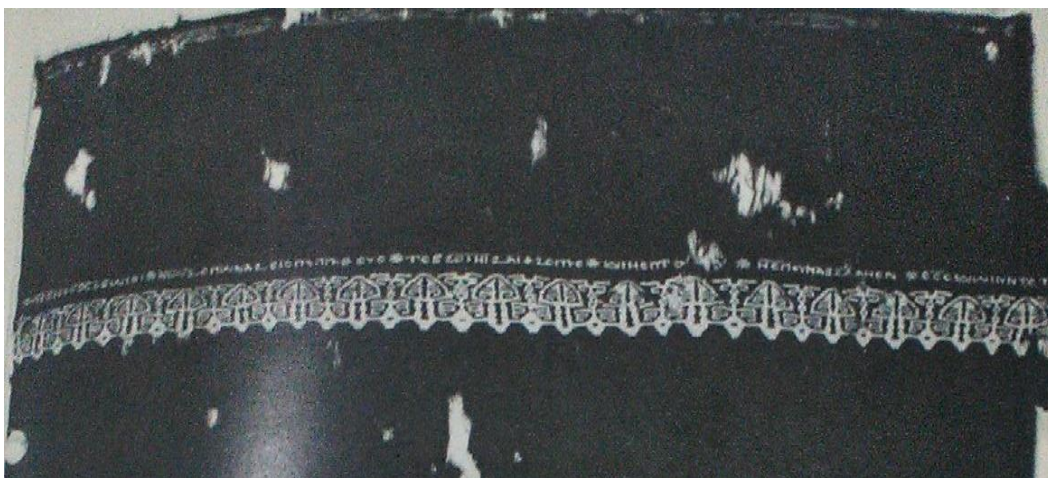
(Stauffer, 1995, no. 61).

(6) A piece of blanket or curtain, (Inv.4659, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin, 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, Tutun? Fig 6. The inscription is well-preserved and written on blue cloth at the top, with a decoration of stylized palmettes arranged in a row. This resembles dark-ground textiles and undyed linen decorations from the Fayoum, decorated with patterns imitating Arabic script. There are red lines parallel to the upper edge. The text consists of a line of Coptic interspersed with crosses.

+π̄ε̄ σ̄ῑ ε̄σε̄χ̄ς̄ β̄οῑθ̄ῑ +ᾱϣ̄ ω̄ρ̄ε̄ε̄ ε̄π̄ω̄νᾱρ̄ ε̄ῑς̄ π̄γ̄π̄ῑλ̄θ̄ε̄ϣ̄ε̄ +τ̄ε̄β̄ρ̄σ̄ῑη̄ῑρ̄αῑ +ρ̄ε̄π̄ λ̄ε̄ +ϣ̄ῑη̄ε̄π̄τ̄ [+4]  
 +η̄ε̄ῑτ̄ο̄γ̄νᾱβ̄ρ̄ [?] λ̄η̄ε̄ν+ ε̄σε̄ω̄ω̄ῑν̄ν̄τ̄ε̄ τ̄σ̄π̄+ᾱο̄[...]

ῑς̄ π̄ε̄χ̄ς̄|| βο̄η̄θ̄ε̄ῑν|| φῑλο̄θ̄ε̄ϣ̄ς̄|| τ̄ε̄ρ̄ς̄ρ̄αῑ|| λᾱω̄ῑη̄? || ϣ̄π̄ῑτ̄ || ρ̄ᾱμ̄η̄η̄ || ε̄σε̄ω̄ω̄π̄ε̄

“Jesus Christ, help! he entered into life, see Philothens (?) His letter? (?) the hypocrite(?) joy, amen, so be it”. (Fluck, 1996, p. 166, pl. XI (a); Fluck, 1997, pp.59–70; Boud’hors & Calament, 2004, p. 468, no.36.).



**Figure 6**

(Fluck, 1996, pl. XI. a).

