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Textiles from Egypt in the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels: History and Provenance

Alexandra VAN PUYVELDE

SUMMARY – The Royal Museums of Art and History keep more than 600 fabrics from Egypt, dating from Late Antiquity to the Mamluk period. The first two lots were purchased in 1887 from Albert Daninos Pacha and Franz Bock of which the majority was registered as coming from Akhmim. The fabrics were exhibited as early examples in the evolution of textile history and as models for (textile) designers, artists and manufacturers. In 1900, Isabella Errera donated over 200 Egyptian fabrics, many of which were purchased from Stanislas Baron in Paris, who was himself a customer of Robert Forrer in Strasbourg. Many textiles originate from Forrer's collection that he already constituted prior to the start of his excavations at Akhmim in 1894–1895. In 1901, Jean Capart made an important purchase at an auction at the Musée Guimet in Paris: the mummy and grave content of the “embroideress Euphemia” and the partial grave content of Aurelios Kolluthos and his wife Tisoia, both excavated in the necropolis of Antinoopolis by Albert Gayet in 1899–1900. The contents of both tombs included impressive textiles that, unlike the previously acquired pieces, were displayed as part of a funerary context.

RÉSUMÉ – Les Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire recensent plus de 600 tissus provenant d'Égypte et datés de l'Antiquité tardive à la période mamelouke. Les deux premiers lots ont été achetés en 1887 chez Albert Daninos Pacha et Franz Bock ; ils ont été en majorité inventoriés comme provenant d'Akhmim. Les étoffes ont été exposés pour illustrer le début de l'évolution de l'histoire du textile et en tant que modèles pour inspirer les *designers* (de textile), les artistes et les fabricants. En 1900, Isabella Errera a fait don de plus de 200 tissus égyptiens. Elle en avait acheté un grand nombre auprès de Stanislas Baron à Paris, lui-même client de Robert Forrer à Strasbourg. Beaucoup de ces pièces proviennent de la collection de Forrer qu'il avait constituée avant ses fouilles à Akhmim en 1894–1895. En 1901, Jean Capart fait un achat important lors d'une vente aux enchères au musée Guimet à Paris : la momie et le contenu de la tombe de la « brodeuse Euphemia » et le contenu partiel de la tombe d'Aurelios Kolluthos et de son épouse Tisoia. Ces deux assemblages proviennent de fouilles dans la nécropole d'Antinoopolis menées par Albert Gayet en 1899–1900. Ils contenaient d'impressionnants tissus qui, contrairement aux pièces acquises précédemment, étaient présentés dans un contexte funéraire.

SAMENVATTING – De Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis bewaren ruim 600 weefsels uit Egypte, daterend van de laatantieke tot de Mamlukenperiode. De eerste twee loten werden aangekocht in 1887 van Albert Daninos Pacha en Franz Bock. Ze werden grotendeels geïnventariseerd als afkomstig uit Akhmim. De stoffen werden tentoongesteld als vroege voorbeelden in de evolutie van de textielgeschiedenis en als modellen voor (textiel)designers, kunstenaars en fabrikanten. In 1900 doneerde Isabella Errera ruim 200 Egyptische weefsels. Een groot deel ervan kocht ze aan bij Stanislas Baron in Parijs, die zelf klant was bij Robert Forrer in Straatsburg. Veel stukken zijn afkomstig uit Forrer's collectie van vóór diens opgravingen in Akhmim in 1894–1895. In 1901 deed Jean Capart een belangrijke aankoop op een veiling in het Musée Guimet in Parijs: de mummie en de grafinhoud van de “borduurster Euphemia” en de gedeeltelijke grafinoedel van Aurelios Kolluthos en zijn vrouw Tisoia, beide opgegraven in de necropool van Antinoopolis door Albert Gayet in 1899–1900. De inhoud van beide graven telde indrukwekkende weefsels die, anders dan de eerder aangekochte stukken, werden tentoongesteld als deel van een funeraire context.

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH)¹ keep more than 600 textiles (615 inventory numbers) from Egypt dating from Late Antiquity (3rd–7th century) to the Mamluk period (1250–1517). A total of 469 inventory numbers, are part of the Art of Eastern Christianity collection. Another 146 Egyptian textiles that date from the Early Islamic until the Mamluk period are registered in the collection Art of the Islamic World of which an estimated 30 pieces predate the 11th century. Both collections were created rather recently. The

¹ Throughout its history, the official name of the RMAH was changed several times. For a complete overview, see LELOUP & MONTENS 2008, p. 27–50. For convenience, we use the current abbreviation RMAH in this paper.

Islamic art section was founded in 1960 by the Egyptologist and Arabist Arpag Mekhitarian². After he retired, he was succeeded by Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne³, a Byzantinist who also created in 1972–1973 the section Art of Eastern Christianity. For the creation of these new collections, both curators moved objects from other departments (especially the Antiquities, Decorative Arts and former Ethnography departments) and made selected purchases. In the 1970s, Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne thus moved the Late Antique and Islamic textiles, which until then belonged to the Textiles collection (part of the Decorative Arts department), to the Art of Eastern Christianity and the Art of the Islamic World sections⁴. Fabrics from the pharaonic periods remained in the Egyptian collection⁵.

The majority of the Egyptian textiles now registered in the collections Art of Eastern Christianity and the Art of the Islamic World of the RMAH were acquired at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, when large amounts of Late Antique and Early Islamic period textiles were discovered in Egypt⁶. The most important acquisitions are the result of the purchases from Albert Daninos Pasha and Franz Bock in 1887–1888, the donation (1900–1901) and bequest (1929) of Isabella Errera and the purchases by Jean Capart at the Guimet auction in Paris in 1901.

THE PURCHASES FROM ALBERT DANINOS PASHA AND FRANZ BOCK, 1887–1888

First contacts with Franz Bock in 1867

As early as 1867, the Aachener canon Dr Franz Bock (1823–1899) tried to sell a collection, of 8th–17th century textiles to the RMAH⁷ which was still housed at its original premises at the Halle Gate, one of the medieval city gates of Brussels, and was then named *Musée Royal d'Armures, d'Antiquités et d'Artillerie* with Théodore Juste as its chief curator. In a letter of August 3, 1867, to Jules Van de Peereboom, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Franz Bock emphasised the importance of the proposed textiles for reconstructing the history of textile production and in serving as models for designers, artists and manufacturers⁸. According to him, this was already acknowledged by manufacturers and other important museums across Europe⁹ since the South Kensington Museum and the Musée de Vienne had already purchased parts of his collection¹⁰.

² VAN RAEMDONCK 2015, p. 10. For a biography of Arpag Mekhitarian: BIERBRIER 2019, 312; BRUFFAERTS 1999.

³ For a biography of Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne: MEKHITARIAN 1994.

⁴ After this transfer, they were given the prefix “ACO” (“Art chrétien d’Orient”) and “IS” (“Islam”) respectively.

⁵ Their inventory numbers have the prefix “E” or “Tx”, or both.

⁶ In this paper, textiles (mainly from the Pharaonic period) registered in the Egyptian collection are left out, but those included in ERRERA 1916 are listed in the overview and concordance tables in annexes 1 and 2.

⁷ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 10/13 (letters to the RMAH and the Minister of Internal Affairs, dated from May 28, 1867 to October 14, 1867).

⁸ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 10/13 (letter from Franz Bock to the Minister of Internal Affairs Van de Peereboom, August 3, 1867): “[...] *seulement à l’aide d’une pareille collection [...] on pourra composer et enseigner l’histoire de la tapisserie et du tissage au moyen-âge. En outre pour la reproduction ces modèles sont de haute importance. La valeur pour la décoration en est incontestable. Aussi l’industrie commence à s’en emparer partout pour les imiter. Tissus, tapisseries, papiers, broderies – tous ces produits de l’industrie pourront se régénérer sur les échantillons antiques d’une telle collection. Comme ce sont en grande partie des étoffes “historiées et fleuries”, l’artiste tant peintre que sculpteur et décorateur en pourra aussi tirer son profit*”.

⁹ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 10/13: Letter from Franz Bock to the Minister of Internal Affairs Van de Peereboom, August 3, 1867): “*Les manufactures en soie de Lyon aussi bien que celles de Crefeld ont reproduit une grande quantité de ces anciens tissus ce qui a excité l’attention des musées de Vienne et de Londres*”.

¹⁰ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 10/13 (letter from Franz Bock to the Minister of Internal Affairs Van de Peereboom, August 3, 1867): “*J’ai donc cédé une partie de ces étoffes au Kensington-Musée. La moitié de l’autre partie a été achetée par le musée de Vienne. Ce qui m’en reste, je l’ai soumis à l’examen de Mr Juste, directeur du musée de Bruxelles*”. The “musée de Vienne” must be the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie, now Museum für Angewandte Kunst (see also BORKOPP-RESTLE 2008, p. 154–156).

The proposed collection most probably did not contain any Late Antique and Islamic period textiles as Franz Bock had not yet travelled to Egypt at that time¹¹. Nevertheless, among the 72 pieces that he wanted to sell, 11 were “*étoffes en soie figurée de la fabrication orientale et byzantine*” and dated to the 8th–11th centuries¹². Franz Bock failed to sell this collection to the RMAH and in a letter of September 20, 1867, Théodore Juste informed him that during the assembly of September 16, the members of the *Commission de surveillance* decided not to purchase the collection, due to “*des acquisitions faites d’urgence ayant considérablement réduit les crédits dont dispose l’établissement*”¹³.



Fig. 1. – *Albert Daninos Pacha, 1900* (© Wikimedia commons).

The attempts by Albert Daninos Pasha and Franz Bock in 1886

On May 25, 1886, Albert Daninos Pasha (1843–1925 ; fig. 1), an archaeologist-antiquarian of Algerian origin¹⁴, wrote a letter from Alexandria to Théodore Juste, stating that he owns “*une collection de broderies anciennes très variées de dessins et de couleurs, et extrêmement intéressantes par les figures de saints, d’animaux et de fleurs qui en composent les sujets. Ces broderies sont de l’époque byzantine et ont été récemment trouvées dans les tombes de la Haute Egypte, appartenant au 2^e et 3^e siècle de l’ère chrétienne. Pensant que cette collection pourrait offrir quelque intérêt à votre musée, tant au point de vue archéologique, qu’artistique et industriel, je viens vous en proposer l’acquisition*”¹⁵. On the letter, someone wrote in pencil: “*sans suite*”. After his second trip to Egypt between December 1885 and January or February 1886, Franz Bock provided several European museums with large amounts of Late Antique and Islamic period textiles¹⁶. He also proposed a collection for sale to the RMAH. In a letter dated December 21, 1886, addressed to Théodore Juste,

¹¹ Franz Bock only made his first journey to Egypt in spring 1885 (BORKOPP-RESTLE 2008, p. 170).

