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A COPTIC TAPESTRY OF BYZANTINE STYLE

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Science historians have emphasized the fact that accepted theory has often been so powerful that observations contradicting it were ignored. Only after the evidence against its validity became so overwhelming that the theory had to be abandoned were the observed facts perhaps recognized. James B. Conant [1] once stated: "The transition to a new theory is seldom easy; old ideas are apt to be tenacious" and a "conservative opponent stoutly maintains his own tenets in spite of contradictory evidence." I. Bernard Cohen wrote: [2] "Scientists . . . stick to their preconceptions as long as possible and often longer than seems wise." It is not surprising that conditions are similar in the history of the Humanities. Willingness, readiness, and ability to learn from observations and to make the necessary corrections of erstwhile basic assumptions are sadly not a matter of course. This explains the phenomenon, for which frequent illustrations can be found in every field in scholarly endeavor, that a pioneer in the freshness of his observations, usually comes nearer to finally accepted opinion than his immediate successors, who approach the subject with theoretical prejudices. Their strength may lead to "involuntary blindness" (Leonard K. Nash) [2] because "research often depends on what the scientist expects to find," (I. B. Cohen).[2]

It is my purpose to attempt the classification of one of the Textile Museum's outstanding Coptic tapestries which forces me to show first how little is really known about "Coptic textiles" due to the inadequate state of scholarship. The enormous number known (recently estimated at around thirty-five thousand) does not include a single dated example, and those which can at present be placed within a narrow time period may be counted on less than ten fingers. The reason is that too few pieces have been analyzed in the thorough manner which is a matter of course for the study of other works of art. W. F. Volbach's contrary statement in his introduction to the catalogue of the Coptic textiles of the Museum in Moenchen-Gladbach of 1959 is not corroborated by facts, provided one does not consider as equivalents to a stylistic investigation mere references to occurrences of identical or similar motifs elsewhere (certainly a rather primitive type of art history). Volbach, a veteran and one of the most renowned scholars in the field, simply ignores our lack of basic historical data. The results of such spadework as has been done make it evident that we are not much nearer to the solution of the problems of Coptic textiles than was Josef Karabacek in 1883.

It is time for the acknowledgment that Karabacek was the first to attack these problems.[3] Having no set theory to fall back upon, what generalizations he made were based upon his own observations and upon some knowledge of Near-Eastern textile arts. His erudition as an Orientalist was no shackle for his imagination, and a keen observation of life around him contributed to his understanding. He has remained the only one to speak in our context of "Modelaunen." [4] Whereas most tapestry was woven for every day clothes or objects of interior decoration, fields in which "the caprices of fashion" rule in sophisticated societies, Karabacek elicited therewith a force which could not but have had some strong influence upon its historic development. The concept "fashion" emphasizes, besides the principle of change for change's sake, its relevancy mainly for the private sphere of life. Tapestries were, except in a few rare cases, not monuments of the ceremonial art of the court, government, or church, but, even when produced in state factories, necessarily products adapted to the changing tastes and demands of the consumers. We have no evidence that the interest of the state was involved in the décor of vestments worn by private persons, and even less in those intended especially for corpses. The production of the latter is another of the

forgotten points raised by Karabacek. No one has investigated whether such special vestments were made only for Jews, and whether the prevalence of scenes from the Old Testament finds herein its explanation. On the other hand, neither Karabacek nor anyone after him has considered the possibility that occasionally, for burials, old clothes might have been used, which, as we know, happened even with church dignitaries in mediaeval times.

The warning, which was implicit in his awareness[5] of the import of textiles into Egypt, has only rarely been heeded. Another victim of the general disregard of Karabacek's scholarly contributions has been his highly important observation that Byzantine and Greek influence was so strong in Egypt into the ninth century that official Arabian documents were sometimes written in Greek, and even displayed at their beginning, the Chrismon, sign of Christ (Funde, p. 13). Correspondingly he took the ninth century as the most recent limit in time of the production of Coptic textiles (p. 4), extending it thereby well into the Islamic period.