(7) The top and bottom ends of the shawl, (Inv. 711 Katoen Natie in Antwerp, Belgium, 10th - 11<sup>th</sup>, Tutun, Fig 7). The text includes a Coptic version of Psalms 17:33ab–34a, followed by two other verses in the same context. As suggested by Boud'hors and Calment in 2004, it may represent a paraphrase or abbreviated translation of Psalms 17:40 b–41a, the great hymn of thanksgiving to David for his victory over Saul.

The top line ❖ ΠΝΟΥΤΕΙ ΠΕΤΜΟΥΡ ΜΑΙ ΝΟΥΒΑΜ ΤΑΒ ΔΥΚΑ ΔΑΖ<Ι>Ε ΕΣΣΟΥΑΒ ΕΤΣΑΥΤΕΝ ΝΑΟΥΡΕΤ  
 ∴ Ε ΘΕ ΝΑΝΙΟΥΛ ΑΚΤΑΒΡΑ ΜΑΙ ΖΙΧΕΝ ΝΑΧΕΝΧΕΕΙ ΤΕΡΟΥ ΑΚΘΕΒΙΑ ΝΑΧΑ∴

The bottom line ❖ ΠΝΟΥΤΕΙ ΠΕΤΜΟΥΡ ΜΑΙ ΝΟΥΒΑΜ ΤΑΒ ΔΥΚΑ ΛΑΖΙΕ ΕΣΣΟΥΑΒ ΕΤΣΑΥΤΕΝ  
 ΝΑ[Ο]ΥΡΕΤΕ ΘΕ [∴] ΝΑΝΙΟΥ [Λ ΑΚΤ]ΑΒΡΑ ΜΑΙ[ΖΙΧΕ]Ν ΝΑΧΕΝΧΕΕΙ ΤΕΡΟΥ- ΑΚΘΕΒΙΑ ΝΑΧΑΧΕ  
 ΖΑΠΕΖΗΥ ΝΑ∴

ΠΝΟΥΤΕ|| ΤΑΖΙΕ|| ΟΥΑΔΒ|| ΣΑΒΤΕ

“God who girds me with strength; He made my way spotless, (He) who straightens my feet like those of hinds”.

“(?) You made me superior over all my adversaries and humiliated all my enemies behind (?)”. (Boud'hors & Calament, 2004, p. 469; De Moor, 2006, pp. 224–25 and col. 28; Van der Vliet, Appx. I, no. 2 and Appx. II, no. 1, figs. 5, 6).