¹² Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 10/13 (letter from Franz Bock to the Minister of Internal Affairs Van de Peereboom, August 3, 1867).

¹³ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 10/13.

¹⁴ For a biography of Albert Daninos Pasha, see BRUWIER 1989, p. 25–28. As director of the *Société belgo-égyptienne de l’Ezbekieh*, he had many contacts with Belgians in Egypt. He sold a monumental bust of a Ptolemaic queen to the Belgian industrialist Raoul Warocqué (1870–1917) which is one of the highlights of the Musée royal de Mariemont at Morlanwelz (BRUWIER 1989, p. 32–35; 2009; see also DERRIKS 2009, p. 28–29).

¹⁵ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 46/2.

¹⁶ BORKOPP-RESTLE 2008, p. 170–178.

the assistant curator Joseph Destrée regrets the rejection by the members of the *Commission de surveillance*: “[...] ils ont également refusé d’acheter des étoffes précieuses que le Dr Bock d’Aix la Chapelle proposait au Musée. Le prix me semblait raisonnable. Je voudrais me tromper, mais je crois qu’ils regretteront les occasions qui se présentaient hier si favorablement”¹⁷. It was not until October–November 1887 that the RMAH decided to purchase a collection from both dealers.

The purchase from Albert Daninos Pasha in 1887

In a letter from Joseph Destrée to Theodor Juste, dated October 21, 1887, Joseph Destrée reports that during the assembly of the *Commission de surveillance* of October 18, the members of the *Commission* proposed the purchase of (among others) “une collection d’étoffes anciennes, venant de l’Égypte pour une somme de frs 2500”. He adds: “La dernière acquisition [i.e. the Egyptian textiles] intéresse beaucoup le musée. Les instituts similaires de l’Europe en sont déjà pourvus et il importait que la Porte de Hal se distinguât par son obtention”¹⁸. So it seemed important to Joseph Destrée that the collection of the RMAH could achieve the same level as other European institutions and that it could display the same kind of objects.

In the “Inventaire 1886–1890” of the *Musée Royal d’Antiquités et d’Armures*¹⁹, the date of the assembly of the *Commission de surveillance* during which the acquisition of the “Étoffes de la Haute Égypte” was proposed, October 18, 1887, is mentioned as the date of entry of the textiles, and “M. Daninos-Pacha, Alexandrie” is noted as the seller. In the “Annexe” of this inventory²⁰ it is specified that it concerns 109 textiles and that the acquisition is “faite par les soins de M. Louis Evenepoel”²¹. All 109 pieces are listed, with the remark: “Les dates approximatives indiquées dans la présente description sont empruntées au vendeur”. For the numbers 1 to 9 (textiles dating to the pharaonic period) is noted “trouvé à Deir el Bahari, nécropole de Thèbes (Haute-Egypte)”²². Above the numbers 10 to 109 is written: “Travail de la tapisserie. Fragments provenant d’Akhmim, l’ancienne Panopolis [...] Premier siècle [sic] de l’ère chrétienne”. We suppose that the information about the provenance of Akhmim probably also derived from the seller, Albert Daninos Pasha. Although we do not know where or from whom he acquired these textiles, it is interesting to note that in 1885–1886, shortly before Albert Daninos Pasha already tried to sell his textiles to the RMAH (May 25, 1886), Gaston Maspero was directing excavations at the Late Antique and Early Islamic period cemeteries of Akhmim²³. These excavations were also an impetus for increasing clandestine diggings and trade of material²⁴. Albert Daninos Pasha had also contacts with Marius Panayiotis Tano, a dealer who owned an antiquities shop in Cairo and sold him some of the Amarna letters in 1887²⁵. In those years, textiles from

¹⁷ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 46/2. In a letter from Franz Bock to the RMAH (to Joseph Destrée?), December 26, 1886, Franz Bock replied to a request to reduce the price that he could not go below 800 frs: Archives of the RMAH, Fonds Joseph Destrée, dossier BE/380469/10/88 (letter 1). Apparently, this did not change the decision taken by the *Commission de surveillance*.

¹⁸ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 83/2.

¹⁹ Archives of the RMAH, Inventory, dossier BE/380469/7/4 (Musée royal d’Antiquités et d’Armures. Inventaires, vol. IV, 1886–1900, p. 161).

²⁰ Archives of the RMAH, Inventory, dossier BE/380469/7/5 (annexe of the inventory 1886–1890, p. 29–42, with old inventory numbers 9351–9459). The same textiles are also registered in the *Inventaire section des Anciennes Industries d’Art*, vol. II, 1885–1902, p. 28–41 (Archives of the RMAH, Inventory, dossier BE/380469/7/8).

²¹ He is probably Louis-Marie Evenepoel (1838–1914), known as Louis, and one of the brothers of Albert Evenepoel (1835–1911), a member of the *Commission de Surveillance* of the RMAH and well known for having bequeathed his ceramics collection to the museum (MARIËN-DUGARDIN 1985, p. 107–113; see also MONTENS, this volume). Louis Evenepoel was a painter and was said to be a friend of Félicien Rops, whom he welcomed several times to his Paris pied-à-terre (MÉNEUX 2000, p. 83). In 1885, he was one of the curators of the Egyptian section at the Antwerp International Exposition (see *Moniteur belge* 1885(7–8), p. 3224) and in 1887, he was appointed as a member of the *Comité de Direction des Arts Rétrospectifs*, where he sat alongside two members of the *Commission de Surveillance* of the *Musée royal d’Armures, d’Antiquités et d’Artillerie*, namely Canon Reusens and Gustave Vermeersch (*Moniteur belge* 1887(3–4), p. 808). It was probably in this context, and maybe also through the intercession of his brother Albert, that he came into contact with the RMAH. Many thanks to Denis Perin, archivist at the RMAH, for these references.

²² Eight of the nine textiles are registered and identified as Tx.2592–2599 and are now part of the Egyptian collection of the RMAH. They are still glued on the cardboard on which Albert Daninos Pasha sold them.

²³ MÜLLER 2005, p. 4; FLUCK 2008; O’CONNELL 2008. See MASPERO 1886, p. 210–212 for a description of the “*momies byzantines et coptes*”.

²⁴ MÜLLER 2005, p. 4; FLUCK 2008, p. 211–224; O’CONNELL 2008, p. 3.

²⁵ CAPART 1936, p. 432 and 441; MERILLEES 2003, p. 7; BIERBRIER 2019, p. 451–452. For more info on the Tano family see HAGEN &

Akhmim could easily be purchased, not only at the site itself but also in Luxor and Cairo²⁶. As most of the textiles that appeared on the market in the years 1885–1886 and ended up in European collections probably originate from Akhmim, it seems very possible that the textiles sold to the RMAH by Albert Daninos Pacha indeed come from there, although caution about the provenance of each single fabric should always be kept in mind²⁷.

So far, 91 fabrics in the Art of Eastern Christianity, Art of the Islamic World and Egypt collections have been identified as coming from the ensemble (109 fabrics) purchased from Albert Daninos Pacha, for which we refer to the overview and concordance table (annex 1). For the remaining 18 fabrics, additional research is needed to identify them and to match the current inventory numbers with the old inventory numbers, registered in the inventory books.

The purchase from Franz Bock in 1887

On September 28, 1887, Franz Bock writes to the RMAH that he is ready to bring a selected collection of 120 “*altkoptische Textilien des V.–VII. Jahrhunderts unter Glasrahmen*” to Brussels²⁸. In the “Inventaire 1886–1890”²⁹ 130 Coptic textile fragments are registered “*provenant de la Haute Égypte, acquis de M. Bock, en deux lots, un de 1000 [frs.], l’autre de 1500 [frs.]*”. Again, the date of the assembly of the *Commission de surveillance*, during which the acquisition was proposed, more specifically October 31, 1887, is mentioned as date of entry of the textiles. In the “Annexe” of the inventory of 1886–1890³⁰, 124 numbers (among the 130 items; some include two pieces) are listed as “*tissus coptes provenant de Akhmim, Haute Égypte*”. Also in this case, we assume that the provenance information stems from the dealer, Franz Bock³¹. As mentioned before, Franz Bock travelled to Egypt in the Spring of 1885 and between December 1885 and January or February 1886. Although his exact itineraries are not known³², it does not seem impossible that the textiles sold by him to the RMAH also originate from Akhmim. In a letter to the director of the museum, dated November 6, 1887, Franz Bock writes that he cannot bring down the price, which was already reduced from 3,000 to 2,500 frs. He also points out that Belgian museums and private collections still have few outstanding textiles and that one should therefore be mindful of at least starting the establishment of an “*archaeologisch wissenschaftliche Textil und Mustersammlung*”³³.

Up to now, 126 textiles in the Art of Eastern Christianity and Art of the Islamic World collections have been identified as coming from the ensemble (130 fabrics) purchased from Franz Bock, for which we refer to annex 1. Four fabrics still have to be identified and matched with the current inventory numbers.

On November 16, 1887, the Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Public Works (also responsible for the “Département des Beaux-Arts”) finally gave his authorisation for the acquisition of the Coptic textiles from both dealers, Albert Daninos Pasha and Franz Bock³⁴. On January 18, 1888, a purchase contract was signed by Théodore Juste and Franz Bock³⁵.

RYHOLT 2016, p. 265–267.

²⁶ O’CONNELL 2008. Also Gaston Maspero himself seems to have been engaged in antiquities trade and collectors could buy antiquities during site visits (O’CONNELL 2008, n. 17).

²⁷ FLUCK 2008.

²⁸ Archives of the RMAH, Fonds Joseph Destrée, dossier BE/380469/10/88 (letter 2, Franz Bock).

²⁹ Archives of the RMAH, inventory book n° BE/380469/7/4 (Musée royal d’Antiquités et d’Armures. Inventaires, vol. IV, 1886–1900, p. 162). The same textiles are also noted in the *Inventaire section des Anciennes Industries d’Art*, vol. II., 1885–1902, p. 42–59 (Archives of the RMAH, Inventory, dossier BE/380469/7/8).

³⁰ Archives of the RMAH, Inventory, dossier BE/380469/7/5 (annexe of the inventory 1886–1890, p. 46–62, with old inventory numbers 9462–9586).

³¹ FORRER 1891a, p. 9 also mentions that the textiles which were traded by Franz Bock come from Akhmim.

³² FLUCK 2008.

