

“Copy & Paste” – Counterfeits of Late Antique Textiles

Ines Bogensperger

In recent decades many research activities focused on late antique textiles or so called “coptic textiles”. These fabrics attract enormous interest among experts and visitors of museums and collections alike in regards to colours, patterns and the fact that these textiles once formed part in everyday’s life. Historic textiles were studied under various aspects and approaches. Despite such high academic attention and enthusiasm less focus was on the aspect of forgery of textiles.

In course of my research project on late antique textiles in the Department of Papyri of the Austrian National Library (Vienna) I came across several objects which proved to be peculiar compared to other fragments: their appearance is certainly not in its original form but shows traces of interference and manipulation. Clearly one tried to imitate the specific ornaments (i.e. *tabulae*, *orbiculi*) of tunics and furnishing textiles. Similar objects are found in many textile collections however less frequently discussed or even displayed. In recent literature such pieces are named *pasticci*.

A question remains though: Can such manipulated textiles, viz. fragments be considered purely as counterfeits? Or would it be suitable to regard them in a different way – more as “new originals”?

Thus my aim is to present one of these “faked textiles” currently held in the Department of Papyri of the Austrian National Library and to discuss a new approach whilst exploring its significance among late antique textiles.