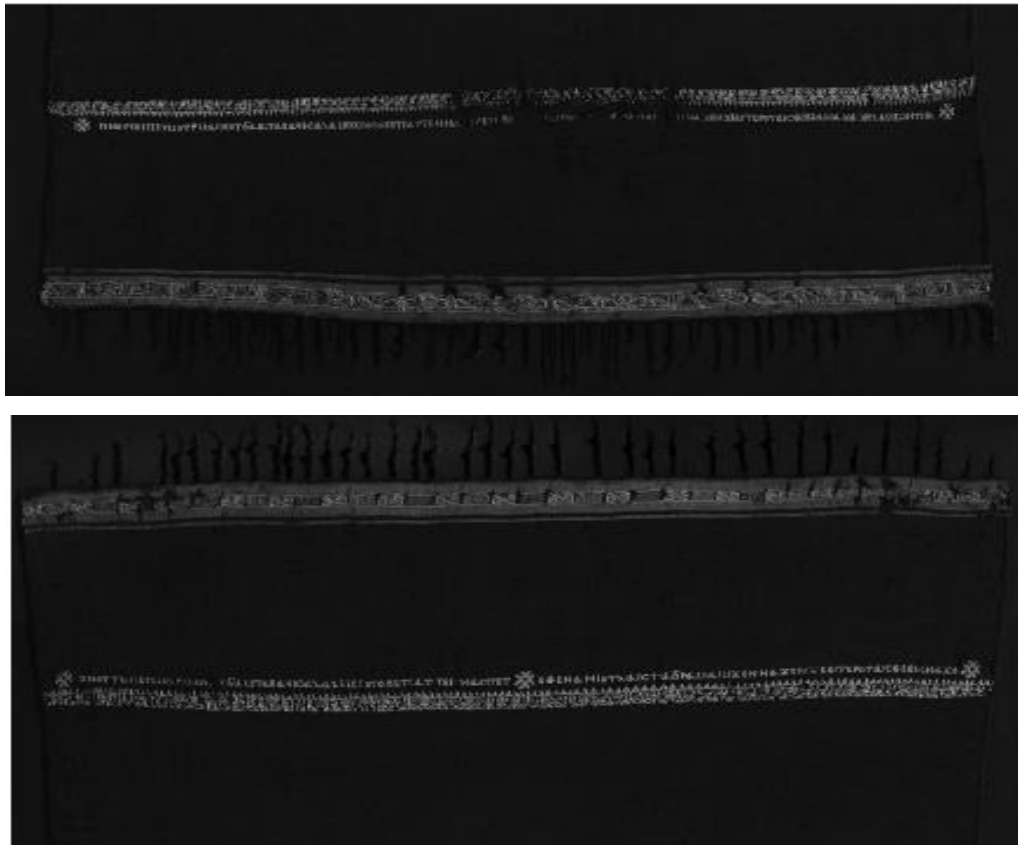


Figure 7 (A, B)

(Van der Vliet, J., Appx. I, no. 2 and Appx. II, no. 1, figs. 5-6).

(8) Inv. 10064, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst 6th -8th, Arsinoe, Fig. 8. It could be a funerary piece, a donation to churches, or a votive offering at the place of pilgrimage. (Fluck, 1997, p. 62.) Despite its fragmentary state, it can be seen that the acclamation  $\omega\theta\eta\iota\alpha$  "O Lord of Help" was preceded by at least a prayer to Saint Damian. The existence of a church or a monastery of the saints Kosmas and Damian in Arsinoe is known from documents. This site is mentioned in a Greek document from the 6th–8th centuries A.D. (Timm, 1991, pp. 1513-14; Wessely, 1903, no. 269:3).

...]ΟΓΙΟΣ ΔΑΜΙΑΝ Π[.....]ΚΕ ΒΟΗΘ[ΕΙ/Δ]ΠΚ[...]

ἅγιος|| κύριος βοηθέω

Holy Damian, who [.....] Lord, help [...] (Fluck, 1996, p.165, pl. X (a); Fluck, 1997, pp. 59–70.)

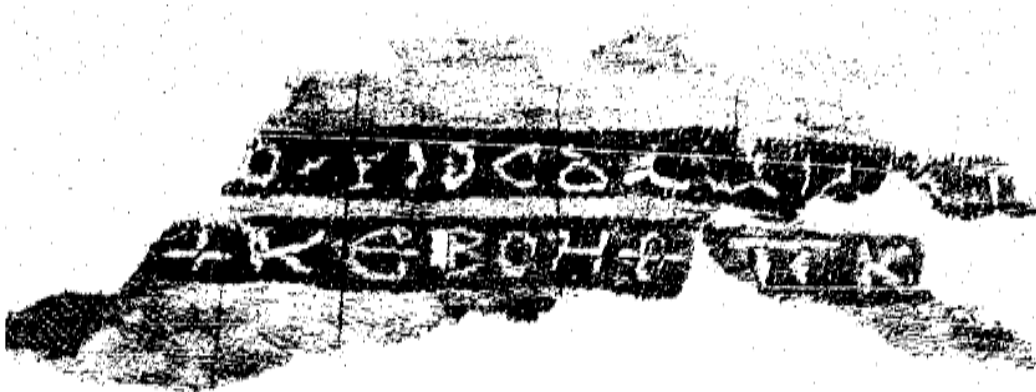


Figure 8

(Fluck, 1996, pl. X. a).

(9) A Fragment of a sleeve of a tunic, (Inv. 10065, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, 6<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>, Arsinoe, Fig 9. The text is composed of the invocation  $\pi\iota\omega\gamma\tau\epsilon \pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  (oh God, logos) with the petition formula  $\gamma\alpha\rho\epsilon\zeta$  (protect) and the name of the person to be protected and his filiation. The parents asked for help for their son, Damian.