³³ Archives of the RMAH, Fonds Joseph Destrée, dossier BE/380469/10/88 (letter 4, Franz Bock).

³⁴ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 12/2 (149) (letter to the Théodore Juste, November 16, 1887).

³⁵ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 12/2 (149) (letter of the Ministry to Théodore Juste, January 28, 1888, with the

TOWARDS A BRUSSELS MUSEUM OF DECORATIVE AND INDUSTRIAL ART

In a minute of a letter addressed to the Minister, dated November 10, 1887, Théodore Juste makes the case for the purchase of the textiles from Franz Bock: “*Je dois faire remarquer que la collection dont il s’agit compléterait la série de tissus, acquis récemment [from Daninos Pasha] ; elle formerait en quelque manière le premier élément de la collection textile et qu’elle offrirait aux dessinateurs de broderies et de tissus des motifs aussi variés que gracieux*”³⁶. Not only does Theodor Juste consider these textiles as examples for textile designers, the fact that he presents them as a “first element” of the textile collection also demonstrates the policy of the RMAH to show the different stages in the evolution of various art disciplines, such as textile art³⁷. These criteria are in line with the general purchasing policy of museums of the time, as is illustrated by two letters written by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr Rolin-Jacquemyns, to the director of the RMAH. In a letter from March 15, 1884, he wrote: “*Il importe que nos musées soient avant tout des moyens d’enseignement, que l’industrie et l’art y trouvent des modèles et que les achats soient dictées par la beauté des objets. Ils doivent présenter au moins, à défaut d’un mérite artistique réel, une certaine individualité historique authentiquement constatée*”³⁸. And in a letter from March 22, 1884, he adds: “*Le gouvernement tient essentiellement à ce que le musée soit un lieu d’enseignement pour nos industries d’art, et à ce qu’il collectionne les meilleures modèles plutôt que les pures curiosités*”³⁹. For the same reason (“*favoriser le développement artistique de nos populations*”), the Belgian government intended from 1885 to create “*un musée d’art appliqué, analogue au musée de South Kensington, à Londres*” in the *Palais de l’exposition nationale*⁴⁰. This *Palais* was constructed in 1880 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Belgium’s independence. In 1889, part of the museum collection, the *Anciennes industries d’art*, moved from the Halle Gate to the new buildings in the Parc du Cinquanteenaire⁴¹ and the museum was renamed *Musées royaux des arts décoratifs et industriels*, thus a museum of decorative and industrial art.

THE DONATIONS (1900 & 1901) AND THE BEQUEST (1929) OF ISABELLA ERRERA⁴²

Isabella Goldschmidt-Errera (1869–1929; fig. 2) was born in Florence as the youngest daughter of Isaac “John” Goldschmidt and Sophie Franchetti. Her interest in ancient textiles was probably encouraged by her uncle, Baron Giulio Franchetti (1840–1909), who was an important textile collector. In 1906, he bestowed his collection to the city of Florence, where it is still kept in the National Museum of Bargello. This donation included Egyptian Late Antique and Early Islamic period textiles⁴³. In 1890, Isabella married Paul Errera, a lawyer and professor at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles*, *recteur* between 1908 and 1911. Isabella and Paul Errera travelled extensively from the beginning of their marriage⁴⁴. From December 1890 to February 1891 they made

convention included). Both acquisitions are also confirmed in the “*Dossier budget*” of 1887 (in which records run until October 2, 1888): 2500 frs. for Franz Bock are registered on January 5, 1888 and 2500 frs. for Albert Daninos Pacha on February 2, 1888 (Archives of the RMAH, dossier Budget 1887).

³⁶ MONTENS 2008, p. 294. This minute was not found in the archives of the RMAH.

³⁷ That artists, craftsmen and designers indeed visited the RMAH to study, sketch, paint and photograph objects is demonstrated by requests that had to be addressed to the chief curator for this purpose, numerous examples of which, dating between 1873 and 1924, are preserved in the museum archives. See Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossiers Dir. 184/1, 38/12, 66/6 and 66/15).

³⁸ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 12/2 (727).

³⁹ Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 12/2 (728).

⁴⁰ Parliamentary intervention by Alphonse de Moreau, Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Public Works (who was also responsible for the Beaux-Arts department) on May 21, 1885, quoted in MONTENS 2008, p. 293 (who refers to the *Annales parlementaires, Chambre, séance du 21 mai 1885*). See also LELOUP & MONTENS 2008, p. 29–30.

⁴¹ The arms and armour collection remained in the Porte de Hal (LELOUP & MONTENS 2008, p. 29–30). For the history of the creation of the Brussels *Musée royaux des arts décoratifs et industriels*, see also LEBLANC 2004, p. 29–30.

⁴² For a short biography: DELMARCEL 1985, p. 99–105; VAN RAEMDONCK 2006, p. 74–76 and ERRERA-BOURLA 2000, p. 149–160.

⁴³ PERI 1996; ERRERA 1907b, p. 28; 1907c. For silk textiles from the Islamic world in the Bargello museum and coming from the collection of Giulio Franchetti, see SURIANO, CARBONI & PERI 1999; GAGLIARDI MANGILLI 2018, p. 115–119 and DIANO 2018, p. 180–182. Interesting parallels exist between the Franchetti collection in Florence and the Errera collection in Brussels which would be interesting to study in more detail.

⁴⁴ An elaborate, almost daily, correspondence from Paul to his mother testifies to this and allows tracing their travels and itineraries (CHERTON 2013, p. 31; Archives Jewish Museum of Belgium, Brussels, Fonds Errera).



Fig. 2. – Isabella Errera, Brussels, Fabronius (not dated) (© Archives Musée Juif de la Belgique, Brussels).

their honeymoon trip to Egypt⁴⁵ and in the following years they toured through Europe, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey⁴⁶. She must certainly have bought historical textiles for her collection during her many travels, as evidenced by mentions of the provenance (“*acheté chez...*”) in the catalogues she wrote⁴⁷. However, there is no mention of purchases in Egypt. Together, they opened an important artistic and literary *Salon* at their home, first in the avenue Marnix and later in the rue Royale in Brussels⁴⁸ and became important patrons of the arts.

Isabella Errera started collecting ancient textiles in 1891⁴⁹ and continued to do so until her death in 1929. Her vast collection that ranges in date from Late Antiquity to the early 20th century was donated and finally bequeathed to the RMAH. Already in 1897, the Minister of Science and Art charged her with the task to classify the textile and embroidery collections of the museum and Jean Capart, curator of the Egyptian collection

⁴⁵ Archives of the Jewish Museum of Belgium, Brussels, Fonds Errera, boxes 5 and especially 11.

⁴⁶ Archives of the Jewish Museum of Belgium, Brussels, Fonds Errera, especially boxes 5 and 6.

⁴⁷ ERRERA 1901; 1905; 1907a; 1916 & 1927.

⁴⁸ VANDEVOORDE 2020, p. 284.

⁴⁹ MAUS 1900, p. 258. In this paper, Octave Maus mentioned that she had already donated part of her collection to the *Musée des arts décoratifs et industriels*.

and from 1925 director of the RMAH, referred to her as “*la véritable fondatrice de notre Département des Textiles*”⁵⁰. Isabella Errera had a keen eye for new acquisitions but also attached great importance to the conservation and preservation of the textiles. In a letter of 1904, she urged Eugène Van Overloop, director of the museum since 1898, to have a velum installed on the glass ceiling of the textile gallery and to have curtains fitted on a table-showcase and 11 wall frames⁵¹. Contrary to what was common practice to glue textiles to cardboard, she demanded that the complete textile collection was sewn onto a linen canvas and personally financed the entire operation. She also insisted on replacing the old display cases with new and modern ones (“*meubles à volets*”) that were more fit to exhibit textiles⁵². Her catalogue *Collections d’anciennes étoffes égyptiennes*, published in 1916 contains a photograph of nearly every textile and remains up to now the most complete catalogue of the Egyptian textile collection of the RMAH⁵³.

The donations of 1900 and 1901

On December 10, 1901, Isabella Errera writes to Eugene van Overloop regarding her donation of 420 textiles, in addition to the 205 “Coptic” textiles that she had already bestowed to the museum, probably in 1900⁵⁴. The latter were recorded in the first volume of the *Bulletin des Musées royaux des arts décoratifs et industriels*, issued in October 1901, although it is stated that the donation consisted 210 textiles instead of 205⁵⁵. The same letter also refers to her catalogue published in 1901 as the inventory of the endowment of the 420 textiles⁵⁶. In this catalogue are three textiles which are now inventoried as coming from Egypt or Syria⁵⁷. Still in the same letter of December 10, 1901, she stipulates that her donation is subject to one condition, i.e. having the possibility to manage this collection in the museum for the rest of her life⁵⁸. A list with the price of each of the 420 textiles is attached to the letter⁵⁹ which also shows that certain pieces were gifts from other collectors or even exchanged with institutions such as the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin or the “Musée de Budapest”⁶⁰. In the same letter, she finally announces that she intends to donate more in the future.

⁵⁰ CAPART 1929.

⁵¹ Archives of the RMAH, dossier Catalogue des broderies (Errera) 1898–1904, 161/11 (letter from Isabella Errera to Eugène van Overloop, April 24, 1904).

⁵² VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 18.

⁵³ ERRERA 1916. The catalogue contains 472 entries, of which 204 concern textiles that she donated (see annexes 1 and 2). One entry, cat. 201, contains two textile fragments, ACO.Tx.0030 and ACO.Tx.1407.

⁵⁴ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/6479 (letter from Isabella Errera to Eugène van Overloop, December 10, 1901): “*J’ai l’honneur de remettre au Musée du Cinquantenaire les 420 tissus anciens qui, avec les 205 pièces coptes visées dans ma lettre du 18 mars 1900, formaient la collection que je destinai à l’Etat belge*”. The letter of March 18, 1900, to which she refers, was not found in the archives of the RMAH. The amount of 205 corresponds almost entirely with the 204 Egyptian textiles she donated. See ERRERA 1916 and annexes 1 and 2.

⁵⁵ *Bulletin des Musées royaux des arts décoratifs et Industriels* 1 (1901), p. 4. DESTREE 1902, curator of the collection *Anciennes industries d’art* also reported on this donation.