Aloys Riegl, in contrast to Karabacek, based his introductory statements to "Die aegyptischen Textilfunde im K. K. Oesterreichischen Museum" (Wien, 1889) upon vague generalities. It was not helpful in the solution of individual textile problems to be told that dating could be based only upon the ornamentation (p. XVII), that characteristics of the international style increasingly supplanted those of indigenous stylizations after the Hellenistic period (p. XVIII), that objects intended for private use still kept their traditional pagan character at a time when church art was already definitely Christianized (p. XXIII). (The last statement implicitly corroborated Karabacek's reference to the power of fashion). It can be easily proved that ultimately the more ostentatious vestiges of pagan culture upon vestments became rare. Quite a different story is told by the easily observable long survival of pagan erotic themes and of the non-classical emphasis laid upon the representation of the sexual parts of figures.[6] To deny such traits, as did e.g. Ernst Kitzinger,[7] may lead to a gross misunderstanding of the indicative value of such representations. An illustration of this may be found in the preface to the catalogue of a recent exhibition in Krefeld (later discussed in more detail). What religious experience could the average Christian have by looking at hunting scenes, nude dancers or erotical mythological scenes such as Europa and the bull, or Leda with the swan? To disregard the long survival of such pagan themes means only to blind oneself to the most comprehensive body of evidence available to us of the urgency with which mundane interests demanded representation.

Riegl evinced a strong tendency toward abstract formulations, and the subjection of individual phenomena to generalizations. Therefore, although neither coherently nor cogently, he pushed the most recent time limit for the production of Coptic tapestries back to the seventh century. He believed that he had shown previously that *the* style of antique textile design had changed between the fourth and the seventh to eighth century from a tapestry style to a style of artistic silk-weaving (p. XXII). This was an oversimplification both from the standpoint of style and technique. The possible conceptions of the role of textile design could, and can, only lie in the importance accorded to it in relation to the character and effect of the textile material and technique. Correspondingly, even Byzantine silk-weaving of the highest class could use unobtrusive patterns such as those evident in the garments of court ladies represented in the mosaics of S. Vitale in Ravenna (second quarter of the sixth century). Tapestry weaving could not help but let some of the terms of its medium influence the form of the décor. It might concentrate on giving the effect of an illusionistic painting or drawing or, on the contrary, stress the character which goes with the decoration of a flat surface. Always it favored motifs requiring frequent changes of colors. Otherwise a simpler technique could be used.

The evident retrogression in Riegl's approach, if compared with Karabacek's, may have resulted from his being on the staff of a large museum. Museums were forced to classify and arrange the masses of "Coptic"

textiles which were coming to be known at the end of the nineteenth century. A solution had to be found, and the only practical way open was to split the masses into groups, according to certain or supposed provenance, technique, motifs, or by some more refined basis such as consideration of the artistic style or of reflected cultural trends. Any attempt to date or classify exactly had to be postponed. Riegl and others began to think in terms of a few large groups. The theory which had developed since the end of the 1880s might be summarized as follows: These textiles come from Egypt, where some of them are attested to have been excavated; they evidently belong in the Christian Era, as they lack any manifest stylistic connection with Dynastic Egyptian art and Christian motifs do appear; we have pieces with inscriptions or lettering in Greek, Coptic and, after the conquest of 641, Arabic. Therefore these are Coptic textiles of a period which may begin in the third century and extends into the eighth. We consider them as provincial products which do not belong in the sphere of the developing, or developed, Byzantine style. In spite of the fact that textiles, especially if used for garments, are objects which most easily spread beyond both their locality and country of origin, we acknowledge only a few foreign ones. We classify these as Asiatic because any European origin is a priori ruled out of question. This lack of consideration of possible *stylistic* links between Byzantine art and "Coptic" textiles produces to this very day one of the most disastrous effects of the rule of the theory, equally harmful to research in both fields. The "theory" does not care that in every other context the word Copt refers only to the Christian descendants of the old Egyptians and to early converts to Islamism, of whom there were a rapidly increasing number. Nor does one care either about the meaning of the terms "late Hellenistic" or "late antique" in other contexts, or how groups overlap chronologically and in reference to the artistic and cultural trends they may reflect. The usual silent assumption is that a single stylistic development progressed always in *one* direction without ever being reversed or deflected by another

Fig. 1

style. One is not disturbed by the fact that precise dating has not proved possible.

In general, this theory still rules today. I will demonstrate this by quoting examples. The most impressive is also the most recent, the program for the exhibition of Coptic art to be held in Essen, Germany, in 1963. The assumptions of the theory will prevail, e.g. pride is taken particularly in the planned arrangement of the textiles "according to the sites where they were found" (information which, provided the show is intended to be comprehensive, is lacking for the vast majority of the pieces, and is in any case of scientific value only for the local history of the sites, because it does not prove an origin there) and "chronologically" (which would have presupposed exhaustive investigation of the individual pieces which, as I have mentioned before, is nearly entirely lacking and is patently impossible for the organizers of the exhibition to undertake). Again the dating will be possible for most of the pieces only in the usual vague way, according to "groups." In fact, the program is full of begged questions which the exhibition cannot possibly solve and may only obscure, unless the "voice of the stones" should prove stronger than the theories of the scholars.