+  $\pi\iota\omega\gamma\tau\epsilon \pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma \gamma\alpha\rho\epsilon\zeta \epsilon\pi\mu\mu\epsilon\rho\iota\tau \kappa\omega\theta\eta\rho\epsilon \tau\alpha\mu\iota\alpha\kappa\epsilon \zeta [\dots] \alpha\mu\eta\eta \omega +$

“God, Logos, guard our beloved son Tamiane [...] Amen”. (Fluck, 1997, pp. 61-70; Fluck, 1996, pp.165-166 and pl. Xb; Durand, 2009, p. 175.)



Figure 9

(Fluck, 1996, pl. X.b)

(10) Fragment of cloth, (Inv. 9949, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup>, Fig 10

ϺΝ ΠΡΑΝ ΝΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΧΑΗΛ ΠΩΕΝ ΒΙΚΤΩΡ ΠΩΕΝΠΑΤΖΑΧΑΡΙΑΣ

“In the name of God, Chael, son of Victor, son of Zacharieh”. (Fluck, 164; Fluck, C., P; Merz, S., *Textilien aus Ägypten: Teil 1: Textilien aus dem Vorbesitz von Theodor Graf, Schmidt*, 2000, no.167).

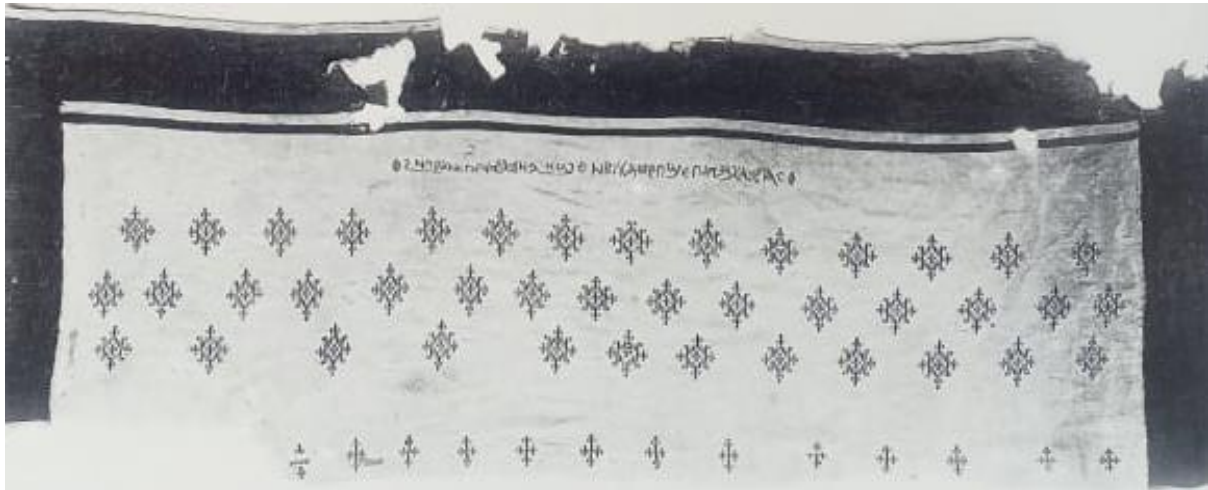


Figure 10

(Fluck, Linscheid & Merz, 2000, no.167.)

(11) Liturgical Tunic with an inscription on the sleeves and its hood, Inv. E 26798- E26799, Louvre Museum, 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> – Naqlun, Fig.11.

A perfectly preserved liturgical garment. The most informative inscription is clearly on the right sleeve.

The left hand of the sleeve: [ϺΝ]ΠΡΑΝ ΕΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΝΩΑΡΠ ΝΖΩΒ ΝΙΜ ΙΣΒΥ

“The name of God. First of all,”

The right-hand of the sleeve

ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΒΩΙΘΙ ΕΠ<Α>ΠΑ ΚΩΛΘΙ ΠΑΤΜΟΥΓΝΗ ΝΕΚΛΩΝΙ Ϻ[ΑΜΗΝ]

βοηθέω || /παπᾶς || μονή

“God, help Apa Kôlthi of the Monastery Neklôni [Naqlun] Amen” (Cat. Lattes, 1999, nos. 88–9, pp. 265–268; Van der Vliet, 2000, pp. 239-244; Cat.Rouen, (2002-2003), pp. 129-130, no.95; Boud'hors & Calament, 2004, p. 468, no.37; Durand, 2009, pp. 175-176; Morgan, 2018, pp. 85-86, 160, 221, fig. 55).