⁵⁶ ERRERA 1901 includes 419 numbers for 420 textiles (221 and 221a are two separate pieces). In the preface, she writes: “*La collection d’anciennes étoffes, dont nous publions le catalogue, a été formée dans les dix dernières années du XIX^e siècle. Elle comprenait aussi une série de tissus coptes, en laine et en soie, donnée déjà au Musée du Cinquantenaire de Bruxelles et qui figurera au Catalogue de la section des antiquités égyptiennes de ce Musée*”. The textiles donated by Isabella Errera were not registered in the RMAH inventory. This only happened when Marguerite Calberg became curator of the textiles collection (between 1933 and 1963; see also *infra*). Until then, the numbers of the entries in Errera’s catalogues served as reference numbers.

⁵⁷ ERRERA 1901, cat. 1, 26 and 27 (respectively IS.0607, IS.Tx.0395 and IS.Tx.0546).

⁵⁸ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/6479 (letter from Isabella Errera to Eugène van Overloop, December 10, 1901): “*Je mets à ma donation cette seule condition que, ma vie durant, je puisse m’occuper de l’arrangement de mes étoffes au Musée*”. In a letter of February 17, 1902, she asks Eugène van Overloop to confirm that she can continue with the “*arrangements des étoffes au musée*”. This confirmation is given by Eugène van Overloop in a letter of February 19, 1902 (Both letters: Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/6479).

⁵⁹ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/6479: “*Je joins, à titre de renseignement pour vos archives, la liste des prix que j’ai payés pour la plupart des pièces*”. This list is also in the same file.

⁶⁰ These collectors are her uncle Giulio Franchetti, Stanislas Baron, Gustave Vermeersch, Guillaume Beer, Robert Forrer, Friedrich Fischbach, [Paul?] Tachard, Károly “Carlo” Pulszky, [Raimundo?] Madrazo, [Otilie?] Goldschmidt-Przibram, [Achille?] Cantoni, and [Justave?] Dreyfus.

According to Jean Capart, Isabella Errera donated textiles from 1903 onwards (“*dès 1903*”)⁶¹, but neither in the archives of the RMAH, nor in the *Bulletin des Musées royaux des Arts décoratifs et industriels*, published between 1903 and 1930, have we found traces of donations from 1903 or later. In an article published in 1903 regarding a new presentation of the textile collection, Eugène van Overloop mentions: “*C’est d’abord la collection de tissus qui nous fut donnée, d’un bloc, voilà bientôt deux ans, par Mme Isabelle Errera [...]*” and “*Nos musées possèdent, en effet, d’autres tissus encore. Des tissus coptes, d’abord, dont nous avions réuni déjà une assez belle collection, que M^{me} Errera vient d’enrichir, à son tour, par le don de plusieurs séries très intéressantes*”⁶². These “Coptic” textiles were donated by Isabella Errera in 1900 or at the latest in 1901⁶³. Be that as it may, it is certain that she continued to purchase textiles which she subsequently lent to the museum as is illustrated by a letter from Eugène van Overloop (November 23, 1903) who extends his gratitude for “*mettre à notre disposition, à titre de dépôt, pour l’exposer dans nos galeries, votre collection de broderies, vous réservant de nous en faire don plus tard*”⁶⁴. In an article published following the death of Isabella Errera in 1929, Salomon Reinach writes that “*La même année [1905] elle déposa sa collection, devenue très riche, aux Musées royaux des arts décoratifs*”⁶⁵. However, “*Elle déposa*” does not mean that this collection was donated but rather that she deposited or gave a collection as a loan⁶⁶.

Provenances of the Egyptian textiles donated by Isabella Errera

In her catalogue of 1916, Isabella Errera describes the collection of Egyptian textiles of the RMAH that ranges in date, according to her from “*la I^{re} dy. (5000–4750 av. J.-C.)*”⁶⁷ to the 12th century⁶⁸. As mentioned before, of the 472 described textiles, 205 were donated by her in 1900 or at the latest in 1901. Compared to the fabrics purchased from Albert Daninos Pacha and Franz Bock, many (143 out of the 204) are entirely or partly of silk. The provenance of the textiles is only briefly touched upon but the vast majority (167 textiles which corresponds to about 82 % of her Egyptian collection) were acquired from Stanislas Baron in Paris. Twice, 1896 is mentioned as the date of purchase⁶⁹ and 61 of them are labelled as deriving from excavations at Akhmim (“*fouilles d’Akhmim*”). Some of these most likely originate from the collection of Robert Forrer, as 12 identical or at least very similar textiles are published in Forrer’s *Die Gräber und Textilfunde von Achmim-Panopolis* of 1891⁷⁰. The same is true for 25 silk textiles which are identical or very similar to textiles that appear in his *Römische und byzantinische Seiden-Textilien aus dem Gräberfelde von Achmim-Panopolis*, also published in 1891⁷¹. Among the textiles bought from Stanislas Baron, 105 are catalogued as coming from excavations in Egypt (“*fouilles d’Égypte*”) of which seven are silks that feature in Forrer’s 1891 publication⁷². One textile has no archaeological provenance although it is also published by Robert Forrer⁷³. His notebook, entitled *Verkaufs und Einkaufs und Notizbuch über*

⁶¹ CAPART 1929, p. 112.

⁶² VAN OVERLOOP 1903a, p. 3–4.

⁶³ As Octave Maus mentioned in 1900 (see note 50) that she had already presented part of her collection to the museum, we tend to believe that she donated her “Coptic” textiles in 1900.

⁶⁴ Archives of the RMAH, Fonds Internal depositories, loans, exhibitions, exchanges, dossier BE/380469/11/4.

⁶⁵ REINACH 1929.

⁶⁶ No documents concerning a loan or depot by Isabella Errera in 1905 or later are kept in the archives of the RMAH. Textiles from her collection that were not donated but already present in the museum, were bequeathed in 1929 (see *infra*).

⁶⁷ Dates given in ERRERA 1916, cat. 1A–E. She refers to Maspero’s *Guide to the Cairo Museum* of 1906 for the dates of the dynasties.

⁶⁸ The most recent textiles included in this catalogue are now dated in the Mamluk period.

⁶⁹ ERRERA 1916, cat. 84 and 124 (ACO.Tx.0612 and ACO.Tx.246).

⁷⁰ FORRER 1891a, Pls. II.5 and II.10 (ACO.Tx.0243 and ACO.Tx.0245), III.2 (ACO.Tx.0275), IV.4–IV.7 (ACO.Tx.0229, ACO.Tx.0231 and ACO.Tx.0215), V.6, V.9 and V.11 (ACO.Tx.0204, ACO.Tx.0210 and ACO.Tx.0209), VII.1 (ACO.Tx.0612), X.4 and X.8 (ACO.Tx.0288), XII.8 (ACO.Tx.0328).

⁷¹ FORRER 1891b, Pls. III.3–III.4 (ACO.Tx.0003 and ACO.Tx.0018), IV.1–IV.2 (ACO.Tx.0013), V.2 (ACO.Tx.0007), VI.2–VI.3 (IS.Tx.0589 and IS.Tx.0023), VII.2 (IS.Tx.0129), VII.4–VII.5 (IS.Tx.0128), VIII.1–VIII.2, VIII.4 and VIII.6 (ACO.Tx.0010, ACO.Tx.0012, ACO.Tx.0603 and ACO.Tx.0602), IX.3–IX.5 (ACO.Tx.1057, ACO.Tx.0026 and ACO.Tx.0008), X.1 (ACO.Tx.0047 and ACO.Tx.1752), XI.1, XI.4 and XI.6 (IS.Tx.0144, IS.Tx.0133 and IS.Tx.0146), XII.1–XII.2 and XII.7 (ACO.Tx.0011 and IS.Tx.0592), XIII.2 and XIII.4 (IS.Tx.0080 and IS.Tx.0113), XVII.10 (ACO.Tx.1053).

⁷² FORRER 1891b, pl. IV.2 and XII.2 (IS.Tx.0591), VII.2 (IS.Tx.0129), VII.3–VII.4 (both images correspond with IS.Tx.0128); IX.4 (ACO.Tx.0026), XI.6 (IS.Tx.0146), XIII.2 and XIII.4 (IS.Tx.0113 and IS.Tx.0080).

⁷³ ACO.Tx.2662 (ERRERA 1916, cat. 422; FORRER 1891a, pl. X.8).

*Koptische Stoffe – Geschäft Achmim*⁷⁴, indicates that he purchased and sold textiles between 1889 and 1903, although other sources suggest that he was still selling in 1920⁷⁵. In the second part of the notebook, containing the sales, Stanislas Baron is mentioned four times as a buyer. On 13 March, 1892, he bought 120 woollen textile fragments from Forrer's "Lot V" for 600 marks⁷⁶, on 12 March, 1892, he purchased 100 silk fragments and 200 woollen fragments from Forrer's "Lot VI" for 13000 marks, on 19 March, 1892, he bought one tunic for 360 marks and 50 woollen fabrics for 200 marks from Forrer's "Lot VII" and on 28 March, 1895, he acquired one silk textile from Forrer for 70 marks, with the mention "*Tausch*" (exchange)⁷⁷. That makes a total of 370 woollen, 101 silk fragments and one tunic. Since 1896 is mentioned twice as the date of purchase from Stanislas Baron in Errera's 1916 catalogue, it is possible that the 164 textiles she bought from him (or at least part of it) originally were part of the "Forrerschen Sammlung". As Robert Forrer excavated in Egypt from March 1894 until January 1895 the textiles bought by Stanislas Baron in 1892 must come from the "Lots" that he already acquired before his first journey to Egypt. In the acquisitions part of his notebook, Robert Forrer often mentioned "Tano" as the seller from whom he purchased his textiles, referring to the Tano family who held a successful antiquities business in Cairo. Other names mentioned are Carl Kallenberg and "Merkens", the latter probably referring to the antiquarian Franz Merkens from Cologne⁷⁸. In the introduction of his publication *Die Gräber- und Textilfunde von Achmim-Panopolis*, Robert Forrer explains that the textiles he purchased were bought from antiquarians in Cairo who were supplied by agents who collected and purchased the fabrics from local finders in Akhmim⁷⁹.

Isabella Errera only labels one Egyptian textile from Akhmim as purchased directly from Robert Forrer⁸⁰. Other known dealers are Schmitz in Munich (one textile), Voss in Brecht (one textile), Roussel in Paris (two textiles) and Ricard in Frankfurt (two textiles). She bought three textiles in Munich in 1892 (also from Schmitz?) and another five from the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin⁸¹, of which two could come from Carl Schmidt's excavations in Antinoopolis (ACO.Tx.0590 and ACO.Tx.0600)⁸². For 23 textiles, no dealer is mentioned, only "*Fouilles d'Égypte*" (19) or "*Fouilles d'Akhmim*" (4)⁸³.