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

In 1961 one of the most important German institutions for the promotion of knowledge of textiles, the Textile School in Krefeld, exhibited a privately owned collection of "Coptic textiles." It is appalling to see upon the paper cover of its above mentioned catalogue a technically excellent colored reproduction of one of them, showing mainly the bust of a man which must necessarily be so much restored in some of the decisive parts that, to say the least, its value as an original document has been much impaired, (Fig. 1). I dare to state that the way of finishing the hair arrangement, of drawing the eyes, the nose and the mouth, cannot possibly be authentic. Why is the piece dated fifth to sixth century when it could just as well be dated sixth to seventh or even eighth century? Unfortunately, the "theory" as yet does not include any warning that many of the pieces which were put on the market during the last decades may be more or less restored. I am convinced that we also have to reckon with outright forgeries woven with threads from original pieces. I know that this problem of authenticity has also worried a few others for at least three decades, but I do not know of any public discussion of it. A unique situation exists in that no scholar is known to be able to prove false without exhaustive investigation those textiles which arouse suspicion.

If my shortest definition of an art historian is accepted as referring to a person knowing what at a given time and place was good and what was poor, what was possible and what was not, we are still lamentably far from such knowledge for "Coptic" tapestries. Thanks to Father Du Bourguet's efforts,[8] it is now beginning to be acknowledged that they were made "most probably until the twelfth century after Jesus Christ." Otherwise even he accepts the assumptions of what he himself [9] appropriately terms "le règne de l'apriorisme." He does not express concern for either the problem of authenticity or whether or not all so-called Coptic textiles are indeed Egyptian.

In the opinion of this writer the Krefeld catalogue demonstrates impressively both the reigning arbitrariness of the adherents of the "theory" and the loss in breadth of approach and regression in method applied since Karabacek. A good example is that the catalogue dates its No. 126 sixth to seventh century and its No. 140 seventh century. The most important characteristic of No. 126 is in the rendering of the body of a dancer, (Fig. 2). It is shown full face with the exception of the legs. Their presentation in profile can only be understood in the context of the evolving representations of the legs of dancers. It is one of the strongest proofs of the sad state of our knowledge that, as far as I know, no study of the gradual evolutionary changes in the rendering of "Coptic" woven motifs has been made comparable to the seriation of motifs done with impressive results in the field of Pre-Columbian art studies. An illustration of this approach may be found in

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Figures 6 to 12 of Alan R. Sawyer's study "Paracas and Nazca Iconography." [10] What is believed essential in the investigation of ceramic, sculptural and architectural motifs is, for "Coptic" textiles, supplanted by confidence in the theory.

Returning to our dancer we see that the left leg is shown in profile in its full length, but dissected into two parts by the right leg, which stands in front of it. Concerning its place in the above mentioned evolution, most significant are the lack of any visual suggestion that the two separated parts belong to the same leg, and the fact that both parts are shown in the same anatomically and perspectively unnaturalistic way. However, in spite of that and the utter flatness of the body, the intention was still the portrayal of an illusionistic design of a dancer. This raises a question as to whether what we see in an individual case is characteristic of a certain stylistic phase, of a traditional mode of representation or, is it merely the result of carelessness or inaptitude on the part of the weaver? That there must have been both better and poorer weavers should be an essential assumption of, and warning for, anyone trying to answer the question. The important point for my argument is my contention that no flight to speculative heights can supplant what is needed first: a very close and sober observation and analysis of the individual pieces and a very circumspect comparison, consuming much time and patience, with other relevant textiles and with works of the other arts. I do not know of any study of the ways of depicting a body in motion during the transitional period between antique and the no-longer-antique art. It is not difficult to observe that the desire to create the illusion of actual dancing had become so strong that unification of several views of the body of a dancer, in an "impossible" juxtaposition of its parts, was acceptable in representations elsewhere not lacking in realistic detail. The legs of the maenad in the bottom row of an ivory relief in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris [11] offer a striking example: the toes face each other, (Fig. 3). Another striking example is the backward turned head of the dancer in fol.5vo [12] of the Paris Psalter, Par. gr. 139. To whom I may seem to give too somber a picture of the state of the research and its effects, I recommend consideration that Hugo Buchthal was still helpless when confronted with this figure: "The Miniatures of the Paris Psalter," London, 1938, page 23. Published by the Warburg Institute in London, the neglect of *continuing* antique modes of representation in Coptic textiles is especially impressive. Impartiality demands the statement that my "co-sceptic" (about the reigning Byzantine renaissance theory), as C. R. Morey termed himself in a dedication to me, also omitted textiles in his attempts to reconstruct the *stylistic* development (e.g. *Speculum* XIV, 1939, page 139 ff.). This neglect was a general one, and no individual deserves therefore to be blamed for it.