**Figure 11 (A, B, C)**

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#### 4. Dating

Historians and travelers have mentioned the Egyptian textile workshops that produced many fabrics, especially tiraz styles in the Delta and Fayoum, as well as in Upper Egypt, between the 8th and 11th centuries AD, indicating the fame of these workshops. (Durand, 2009, p. 172).

Regarding the Fayoum shawls are stylistically attributed to the ninth and tenth centuries AD, especially those from the workshops at Tutun. However, the objects do not indicate the date or the name of the caliph who controlled production, but they take on the same epigraphic features as in other sources from the same region. (Durand, Rettig, 2002, pp. 167-168). However, Winnik (2025, p. 200) dated these pieces to the late eighth to early twelfth centuries AD.

The Naqlun pieces are not only from an ancient context but are also firmly established in the eleventh to fourteenth-century AD chronology. This is because a significant cemetery revealed artifacts that belonged to the Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk eras. (Godlewski, Herbich & Wipszycka, 1990, pp. 181-188; Czaja-Szewczak, 2005b, p. 133. It is noted that Coptic epigraphy on textiles began to decline after the twelfth-thirteenth century, and was later confined to liturgical garments. (Durand, 2009, p. 176).

#### 5. Conclusion

These textile fragments revealed strict concepts about their users or owners, and some of their religious functions; these individuals were clearly known donors and patrons in the Fayoum area of Tutun, belonging to wealthy families such as Pantouleos, Thoter, and Raphael. Textiles also helped define fashion, previously unknown in engravings and murals. Some pieces, particularly those bearing Arabic and Coptic inscriptions, have helped to accurately date them, based on their writing style, dialect, decorative style, and perhaps through comparison with similar inscriptions from the same location (for instance, Tutun pieces). These textiles attest to the fact that Fayoum still housed a Christian population sufficiently wealthy and self-conscious to demand and wear these typically luxurious Christian items, particularly in the southern part of Fayoum, which includes major Christian centers, especially in the ninth/ tenth century AD.

They also testify to the Coptic community's adaptation to the public market and the production of these pieces from various materials, including wool, linen, and sometimes silk, for export and trade. Most of the textiles are neutral, expressing sentiments that do not offend Christians or Muslims. They also indicate the integration of the Christian elite with the Islamic authority, following the establishment of private workshops in Tutun. This was considered a political act, demonstrating a desire for independence, especially after the deliberate absence of the name of the Islamic caliph on the shawls during the Tulunid and Ikhshidid dynasties, to legitimize their authority more than that of the Abbasid caliphs. Fayoum was famous at that time for the linen

trade and the multiplicity of workshops, this is evidenced by some bilingual textile fragments (Arabic and Coptic) that were found in Tutun which mentioned the workshop in Tutun (evidence that it was made in one of the workshops spread in Fayoum at that time), reflecting the wealth of commercial and economic activity during that period.

Most of the inscriptions included Fayoumi-Sahidic texts, but some inscriptions were bilingual Coptic and Arabic (Texts Nos. 2, 3). Some of the formulas used in the Fayoumic inscriptions revealed their influence from the Arabic language, such as the inscriptions that begin with (Ⲅⲙ ⲡⲗⲈⲚ ⲙⲡⲢⲞⲮⲧⲓ), which corresponds to the Bismalah in Arabic (Texts Nos. 10, 11).

The textile inscriptions also document the prevalence of religiosity of the Fayoumic Christian community, as some of them included inscriptions inspired by the liturgy and biblical texts, and most of them adopted some religious symbols, indicating their affiliation with an authentic Coptic environment, usually a monastic one.

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