The available information points to Robert Forrer and the necropolises of Akhmim as the provenance of the majority of the Late Antique and Islamic period textiles from the collection of Isabella Errera. However, whether the textiles from Robert Forrer indeed originate from Akhmim is far from certain and should not be taken for granted, particularly those that were bought from dealers in Cairo and local agents before the start of his own excavations at Akhmim between March 1894 and January 1895⁸⁴.

The bequest of 1929

A copy of Isabella Errera's will of November 27, 1926, is kept in the archives of the RMAH which states: "*Je lègue en pleine propriété à l'État belge tous les objets que j'ai prêtés au Musée du Cinquantenaire plus toute ma*

⁷⁴ It is kept in the archives of the Archaeological Museum of Strasbourg. GLOWA 2021, p. 42–43. Our heartfelt thanks go to Anna Glowa of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, for generously sending us the images of Forrer's entire *Notizbuch*.

⁷⁵ GLOWA 2021, p. 43, n. 16.

⁷⁶ Here Forrer also mentions "Doublets" or "Doubletten" (unclearly written).

⁷⁷ See pages 17 and 18 of his *Notizbuch*; the purchase of 28 March is mentioned on a page without number. The dates are given according to the order in the notebook. For woollen textile fragments (in reality often combined with linen), Forrer uses the abbreviation "W" (= *Wolle*). Silk fragments are indicated with the letter "S" (= *Seide*).

⁷⁸ GLOWA 2021, p. 43.

⁷⁹ FORRER 1891a, introduction (s.p.); FLUCK 2008, p. 211–224.

⁸⁰ ACO.Tx.209 (ERRERA 1916, cat. 53; FORRER 1891a, pl. V.11).

⁸¹ ERRERA 1916, cat. 226 (ACO.Tx.0056), 231 (ACO.Tx.0600), 351 (ACO.Tx.0057), 352 (ACO.Tx.0006) and 372 (ACO.Tx.0590).

⁸² GLOWA 2018–2019, p. 30–31; GOTO 2021, p. 106–107. Curiously, Errera indicates that she bought them from the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin (ERRERA 1916, cat 231 and 372), whereas in the inventory of the former Kunstgewerbemuseum they are recorded as "*Tausch mit Frau Errera in Brüssel. Gegenwerth: Stoff Doubletten*". From the price list attached to her letter of December 10 (see note 60), we know that she exchanged textiles with the Kunstgewerbemuseum (n°30 and 295 in the price list, which correspond with ERRERA 1901, cat. n° 30 and 295).

⁸³ One of these is published in FORRER 1891b, pl. XII.1.

⁸⁴ FLUCK 2008; GLOWA 2021, p. 43. For a recent paper on this topic see also CHAPPAZ 2023.

*bibliothèque d'Art*⁸⁵. On August 6, 1929, Jean Capart, who succeeded Eugène van Overloop as director of the RMAH in 1925, writes to the Minister of Science and Arts with regard to her bequest which consists of objects that were already on loan in the museum: “[...] depuis 1903, date de la donation à l’Etat de la collection Errera, Madame Isabelle Errera avait continué l’acquisition de très nombreuses pièces d’étoffes et de broderies qu’elle s’était bornée à déposer en prêt dans nos musées [...]”⁸⁶. He adds a list to the letter of the bequeathed textiles that counts 236 pieces of which the numbers refer to her catalogue of 1927⁸⁷ plus 10 embroideries and 23 laces, thus a total of 269 textiles. According to Jean Capart, Isabella Errera never drafted a complete list of the textiles that were on loan. Therefore, the list of bequeathed textiles was drawn up on the basis of the catalogue entries in her catalogue of 1927 with the indication “*prêté par I. Errera*”. Four of them were recorded as (probably) coming from Egypt⁸⁸. Four more Egyptian textiles are recorded as bequeathed by Isabella Errera in the Textiles inventory book, drawn up from the curatorship of Ms Marguerite Calberg, curator of the Textiles Department from 1933 to 1966⁸⁹. Before this Textiles inventory was compiled by Marguerite Calberg, the textiles donated and bequeathed by Isabella Errera did not have inventory numbers. The numbers in Errera’s catalogues served as reference numbers⁹⁰.

Altogether, Isabella Errera endowed and bequeathed 894 examples of textile art to the RMAH. Regarding the ones from Egypt, we can conclude that most of them (at least 205), were donated in 1900 or 1901.

THE BEQUEST OF GUSTAVE VERMEERSCH (1911)

During the time that Isabella Errera managed the textile collection, the museum received the important bequest (2936 inventory numbers) of Gustave Vermeersch (1841–1911, fig. 3) in 1911⁹¹. This large and very varied collection also included 66 Egyptian textiles (mostly small fragments) from the pharaonic period until the 9th–11th centuries. 48 of these are registered as coming from excavations at Akhmim⁹². We do not know exactly from whom Gustave Vermeersch acquired the textiles but from the “price list” of the textiles donated by Isabella Errera in 1901⁹³, it is clear that she and Gustave Vermeersch exchanged textiles. Moreover, three letters from Franz Bock, addressed to the RMAH, reveal that he and Gustave Vermeersch also exchanged fabrics (and other art objects?)⁹⁴.

⁸⁵ Archives of the RMAH, dossier Don Errera 22/112 (Copy of the will, sent by the notary Ed. Van Halteren to the Minister of Science and Arts on July 13, 1929, as dictated by Isabella Errera on November 27, 1926 and registered in Brussels on July 4, 1929). Her library was finally donated to the *Institut supérieur des arts décoratifs* in Brussels, now ENSAV La Cambre.

⁸⁶ Archives of the RMAH, dossier Don Errera 22/112. Again, he mentions 1903 as the year of a donation of Isabella Errera. As mentioned before, we have only evidence of the donations of 1900 or 1901 for the “Coptic” textiles and of 1901 for the 420 textiles, catalogued in ERRERA 1901.

⁸⁷ ERRERA 1927.

⁸⁸ ERRERA 1927, cat. 21A (IS.Tx.0562), cat. 62A (IS.Tx.0509), cat. 72 (IS.Tx.0510) and cat. 72A (IS.Tx.0511).

⁸⁹ IS.Tx.2007, IS.Tx.2014, IS.Tx.2023, IS.Tx.2024: Archives of the RMAH, Inventory, dossier BE/380469/7/43 (Inventaire des Textiles, p. 109, 110 and 111).

⁹⁰ From the compilation of this textile inventory, all fabrics were given an inventory number prefixed “Tx”. For the concordance of the current inventory numbers with the numbers in ERRERA 1916, see annex 2.

⁹¹ DERVEAUX-VAN USSEL 1985, p. 165–174. Gustave Vermeersch was a member of the *Commission de surveillance*.

⁹² On the inventory cards and in the Textiles inventory book, drawn up by Marguerite Calberg. As is the case with the textiles donated and bequeathed by Isabella Errera, those bequeathed by Gustave Vermeersch have no old inventory numbers as they were not registered in the RMAH inventory. Curiously, they also do not appear in the inventory book of the Gustave Vermeersch’s bequest (Archives of the RMAH, Inventory, dossier BE/380469/7/52 [*legs Vermeersch 1900*]) nor in ERRERA 1911.

⁹³ Attached to Errera’s letter of December 10, 1901 (Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/6479).

⁹⁴ In an above mentioned letter from Franz Bock of December 26, 1886 (see note 17), Franz Bock mentions that he would like to respond to Vermeersch’s request to exchange textiles and that he will bring “*einige textile Seltenheiten*” to Brussels for this purpose. In two other letters, Franz Bock writes about an “*Austausch*” with Gustave Vermeersch (Archives of the RMAH, Fonds Joseph Destrée, dossier BE/380469/10/88 (Franz Bock letter 6, December 1, 1887 and letter 7, December 12, 1887). In the letter of December 1, 1887, Franz Bock asks if he can meet Gustave Vermeersch and the person to whom the letter is addressed (Joseph Destrée?) at his home for this purpose.



Fig. 3. – Portrait of Gustave Vermeersch at the age of 28 by Jeanne Vermeersch, terracotta, 1869, inv. V.2769 (© RMAH).

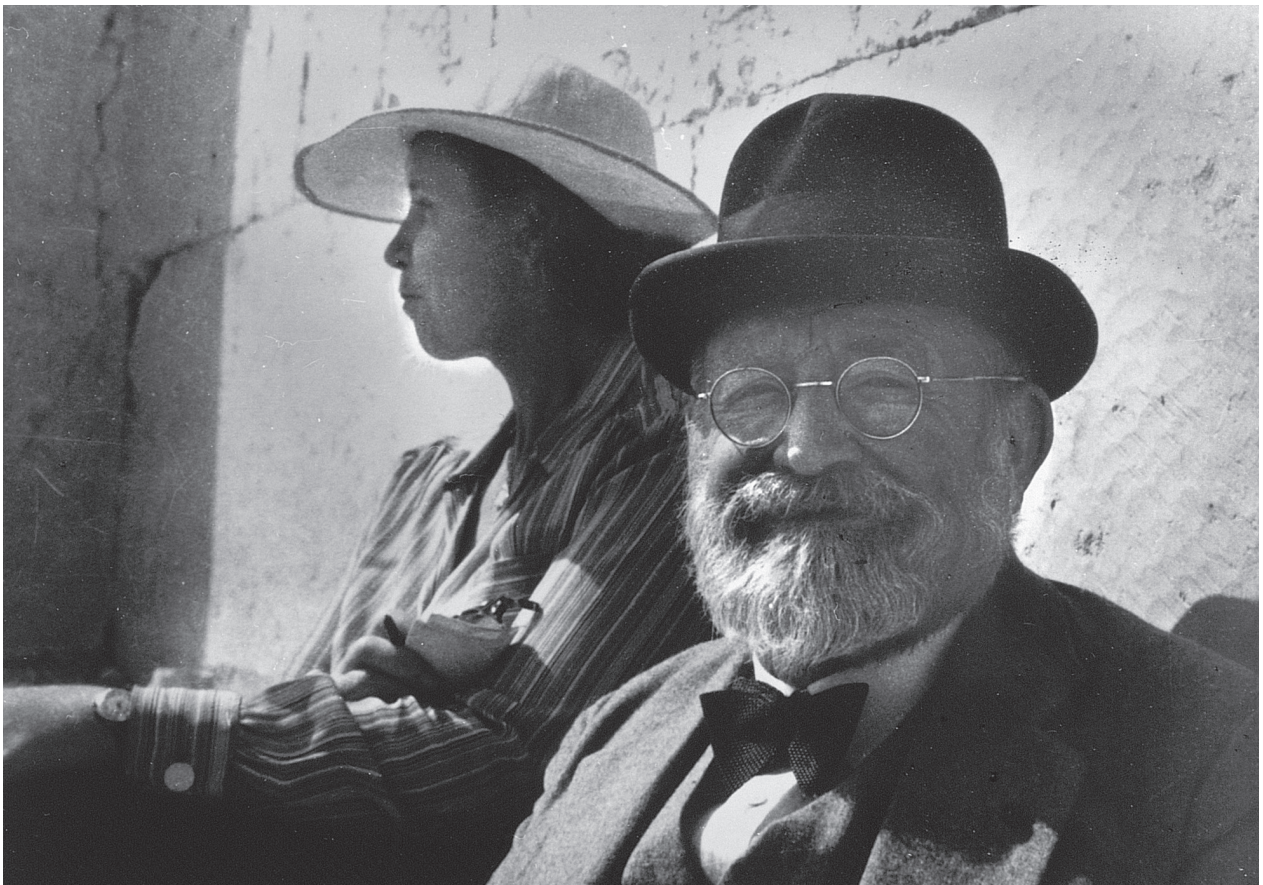


Fig. 3. – Jean Capart and his collaborator Marcelle Werbrouck, Luxor, 1946, photo by Aram Alban, RMAH Library, inv. EGI-2.2491 (© RMAH).

