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Egyptian textiles and their production: 'word'  
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## Conclusion: Egyptian Textiles and Their Production

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# Conclusion

Dominique Cardon

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This book, “Egyptian textiles and their production: ‘word’ and ‘object’ (Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods)” is both very useful and... frustrating. Indeed, all volumes of transactions of a scientific symposium are bound to be so, since research is a never-ending story. However, this is particularly true of textile research, which involves so many different approaches.

Most of the relevant scientific domains are represented in this volume. There is a good combination of several reports on new research – recently studied archaeological textiles and iconographic documents on weaving – with attempts at syntheses of available evidence, both archaeological and textual, alongside useful critical reappraisals of some long-published hypotheses on the equipment and organisation of production.

Studying Egyptian textile production over the very long period considered in this volume offers endless possibilities. Egypt is, on the one hand, unique in the wealth of different types of complementary historical sources offered by the dry environments of different parts of its present territory. It is also exceptional in the diversity of textile cultures that flourished in the country: the long-mastered techniques linked with flax/linen production being complemented successively by the technological cultures associated with wool, cotton, and lastly silk. On the other hand, Egypt, in many aspects, is representative of the importance and diversity of textiles in the ancient Mediterranean world since Hellenistic times and even more so after its incorporation into the Roman Empire, as argued by Kerstin Droß-Krüpe, following Rostovtzeff.

In this fertile context, the exchanges of diverse experiences, points of view and expertise during the workshop and in the present publication bring forward a wealth of prospects for further research. Among the most prominent must be research into the diversity of weaving looms available to weavers in Egypt at different periods or simultaneously. Were they invented in-country or adopted from elsewhere (Europe, tropical Africa, Middle or Far East)? When? Why do they keep being used? Why are some adopted, others abandoned? Connected with the evolution of the range of available weaving looms is the intriguing evolution of weaves: from linen plain tabbies of different but mostly high qualities, to very complex weaves for fine wool, such as the weft-faced and blocked twill damasks of Roman Egypt which later disappear; from the wool weft-faced compound tabbies of the same period to the later silk compound twills. Questions of fashion? Of technology and technical skills?

Making use of the new resources of archaeometry and of the advances of a diversity of analytical techniques will doubtless help to shed some light on recurring questions, such as the qualities of the fibres and the identification and provenance of the dyes, as demonstrated by some of the contributions in this volume. It is to be hoped that these resources and techniques may be more easily applied in the future to the archaeological textiles currently being discovered in Egypt, and not only to Egyptian textiles preserved in foreign museums.

In the mean time, this volume offers a striking image of the huge contribution of textile production to the economic and social history of Egypt.