Because of our lack of help from previous studies, no one is known to possess the knowledge for offhand dating, or even for ascertaining the degree of authenticity, of No. 140 in the Krefeld catalogue (our Fig. 4). Nor is it possible to say whether or not it represents a stylistic phase for which an adherent of the theory is entitled to exclude the sixth century as has been done in the catalogue. Personally, I believe that large parts of the original design were replaced by the work of a restorer, who in this case misunderstood some of its remnants. In my opinion the representation of the dancing girl belongs to the type with a shawl and a shield,[13] (Figs. 5 and 6). Obviously the weaver knew how to represent convincingly a graceful and voluptuous body in a coherent movement. I do not know any unquestionably authentic piece which would allow the assumption that he combined such a naturalistic conception with, in the evolutionary respect, the much later conception as expressed in the oversized left hand and in the all too distorted right foot. That no one can decide how to answer such questions without a lengthy investigation, in spite of eighty years of scholarly endeavors, can only show that something was and is basically wrong in the approach of the adherents of the "theory."

Regrettably, it falls into the scope of this paper to stress the shortcomings of previous publications rather than their achievements.[14] In order to prove the extent of our lack of knowledge, I am pointing both to some recent spectacular publications and to some of significance by a few renowned scholars. One can only guess that the difficulty of having to cope with such a chaotic mass of material induced Sergio Bettini [15] and André Grabar [16] to omit any reference to textiles in their studies of Early Christian and Byzantine painting. This in spite of the fact that their designs represent, even if only as derivations, the richest continuous documentation known to us from the early centuries of the Byzantine empire, which would allow for some important inference to both the art of painting and drawing, and to the strength of antique traditions. Had they taken the tapestries into consideration, perhaps the style of the frescoes in Castelseprio (Italy, discovered in 1944) would not appear to many as isolated as they seem to be. Even Lasareff cited as stylistically related works of Byzantine silversmiths of the sixth and seventh century, but omitted textiles.[17] Once again, it can only be that the problem of how to deal with this mass of documents which have not been properly studied and classified prevented them from being taken into consideration. In this connection the most impressive instance was their complete omission in Kitzinger's attempt to find the fundamental data for the reconstruction of the development of Coptic art in his otherwise most important article quoted above. The least which he could have gained by some reference to textiles would have been to realize that it is an over-simplification to emphasize, as is usually done, so much the contrast between Alexandria and the "hinterland" and "between local and official art." He might have been able to put some stress on the difference between those classes of society which were ruled by ascetic and monastic ideals and those which were not. He might also not have overlooked the multiplicity of stylistic influences to which artists in Egypt were simultaneously exposed. If one could follow the modes of different phases of style, one might find even sudden changes.

Were "Coptic" textiles approached with the same care which is a matter of course for other works of art, could the inscription OCEαC (in English letters: OSEaS) of the depiction of the prophet Hosea be read "Moses" as in the Krefeld catalogue (No. 122, Pl. 7)?

Our most distressing proof of the inadequacy of the method is an article by Gerhart Egger, which the "Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien" published in 1956 (vol. 52, p. 7, ff.). Evidently no appropriate criticism reached Egger's ear to prevent him from including some of the same mistakes and uncorroborated assumptions in a 1958 lecture which was published [18] in 1961. This is not the place for an extensive criticism of his articles, though some basic points must be raised. Only by showing where the "theory" has led us, especially when coupled with other preconceptions, can we hope to let observations

prevail. We must search for the kind of arguments which may be refuted as not valid and which can be accepted as appropriate.