PURCHASES BY JEAN CAPART

Purchases from Theodor Graf, 1900 and 1901

In 1900 the young Egyptologist Jean Capart (1877–1947, fig. 4) was appointed assistant curator at the RMAH⁹⁵. Under his curatorship and direction, the Egyptian collection of the museum would know a decisive development and golden age. Shortly after his appointment, he purchased Late Antique textiles from the Austrian carpet and antiquities dealer Theodor Graf (1840–1903), seven in November 1900⁹⁶ and one in 1901⁹⁷. Theodor Graf dealt first from his address in Alexandria and opened later a shop in Vienna with a branch in Cairo, and between 1888 and 1893, he also organised travelling exhibitions⁹⁸. In 1900 and 1901, he held an exhibition in the Boulevard de la Madeleine in Paris from where he sent letters to the RMAH. Regarding the purchase of November 1900, an elaborate correspondence between Theodor Graf, Jean Capart, Eugène van Overloop, the *Comité de la section des anciennes industries d'art et d'antiquités* and Maurice van der Bruggen, Minister of Agriculture, dating from October 10 to December 17, 1900, is kept at the archives of the RMAH⁹⁹. In a letter of October 10, 1900, Theodor Graf offers for sale “*bustes et masques en plâtre peint de la période gréco-romaine en Egypte et d'étoffes antiques d'Achmim, haute Egypte*” which he has send in crates to the museum and to which end he has added a price list to his letter¹⁰⁰. In the price list, the textiles are mentioned as “*tableaux avec étoffes antiques*” (the “*tableaux*” were probably cardboards on which the textiles were glued¹⁰¹). After Jean Capart had examined the objects, he wrote a letter with a report of his findings to Eugène van Overloop, dated October 16, 1900¹⁰². Regarding the textiles, he advises the acquisition of a selection of six *tableaux*¹⁰³. The total price for this selection is 710 frs. He notes that “*le prix des étoffes est notablement plus élevé que celui autrefois donné pour les étoffes achetées à Daninos Pacha et M. Bock. Cependant il ne faut pas perdre de vue que les pièces présentées actuellement sont des morceaux de choix qui viennent heureusement combler des vides dans nos séries*”. In a letter of November 16, 1900, Maurice van der Bruggen, Minister of Agriculture, approves the purchase of the textiles, among other objects¹⁰⁴.

As for the 1901 purchase¹⁰⁵, one textile (ACO.Tx.0294) was bought together with a Ptolemaic mummy mask (now in the Egyptian collection, E.01048). After visiting Theodor Graf's exhibition in the Rue de la Madeleine in Paris¹⁰⁶—he was in Paris to assist in the Guimet auction of June 17 (see *infra*)—, Jean Capart selected both pieces from a wide range of objects, offered for sale by Theodor Graf in a letter to the RMAH of June 4, 1901¹⁰⁷. In a letter of August 20, 1901, he describes the textile as “*une étoffe égyptienne avec représentation*”

⁹⁵ BIERBRIER 2019, 88–89; For a full biography of Jean Capart, see BRUFFAERTS 2022.

⁹⁶ ACO.Tx.0152, ACO.Tx.0169, ACO.Tx.0254, ACO.Tx.0262, ACO.Tx.0277, ACO.Tx.0285 and ACO.Tx.0615 (respectively ERRERA 1916, cat. 80, 166, 146, 107, 194, 301 and 193). These textiles are registered in the inventory book *Musée royal d'Antiquités et d'Armures. Inventaire 1885–1902*, p. 230–231 and 240–241, with the old inventory numbers 10885–1890 and 10971 (Archives of the RMAH, Inventory, dossier BE/380469/7/8).

⁹⁷ ACO.Tx.0294 (ERRERA 1916, cat. 160).

⁹⁸ HAGEN & RYHOLT 2016, p. 217; see also BIERBRIER 2019, p. 187–188.

⁹⁹ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/293.

¹⁰⁰ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/293 (document n° 5).

¹⁰¹ In a letter to Theodor Graf of October 22, 1900, Eugène van Overloop mentions them as “*les cartons de tissus coptes*” (Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/293, document n° 8).

¹⁰² Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/293 (document n° 4).

¹⁰³ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/293 (documents n° 4 and 5): N° 88, 100, 219, 237, 77 and 107 of the list of Theodor Graf. In a note of Eugène van Overloop addressed to Franz Cumont, curator of Antiquities, of November 24, 1900, there is also mention of a n°219bis, bringing the total to seven textiles, on six “*tableaux*”.

¹⁰⁴ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/293 (document n° 11).

¹⁰⁵ There exists elaborate correspondence in this regard between Theodor Graf, Eugène van Overloop, the president of the *Comité de la section des anciennes industries d'art et d'antiquités* and Jean Capart between June 4, 1901 and August 20, 1901. See Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/354.

¹⁰⁶ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/354 (documents n° 14 and 17: letters of Capart to Eugène van Overloop of July 3, 1901 and August 20, 1901). See also Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/354 (documents n° 11 and 12: letters of Theodor Graf to Eugène van Overloop of June 18, 1901 and to Jean Capart of June 22, 1901).

¹⁰⁷ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/354 (document n° 4).

d'un paon” (which is clearly ACO.Tx.0294) for the price of 250 frs¹⁰⁸. According to Theodor Graf, his textiles are “*Etoffes antiques provenant des tombeaux d’Akhmim*”¹⁰⁹. The ministerial authorisation for the purchase of the textile and the mummy mask, each for the price of 250 frs, was given on September 14, 1901¹¹⁰.

Both series of textiles offered for sale in 1900 and in 1901 were labelled by Theodor Graf as coming from Akhmim. As far as we know, this is the only time that he provides written information with regard to the findspot of his textiles that were for sale. But to what extent is this information reliable? Several doubts exist and there are at least unclarities with regard to the provenance of the 584 textiles he sold to the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie (the actual Museum für Angewandte Kunst) in Vienna in 1883 and the 147 pieces that were acquired by the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin in 1886¹¹¹.

Theodor Graf is known as the first to bring Egyptian textiles on a large scale to Europe. Spurred on by the Viennese orientalist Josef Karabacek (1845–1918), he searched for papyri, textiles and other antiquities from 1879 onwards¹¹². He probably never excavated himself but instructed local agents from whom he bought. Theodor Graf and Josef Karabacek never mention the find spots of the textiles in their correspondence, nor in their published writings¹¹³. Provenance information is sometimes given by their contemporaries. According to Franz Bock and the natural scientist and explorer Georg Schweinfurth (1836–1925), Theodor Graf collected textiles in 1882 in the Fayyum province, textiles which according to them ended up in the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie in Vienna and in the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin¹¹⁴. The textiles purchased in 1886 by the latter museum were indeed registered as coming from the Fayyum¹¹⁵. However, the textiles now in Vienna are described by Alois Riegl as originating from Saqqara and Akhmim. Presumably textile ensembles of different origins were involved in the acquisitions by both museums¹¹⁶. As Theodor Graf’s collection included fabrics from the Fayyum, Saqqara and Akhmim, it cannot be excluded that the textiles he offered for sale to the RMAH may have been composed of fabrics of different origins as well. His methods of acquiring through local agents implies that the information regarding the origin of the fabrics was and is hardly verifiable. Furthermore, Theodor Graf not only purchased textiles in Egypt, as is demonstrated in Forrer’s *Notizbuch* (p. 17), where he is mentioned with regard to the acquisition of four silks in 1892.

Purchases by Capart in Egypt, 1900–1901

According to Isabella Errera, an additional 12 textile fragments were bought by Jean Capart during his first mission to Egypt in 1900–1901¹¹⁷. In a notebook he kept during this journey, Capart mentions on

¹⁰⁸ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/354 (document n° 17).

¹⁰⁹ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/354 (documents n° 4: letter of June 4, 1901).

¹¹⁰ Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/354 (document n° 18).

¹¹¹ FLUCK, LINSCHIED & MERZ 2000, p. 43 and 127–131.

¹¹² MÜLLER 2005, p. 3.

¹¹³ FLUCK, LINSCHIED & MERZ 2000, p. 127, 130. KARABACEK 1883, p. 4 mentions that “...die Localität der entdeckten Gräberstätte aus verschiedenen Gründen noch unser Geheimnis bleiben muss”.

¹¹⁴ BOCK 1886, p. 2 mentions more precisely “*el-Fajjum, dem berühmten Arsinoë des Altertums*” (or Crocodilopolis) as findspot while SCHWEINFURTH 1887, p. 69 and 71 mentions “*Kom-el-addame oder Kom-el-adma (richtiger Kom el’azm or Kom-el-Atm)*” (meaning the “bone mound”), located to the north of the cultivated land of the Fayyum province. See also BOCK 1887, foreword and FLUCK, LINSCHIED & MERZ 2000, p. 43 and 129.

¹¹⁵ FLUCK, LINSCHIED & MERZ 2000, p. 43 (with critical comments).

¹¹⁶ RIEGL 1889, p. V, 1–52, n° 1–584 (Saqqara) and p. VI–VII, 53–68, n° 585–703 (Akhmim). Regarding the latter site, he writes in his introduction “*Diesem Leichenfelde sollen namentlich die zahlreichen von Dr. Bock nach Europa in den Handel gebrachten Stücke entstammen, was nicht hinderte, dass auch H. Graf daselbst noch reiche Beute machen konnte, von der er sich veranlasst fühlte, einen Bruchteil dem österreichischen Museum geschenkwiese zu überlassen*” (RIEGL 1889, p. VI–VII). According to Alois Riegl, Theodor Graf visited Akhmim after Franz Bock had been there, which was not before 1885. This could mean that the Viennese museum did not buy these textiles from ‘Akhmim’ from Theodor Graf together with the big lot of textiles of 1883, but that they were acquired at a later time (FLUCK 2008, n. 12). However, NOEVER 2005 mentions that the textiles with a provenance of Akhmim were purchased from Theodor Graf in the year 1883. Correspondence between Josef Karabacek and Theodor Graf also indicates that the textiles acquired in 1883 and now in Vienna did not belong to one closed ensemble, but instead consisted of at least two groups (FLUCK, LINSCHIED & MERZ 2000, p. 130).

¹¹⁷ ERRERA 1916, cat. 126 (ACO.Tx.0304), 156 (ACO.Tx.1737), 202 (ACO.Tx.0261), 210 (ACO.Tx.1717), 278 (ACO.Tx.0307), 302 (ACO.

December 21, 1900, when he is in Luxor, that he bought “*de très bons morceaux d'étoffes coptes pour 15 livres sterling à Ahmed Yousef*”¹¹⁸. Ahmed Yousef worked from 1889 in partnership with the dealer Khaled, who is said to have acquired objects from both Akhmim and el-Manshah¹¹⁹. In the same notebook, still in Luxor, he notes the purchase of “*un fragment d'étoffe copte*” together with seven other objects for “25 p.” (piaster) on January 8, 1901 and the acquisition of “*3 étoffes coptes pour 15 p.*” on January 9, 1901¹²⁰, both times without mentioning from which dealer. In a letter of January 10, 1902, the Minister of Agriculture, Maurice van der Bruggen, authorises “*l'acquisition, au prix de frs. 500, d'une série de tissus coptes rapporté d'Égypte par M. le Conservateur-adjoint Capart*”¹²¹.

Acquisitions from British excavations

Already in 1899, when Jean Capart was still a volunteer at the museum, he urged Eugène van Overloop that the RMAH should financially support British excavations in Egypt, executed by institutions such as the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Egyptian Research Account or the British School of Archaeology in Egypt. In exchange, vast allotments of archaeological finds from different excavation sites entered the collections of the RMAH¹²². In 1920, a set of 11 textiles, excavated at Antinoopolis by John de Monins Johnson for the Graeco-Roman Branch of the Egypt Exploration Fund in 1913–1914, is registered in the museum inventory¹²³. First registered in the Egyptian collection, they are now part of the Art of Eastern Christianity collection under the numbers ACO.Tx.2488–2498.

The purchase at the Guimet auction, 1901

Jean Capart's most important purchase in the field of Late Antique textiles was done at the Guimet auction in Paris of June 17, 1901 where he bought the complete and partial grave contents of two tombs that were excavated by Albert Gayet during his fifth campaign in 1899–1900 in the necropolis of Antinoopolis. Gayet dated (erroneously) the cemetery between the foundation of the city in 130 CE and the end of the Roman period. Both tombs were located in the north-western part of the necropolis which according to Gayet was no longer in use after the 5th century¹²⁴.

The complete grave content, including the mummy, belongs to the so called “embroideress Euphemia” (fig. 5)¹²⁵. The mummy was dressed in four tunics, a cap and a headwear called *bourrelet* attached to a so-called *mantelet* which in fact consists of two textiles lying on both shoulders. One was attached to the *bourrelet* with a modern thread while the other was originally a cushion cover. Two pillows were found under the head and feet, the latter being wrapped in a folded fabric¹²⁶. The rest of the contents, said to come from her grave as well,

Tx.0296), 326 (ACO.Tx.0343), 330 (ACO.Tx.0312), 335 (ACO.Tx.0336), 342 (IS.Tx.0069) and 381 (IS.Tx.1724) and 18 (E.7621).

¹¹⁸ Archives of the RMAH, Fonds Jean Capart, dossier BE/380469/4/243 (notebook *Voyage d'Égypte. Décembre 1900–Janvier 1901*, f° 2. Jean Capart mentions this purchase also in an expense booklet. See Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 61/27 (Archives Capart, Achats en Égypte 1900–1901).

¹¹⁹ HAGEN & RYHOIT 2016, p. 191 and 227.

¹²⁰ Archives of the RMAH, Fonds Jean Capart, dossier BE/380469/4/243 (notebook *Voyage d'Égypte. Décembre 1900–Janvier 1901*, f° 14–15. Jean Capart mentions these purchases also in an expense booklet. See Archives of the RMAH, Direction, dossier Dir. 61/27 (Archives Capart, Achats en Égypte 1900–1901).

¹²¹ Archives des RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/392 (document n° 4).

¹²² VAN DE WALLE 1980, p. 17; VAN DER PERRE 2023, p. 169–171.

¹²³ Museum inventory cards, ACO.Tx.2488–ACO.Tx.2498; O'CONNELL 2014, p. 415–466, especially p. 463–464.

¹²⁴ GAYET 1900, p. 1–2, 5–7, 8–9; GAYET 1901, p. 7–12; see also VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 8.

¹²⁵ Albert Gayet described the textiles in her grave as embroideries and he considered the tools, said to be found in her grave, as embroidering instruments. The embroideries were in fact tapestry weaves and the tools can be identified as weaving and spinning instruments (VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 8). According to Gayet the name “Euphemiaan” seemed to be written on the first shroud of the mummy. However, a shroud with this inscription was never found in the collections of the RMAH.

¹²⁶ The mummy, the clothing she is wearing and the cushions under her head and feet are inventoried under E.1045. The fabric (decorated

consists of weaving and spinning instruments¹²⁷, toilet requisites¹²⁸, two *styloi* (?) (E.1036 & E.1037), an ivory box (E.1019), two oil lamps (E.1040 & E.1041), pottery (E.1035, E.1038, E.1039 & E.1042), other textiles¹²⁹, a pair of shoes with inscriptions¹³⁰, lead seals (E.10221), a so-called “*ivoire gnostique*” (E.1029)¹³¹, and a coin minted in Alexandria in 325–326 CE (E.1020; not mentioned by Gayet)¹³². The whole set was not inventoried in the museum until 1905. The mummy and her clothes, the weaving and spinning instruments, toilet requisites, *styloi* (?), oil lamps, pottery, lead seals, the ivory object and the coin were registered in the Egyptian collection (with inventory numbers preceded by the letter ‘E’). The textiles that were given as grave goods went to the Textiles and Embroideries department, managed by Isabella Errera. Since 1972–1973, these textiles are inventoried in the “Art of Eastern Christianity” collection, with inventory numbers preceded by the prefix “ACO.Tx”¹³³.



Fig. 5. – The mummy of the “embroidress Euphemia”, Antinoopolis, end 5th–early 7th century CE, after the conservation-restoration treatment in 2019, inv. E. 1045 (© RMAH).

The (partial) content from the second grave came from the tomb of the goldsmith Aurelios Kolluthos and his wife. This tomb was well documented thanks to the presence of five papyri (now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris) that date to the middle of the 5th century CE¹³⁴. Only part of this grave content was bought¹³⁵: fragments of the coffin of Kolluthos (E.7629)¹³⁶, the Kolluthos hanging (ACO.Tx.2470, a large

with flowers, birds, fish, and grapes in tapestry weaving) on her right shoulder and arm has inventory number E.1047.

¹²⁷ They consist of a frame of a mirror used by weavers on a vertical loom (E.1033), two handles of spinstaf (E.1022 and E.2024), a weaver’s comb (E.1023), four spindles (E.1031), a wooden instrument probably used for making a rope or string (E.1034), spools (E.1027) and weaving cards (E.1032).

¹²⁸ A kohl container (E.1030), an ointment pyxis (E.1026) and perfume flasks (E.1043 and E.1044).

¹²⁹ ACO.Tx.2468, ACO.Tx.2499, ACO.Tx.1609 and ACO.Tx.2728 were identified by VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 9–10 as textiles described by Albert Gayet. Isabella Errera however mentions eight additional pieces: ERRERA 1916, cat 43 (ACO.Tx.2467.A and B), cat. 82 (ACO.Tx.1720), cat. 88 (ACO.Tx.2474), cat. 127 (ACO.Tx.2465), cat. 129 (ACO.Tx.1610), cat. 130 (ACO.Tx.0639), cat. 132 (ACO.Tx.0641), cat. 152 (ACO.Tx.2466). Since she acknowledges Gayet for the precious information he gave her (ERRERA 1916, p. IV), we can assume that the attribution of these textiles to the tomb of Euphemia comes directly from Albert Gayet. Nevertheless, ACO.Tx.2465 can be identified with one of the textiles described by Gayet as coming from the grave of Aurelios Kolluthos and his wife (VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 16, n. 60).

¹³⁰ Not registered in the museum inventory; its current whereabouts remain unknown until today.

¹³¹ E.1029. Its “gnostic” designation is given by GAYET 1900, p. 6.

¹³² VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 9–14, 19; VAN RAEMDONCK, VERHECKEN-LAMMENS & DE JONGHE 2011, p. 225–234. The coin (E.1020) was considered by Jean Capart as minted under Constantinus the Great and dated 324–325. However, Johan Van Heesch (KU Leuven and curator emeritus of Coins and Medals at the Royal Library of Belgium) identified it in 2007 a *nummus* of Constantinus the Great that was minted in Alexandria in 325–326 (VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 14).

¹³³ VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 9–10, 15; VAN RAEMDONCK, VERHECKEN-LAMMENS & DE JONGHE 2011, p. 230–231.

¹³⁴ VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 6.

¹³⁵ For the following enumeration, we relied on CALAMENT 2005, p. 365–366 and VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 6, 16–17 (especially note 65).

¹³⁶ CALAMENT 2005, p. 365, fig. 39a.

figured wool fabric, radiocarbon dated to a period between the first quarter of the 4th and the first quarter of the 5th century CE)¹³⁷, half of a very fine linen tunic (ACO.Tx.2477)¹³⁸ with wool decorations dyed with mollusc purple and radio carbon dated 240–400 CE¹³⁹, a linen with loops (ACO.Tx.2469)¹⁴⁰, a fragmentary tunic with traces of *bandelettes* (ACO.Tx.2472)¹⁴¹, three sprang hairnets (ACO.Tx.2473, 2478 and 2481)¹⁴², a *tabula* (panel) with a horseman (ACO.Tx.2476)¹⁴³, and a fragmentary tunic with polychrome decorations (ACO.Tx.2471)¹⁴⁴. All but the sprang hairnets were mentioned by Gayet¹⁴⁵.