What Egger did was to apply, to a few examples, chosen from material available in the Vienna museums, the yardstick of his preconceived ideas about artistic trends and their cause during a period which begins sometime before 217 A.D. (p. 31) and seems to end for him in the eighth century. (Among many other authors he ignored Father Du Bourguet's important articles.) Like other followers of the theory, he thought in groups of which he decrees four. I cannot imagine that in dealing with another kind of object he would have grouped together such disparate material as his third and fourth groups include. Abstract theorizing took the place of careful observation. Otherwise I cannot believe it possible that he would have seen some Oriental influence (without any nearer definition!) in the design of his Fig. 6 or a Sassanian one in that of his Fig. 25 (again undefined, p. 28) in which the animal on the left is a lion, not a panther. (There are other erroneous statements of the same type.)

Evidently Egger did not have enough experience in historical research on textiles to realize some basic facts. Textiles can be the least solid of foundations for the induction of general stylistic principles of a period because they may be strongly influenced by both tradition and fashion. Weaving is a craft with the oldest of decorative traditions which designers and weavers follow quite naturally. (Who in the year 3000 will for example believe, if we assume a comparable knowledge of the past, that a printed palm-top design on a piece of silk could have been printed in 1960 instead of around 1840?) Textile design is not a so-called free art, and the designer and weaver have to work in terms of the material to be used and of the technique to be applied. We do not know whether a certain class of weavers were in the main designers themselves, or how often they depended fully upon designs made by painters, as may be obvious in certain cases. Textile design deals essentially with the decoration of a flat surface. The décor, in accordance with the intended use of the product, may have to include at least some motifs which remain meaningful if the textile is not seen vertically. Obviously there were differences in the quality of textiles catering to the taste of the refined or rich classes and those which met the demands of the average customer, or did not transcend the level of folk art. Many intermediate levels may be discerned in either of these groups. Egger, like many others, never considered the question as to whether representations contained, for the contemporaries of the weavers, enough stimuli to arouse an illusionary effect of plasticity and movement in space where modern art-theoretical speculations tend to see only spacelessness and flatness. Is it merely coincidence that for me the dancer of Egger's Fig. 19 is shown moving in space or that the piper in Fig. 12 appears to sit behind the tree, whose trunk could so easily have been moved a little bit toward the left if spacelessness had been the goal? What gives us the right to exclude the likelihood that the weaver could expect his figures to be seen, not as lacking a space in which to move, but as localized in some landscape in limitless space, which needed no more precise definition? Was it not one of the characteristic possibilities of late antique and early Byzantine art to conceive as indefinite space what may appear to us as a flat surface? Why must evidence of the influence of something as vague and problematical as tendencies of Egyptian art ("aegyptische Formtendenzen" p. 16) be found in the position of the right arm of the nymph, when it could but be a matter of course for the weaver to restrict as much as possible the undecorated part of the background? I cannot see that he emphasizes the outlines as such. A good part of them lack any emphasis other than that inherent in contrasting colors. It is evident in many of the textiles that a contour bordered by a black line was meant as being in shadow.

I agree with Egger that the dancing girls of his Fig. 22 do not move in our eye (our Fig. 7 shows one of them). However, they do not sit (p. 25). One needs only to look at our Figs. 2 to 6 to become aware that these designs belong in a coherent evolution of the depiction of dancers, and that such unification of profile and full face views

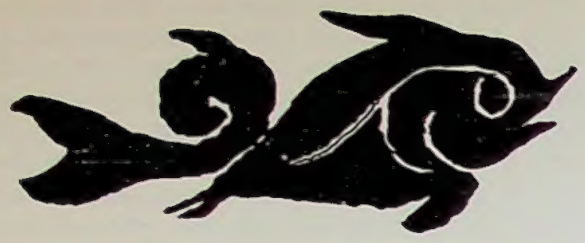

Fig. 8

has nothing to do with an assumed emphasis on the contours and the flatness of the bodies (p. 27) but was a way of visualizing a body in movement.