The mummy of the “embroideress Euphemia”, most of her clothes, the textiles and three objects were radio carbon dated¹⁴⁶. The mummy and most of the textiles date between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 7th century CE. However, certain textiles, such as those on her shoulders of which one was attached with a modern thread to the *bourrelet*, yielded different dates that were on average 225 years older, indicating that they originally belonged to another tomb, perhaps the tomb of Kolluthos. Radiocarbon analyses of three textile samples from the latter grave delivered an average date of 230–340 CE, all roughly from the same period, like the older samples from the tomb of Euphemia, but predating the burial of Kolluthos¹⁴⁷. Although the ensemble from the grave of “the embroideress” is most probably and for the most part authentic, it seems at least partially staged and one can wonder if material from different periods, different graves and even different excavations were brought together¹⁴⁸. Thanks to an anonymous donation through the King Baudouin Foundation, the mummy, her clothing and the textiles on and under her body underwent a conservation-restoration treatment by Patricia Dal-Prà and Laure Cadot in 2019 but remains to be published.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE “COPTIC” TEXTILES IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

In 1903, a new presentation in the *Galerie courbe* in the left wing¹⁴⁹ of the *Musées royaux des Arts décoratifs et industriels*, was ready. It was a temporary presentation, in expectation of a more permanent installation in the right wing of the building. Eugène van Overloop, described the successful location and layout of the museum rooms: the room dedicated to the textile collection, including the “Coptic” textiles, was located next to the Egyptian section, where the mummy of “the embroideress” was exhibited, together with the “*étoffes précieuses qui enveloppaient le corps de la brodeuse Euphemiâan*”¹⁵⁰.

In 1905 the new *Pavillon de l'Antiquité* was installed in the *Salle des fêtes*¹⁵¹, in the right wing of the building. There, the “embroideress” was exhibited in the third room, surrounded with showcases displaying the content

¹³⁷ BOUDIN, VERHECKEN-LAMMENS & VAN RAEMDONCK 2015, p. 137–139.

¹³⁸ The other half is kept in the Whithworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester (VERHECKEN-LAMMENS 2010).

¹³⁹ DE MOOR *et al.* 2010, p. 35, 44, fig. 4.

¹⁴⁰ ERRERA 1916, cat. 79.

¹⁴¹ 250–410 CE for the basic tunic and 120–330 CE for the sewn on decorations (DE MOOR *et al.* 2010, p. 35–37, fig. 2).

¹⁴² ERRERA 1916, cat. 142, 144, 143; LAFONTAINE-DOSOGNE & DE JONGHE 1988, figs. 41–42.

¹⁴³ ERRERA 1916, cat. 197.

¹⁴⁴ ERRERA 1916, cat. 266.

¹⁴⁵ VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 17, n. 65.

¹⁴⁶ VAN STRYDONCK *et al.* 2011, p. 238, 242–253, 256–257. Between 2007 and 2011, the mummy of the “embroideress Euphemia” and her grave content were the subject of a multidisciplinary research project that resulted in important new insights, see VAN RAEMDONCK 2007; VAN RAEMDONCK, VERHECKEN-LAMMENS & DE JONGHE 2011.

¹⁴⁷ VAN STRYDONCK *et al.* 2011, p. 257.

¹⁴⁸ VAN STRYDONCK *et al.* 2011, p. 257; VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 20; VAN RAEMDONCK, VERHECKEN-LAMMENS & DE JONGHE 2011, p. 35. This may be the reason why Jean Capart already criticised Albert Gayet: “*L'exposition des fouilles d'Antinoé par Gayet était en dessous de tout ce que l'on peut imaginer... de plus ridicule. J'ai acquis la conviction ou bien que Gayet n'assistait pas à ses fouilles ou bien que sciemment il trompait le public pour corser ses découvertes... Il est cependant incontestable que les fouilles d'Antinoé ont donné quelques pièces de grande valeur...*”: Archives of the RMAH, letter from Jean Capart to Eugène van Overloop, dated August 24, 1905, containing a report of his recent study tours in London and Paris (VAN RAEMDONCK 2007, p. 16, n. 62).

¹⁴⁹ Now part of the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History.

¹⁵⁰ VAN OVERLOOP 1903a, p. 89; 1903b, p. 1, 3–4.

¹⁵¹ Now the gallery dedicated to the “Art of the Islamic World” collection.

of her grave (including the textiles) and with the hanging from the grave of Aurelios Kolluthos¹⁵². It shows that at least part of the textiles belonging to the tombs of “the embroideress” and Kolluthos were presented in their funerary context.

ACQUISITIONS AFTER ISABELLA ERRERA AND JEAN CAPART

Since the bequest of Isabella Errera in 1929, 60 Egyptian textiles were acquired by the RMAH of which the vast majority were purchased from art dealers and private collectors. The most important were 32 textiles from the collection of Edmond de Bruyn (1875–1956) through the intercession of Pierre Bautier (1881–1962) in 1956¹⁵³, 10 textiles from the Dutch collector Nicolaas Biegan in 1973¹⁵⁴ and another 10 textiles from the art dealer René Withofs in 1976¹⁵⁵. The most recent acquisitions go back to 2004 when a set of 25 Late Antique textiles (E.9589–E.9622) were donated to the RMAH by the daughter of Albert Demulling, an industrialist active in the sugar industry in Egypt between 1907 and 1941¹⁵⁶. He was a patron of the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Elisabeth (now Association Égyptologique Reine Elisabeth) and donated already in 1927 a series of Coptic papyri¹⁵⁷. As it was the emphatic wish of his daughter to reunite the textiles with these papyri, they were registered in the Egyptian collection of the RMAH¹⁵⁸.

CONCLUSIONS

From a historical point of view, the collection of Egyptian Late Antique and Islamic period textiles of the RMAH can be considered as representative. Large quantities of fabrics were purchased during the last decades of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century from (archaeologist-)dealers operating in the country itself, such as Albert Daninos Pacha, Franz Bock, Theodor Graf and Albert Gayet. As many of these early excavations were not executed in a scientific manner, the exact provenance and archaeological contexts of most of these textiles are not known. Most of them were registered as originating from Akhmim which was also the case for those that were part of the donations and bequests by Gustave Vermeersch and Isabella Errera. Particularly for the latter textiles—those bought by Isabella Errera from Stanislas Baron that to a large extent were originally the property of Robert Forrer—, their attribution to Akhmim as the site of origin is not very reliable as it was mainly based on information that was provided to Robert Forrer by art dealers¹⁵⁹. The same goes for the textiles that were acquired from Theodor Graf, who relied on local agents as well. More and better information exists with regard to the textiles from Antinoopolis that were purchased by Jean Capart at the Guimet auction of 1901. The auction catalogue and the exhibition guide by Albert Gayet contain precious information and multidisciplinary research carried out between 2007 and 2011 on the grave contents, and in particular the textiles, substantially enhanced our knowledge about these two tomb assemblages. However, the composition of the grave contents and the information given by Albert Gayet should be carefully evaluated. Indeed, practices in trading and promoting Egyptian fabrics at the time, such as cutting up large fabrics and garments, buying and/or exchanging pieces at museums, organising auction exhibitions where grave ensembles were assembled or staged more or less truthfully, were quite different from our current standards. The situation

¹⁵² CAPART 1905a, p. 75–76; 1905b, p. 138–139. Other Late Antique and Early Islamic period textiles (“*une importante collection de fragments de tapisseries*”) were exhibited in the Textile department (CAPART 1905b, p. 137–138).

¹⁵³ ACO.Tx.3047–ACO.Tx.3078; Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/4671.

¹⁵⁴ ACO.0073.5.1–ACO.Tx.0073.4.10; Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/5884.

¹⁵⁵ ACO.0076.2.1–ACO.Tx.0076.2.10; Archives of the RMAH, Acquisitions, dossier BE/380469/1/5936.

¹⁵⁶ For this donation, see MARTIN & RASSART-DEBERGH 2005. For a brief description of the relationship between Albert Demulling and Jean Capart, see DELATTRE 2004.

¹⁵⁷ DELATTRE 2004.

¹⁵⁸ MARTIN & RASSART-DEBERGH 2005, p. 378–379; Archives of the RMAH, section “Art of Eastern Christianity” (letter of Alain Martin, director of the Fondation Égyptologique Reine Elisabeth, to Anne Cahen-Delhay, director of the RMAH, July 30, 2004).

¹⁵⁹ FLUCK 2008.

changed after the curatorship of Isabella Errera and Jean Capart when acquisitions of Egyptian textiles were made only from European dealers or collectors and involved textiles that had already been on the art market for a longer period of time.

In accordance with the international zeitgeist, the textiles from Daninos Pasha, Franz Bock and Isabella Errera, were acquired to show the different stages in the evolution of textile art and as examples of forms, motifs and techniques for designers. The textiles from Antinoopolis however, were bought as part of a funerary context and exhibited accordingly.

At present, most of the RMAH's Late Antique and Early Islamic period textiles are kept in the store rooms for conservation and preservation reasons but we are hopeful to open up this rich collection to the public in temporary presentations in the years to come.

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ANNEX 1 : OVERVIEW AND CONCORDANCE TABLE¹⁶⁰

Egyptian textiles in the RMAH collection

This overview and concordance table includes the Egyptian fabrics kept in the Art of Eastern Christianity and the Art of the Islamic World collections, as well as fabrics belonging to the Egyptian Collection of the RMAH. The table lists the textiles according to their current inventory numbers, gives an overview of the provenances and shows, if known, the concordances between the current and old inventory numbers. It also mentions the numbers from Errera’s catalogues. Pharaonic textiles kept in the Egyptian collection are only included if they are mentioned in ERRERA 1916. Some pharaonic textiles preceded by the letters “Tx” do not have the prefix “E”. We do not yet know whether they indeed correspond with inventory numbers with the prefix “E” from the Egyptian collection. For quite a number of textile fragments, the old inventory numbers remain to be identified.

ANNEX 2 : CONCORDANCE TABLE¹⁶¹

Egyptian textiles in the RMAH collections included in ERRERA 1916

List of textiles according to their numbers in ERRERA 1916. Only the textiles recorded in this catalogue are included.

¹⁶⁰ Available online: <https://orfeo.belnet.be/handle/internal/11291>.

¹⁶¹ Available online: <https://orfeo.belnet.be/handle/internal/11292>

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