I agree also with Egger that for us the body of a dolphin showing a loop of the body over the back looks flat (p. 22, our Fig. 8). However the weaver had not to reckon with the possibility of such misunderstanding by educated people. Such representation was a survival of what had been in antique art one of the standard ways of representing long fishlike bodies of sea-animals and sea-deities. (The tradition lasted well into the eighteenth century as may be seen for example on maps.) Certainly, the design is here adapted to the exigencies of a flat decoration, but that does not mean that it was necessarily always seen as lacking in depth. May it not simply be the higher quality of the stylization and the weaving that causes even Egger to acknowledge some voluminosity in the design of the hare (p. 23; here Fig. 9)? The way of showing the further ear, though corresponding again to the exigencies of a flat decoration, was accepted tradition and was no contradiction to a voluminosity of the head. It finds its counterparts for example in our Fig. 2 and the Museum's roundel. After all, no one doubted that the ear of the far side of the head was shown. The weaver expected response to slight visual suggestions. It seems a bit far-fetched to claim that such a design belongs, like that of the dolphin, to a group of textiles which evolved according to the same "laws" (p. 26) that once ruled the development of the Hieroglyphs. (The hypostatization of artistic tendencies as independent rulers, instead of the acknowledgment of their being inseparately connected with, and caused by, individuals and modes of the artistic representation and visualization is an unfortunate heritage of Riegl's way of expressing himself.) Egger calls such designs "symbols" or "signs" (p. 23, 29) without any other definition of the meaning of the terms than that inherent in the characterization of his fourth group, in which signs are arbitrarily called "Einzeldinge" (isolated motifs) and wrongly contrasted to both decoration in general and to that of a flat surface in particular ("nicht als Zeichen sondern als Dekoration und Flaechenfuellung erscheinen"). He claims that their "Formcharakter" or "Darstellungsweise" (p. 27; the best translation may be stylization) corresponds to that of the hieroglyphs. Are such designation and claim really compelling enough to exclude, that they were understood as naturalistic representations which were sufficiently visualized as such, although rendered in line within the terms of the medium? Must a representation lacking in realism under all circumstances make an anti-naturalistic impression? (To convince oneself easily that this is not the case even for modern eyes one needs only to look at old filet embroideries such as shown in Figs. 10 and 11.) [19]

The very antithesis of Egger's article appeared in the same year 1956. It should have revolutionized our whole approach to the problems but, in line with my introductory paragraph, has as yet failed to do so. I am referring to Henry Seyrig's and Louis Robert's convincing reading and interpretation of the inscription HPAKLEIAC, woven into the Textile Museum's hanging 71.118, as the mark of the imperial textile manufactory in Herakleia in Thrace.[20] (I

Fig. 9

mention as a support for Seyrig's reading e.g. Kendrick II, 326. Why weavers should tend to show inscriptions with inversed order of the lines I am unable to say.) Alan J. B. Wace has published the hanging in *Workshop Notes* No. 9 (1954). He was right in recognizing that the Textile Museum's hanging 71.18 belongs in the same context. Wace's tentative date "probably fifth century" was chosen for stylistic reasons and in accordance with the suppositions of the theory. Whether the dating will prove itself correct or too early only future study will reveal.

Seyrig's and Robert's discovery is bound to have some influence on the evaluation of information concerning historical classification to be gathered from the kind of material used in the textiles and from the technique of individual pieces. Louisa Bellinger coined for them the phrase "data furnished by a study of the crafts used." [21] She rightly stressed the point that sometimes these data may hint at import from another country or at their having been woven by a weaver reared in foreign craft traditions, who, as she stated in the Textile Museum's "Catalogue of Dated Tiraz Fabrics," [22] may have brought with him his material. I am inclined to assume that the amount of imported weaving material could be much greater everywhere than is generally supposed. After all, everyone ought now to reckon with the fact that tapestries exactly

Fig. 10 German, about 1580

Fig. 11 German, 1623

like those of Egypt were actually woven in the Balkans. I do not believe that rapid economic consequences and trade restrictions which the conquest of a country or a state of war may have in modern times can be taken for granted during the first millennium of our era. I share the often stated opinion that one of R. Pfister's most important contributions towards the solution of the problems we are dealing with is his direction of our attention to the use of Eurasian madder in what one considers as earlier "Coptic" textiles, and of Indian lac in later ones ("Revue des arts asiatiques" X. 1936, P. 1 ff.). The principal cause may indeed have been the transformation of Egypt to an Arabian country. But why must we assume that the effect of it made itself felt very soon, unless we presuppose that trade relations many centuries old could be stopped over-night between countries lacking the modern possibilities of quick communications and of strict import and export controls, and that no stocks of madder were available anywhere in the countries falling under Arab rule? Why should the source of "the red paint which has been brought for sale from the land of the barbarians" to Armenia, as reported by a source contemporary to the iconoclastic controversy [23] have

been inaccessible for the Arabs? And what about those "Coptic" textiles which continued to be produced in the Byzantine Empire? On the other hand, is it not possible that lac was used in Egypt even before the conquest, as trade relations with India existed? I do not see that a precise dating and localization can be deduced from the use of madder or lac—and it is irrefutable exactitude which we need. The problem is not eased by the fact that experts in technical data tend to be no more in agreement among themselves than are the art historians who base their judgment upon stylistic considerations. The investigation of the technical data is often very difficult, and this refers also to the analysis of materials and colors.

May I emphasize once again that having a stated goal in mind, I wish to clear the road of unconvincing suppositions and to stress again and again the point that no short cut to knowledge has emerged. Only through scrupulous scrutiny of individual pieces can we ever hope to gain such knowledge. The investigation of the technical data certainly has to be included, together with available evidence from other sources. Once all these precautions are taken, one ought not to drive skepticism beyond a limit where belief in the credibility of any knowledge attainable by the standard historical and philological methods becomes impossible. One has also to accept the fact that there are ways of art-historical reasoning which cannot but be subjective and the results of which cannot be confirmed by anything approaching a proof, in terms of science. The problem of the aesthetic standards of both the weavers and the customers, to which I have already alluded, is one of the thorniest. Often we can only imagine the works of "high" art which the weaver may have wished his tapestry to be understood as related to. All too little is known about the organizational setup of the weaving industry. It seems to me rather beside the point to use modern socio-economic criteria as guides to the definition of its exact economic status. Miss Bellinger (*op. cit.* p. 320) stressed as a fact that weavers on linen warps belonged to another "guild" than those using woolen warps. However, their close cooperation was required when the tapestry was to be inserted into a space left blank on the wefts by the linen weaver. Tapestries with such linen warps are not unusual. Therefore it appears to me, as an art-historian, more important to stress the point that we have no reason to doubt the skill of many linen weavers to decorate their fabrics with uncomplicated ornaments woven with woolen wefts, as e.g. Guerrini 86. But we cannot assume that the weaving of decorations aiming at artistic excellence could be expected from the average linen weaver. There is not the slightest hint of the existence of cartoons —that is, full-size textile designs, especially of cartoons on squared papyrus. It would have been economically absurd to employ for ordinary linen weaves someone able to do weaves of the highest class after small scale designs or actual weavings, even if the weaver were a slave. We can assume that large estates had their own weavers, free or slave, to supply the needed household goods and garments for everyone from the lord and his family down to the last slave child. And we can assume that any surplus production was for sale as were other products. We may even assume that in exceptional cases such estate workshops could qualify as factories, being distinguished from other factories only by a possible location in the open country and by the social rank of their owners. John Beckwith [24] alluding to stylistic debasement in part of the textiles has not substantiated his statement "that the majority of textiles from Egyptian burial grounds were woven almost certainly not in factories but in cottages, and homework of this sort is apt to resist any rigid attempt of classification." From what I have already said, it must be clear why I believe neither the train of Beckwith's thought cogent nor the antithesis correctly chosen. We have to reckon with products of state and private factories, of workshops of single craftsmen, and of what he called homework in cottages; this means, in our context, tapestries by people who knew how to weave plain fabrics but who were dilettantes when it came to tapestries. Riegl ("Textilfunde" p. IX) rather contemptuously rejected the appropriateness of considering homework

("Hausindustrie") because Egypt with her highly developed civilization had surpassed "this low level of human economy" ("Erwerbstaetigkeit") long before the late Roman period. He was of course right in rejecting the idea that in general the tapestries were such products. However, as mentioned before, I believe that we have to assume that some of such homework was done in estates and even in "cottages." Why must it be assumed that no "cottage" dweller ever did some home-weaving or that, following the expense of acquiring a loom, he never could think of selling or bartering some cloth to any customer available? Such assumption serves only to obscure the complexity of the problem of the "debasement" of style. It makes considerable difference which cultural level weavers and customers are supposed to have represented. It makes considerable difference whether motifs without any meaning were woven and accepted by people who simply did not care for anything other than the color effect, or whether they consciously preferred for aesthetic or, in the case of Moslems, religious reasons an abstract stylization to any naturalism. Even if one considers 1100 as the latest possible date for the dancers on Father Du Bourguet's No. 23 ("bulletin" p. 58), the problem poses itself with all urgency if the design is juxtaposed against Beckwith's illustration p. 25 above (our Fig. 12 shows a detail). Is it not probable that the first tapestry was made for a Copt and the second for a Moslem? Possibly even executed by a Mohammedan Egyptian, does the second not stand as a monument of Islamic rather than of Coptic art?

In my opinion it is regrettable that the *CIBA* article seems to remain as the only published result of Beckwith's extensive study of Coptic textiles. It includes many correct statements and attacks on unjustified assumptions. However, it was not the place to write extensively on his reasons for making them. He approached the problems with much élan and understanding. But his "Introduction" shows him vacillating. Though for example he makes the normal and necessary use of comparisons of textiles with other works of art for their classification, he calls the method "apt to be . . .

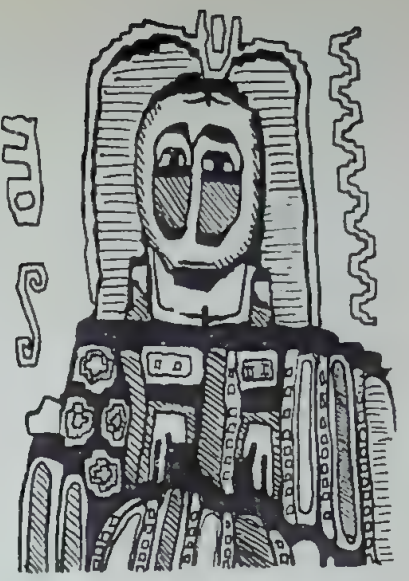

Fig. 12

unrewarding" (p. 3). More serious in my opinion was the fact that he had not yet liberated himself from all the shackles imposed by the "theory." He still thought so much in "groups" that he believed that "the presence of markedly debased examples in a given group makes the question of import of such articles unlikely" (then follows the above quoted and criticized statement about the "homework"). As I understand it, the sentence presupposes that the more general the characteristics of a group are the more they weigh, when compared with individual traits of the piece. Strange as it sounds, it has not yet become a matter of course to search in the designs for those hints at their date which might be connected with the representation of details taken from life. Beckwith too was still inclined to neglect the non-stylistic data of a piece. This is clearly shown by the interpretation of the tapestry roundel which was reproduced on the cover of his article (p. 1. Kendrick 669 inversely). It represents a Byzantine emperor wearing a pointed beard. Beckwith agreed that it might be Heraklios. However, the only Byzantine emperor with a pointed beard was his predecessor Phokas [25] (602-610). But he did the greatest disservice to the advancement of the research by simply dismissing Seyrig's and Robert's explanation of HRAKLEIAC as "more than doubtful" or an uncertain prop (p. 4).

Thus, instead of leading to a definite breakthrough in the wall of the suppositions, his article has aroused bewilderment and headshaking more than it has influenced the approach to the problems.

If I have succeeded in conveying the impression that our exact knowledge about the "Coptic" tapestries amounts to almost nothing, and that the difficulties of recognizing the period and the spheres of artistic traditions and workmanship to which a piece belongs are still appalling, I have reached my goal. This exact classification requires an amount of knowledge which even a specialist cannot be sure of acquiring during a lifetime's work. He ought to remain continually conscious of, and master, the full range of possible choices for designer and weaver, because these "Coptic" textiles "are a microcosm of cultural and stylistic change" (Beckwith p. 26). He must know enough of the effects which the meeting of the classical naturalism and the more unrealistic "primitive" modes of stylization had in general upon the level of the average provincial indigenous artistic and craft production, if he is not to take as a specific Coptic development that which may in reality be a much more general phenomenon. Needed is the acquisition of both the knowledge of, and the flair for, the differences between stylizations caused by reasons of artistic, craft or cultural traditions, and the flair for the possible fluctuations in a given stylistic phase. One ought to store in the memory many thousands of pieces, but even then it will always be only a limited number of pieces which he knows, and still fewer ones which he will be able to check on when the need arises. Attention is indispensable to those diagnostic elements which are not dependent upon the personality of the designer or the weaver, but are taken from reality or from established modes of representation. Steps in the evolution, or metamorphosis, of motifs may, though not of necessity, belong to the individual. But it may at least be helpful to determine a *terminus post quem* from the rendering of a realistic coiffure, or of a saddle or of a piece of costume or of similar motifs, or from the way anatomical details are drawn, or for what effect colors are used, or what illusionary effect is sought. The needed flair for authenticity remains to be mentioned. I am fully aware how unpopular will be any hint, especially without the proffering of irrefutable evidence, of the existence of pieces which may be outright fakes or of which the documentary value has been more or less impaired by extensive restorations. However, every serious student of the matter must be impressed by the fact that during the last decades many pieces in an unusual, good state of preservation, and with unusual, sometimes suspicious stylistic traits, have appeared on the market without any attested provenance, whereas very few, if any, comparable pieces had been available during the first decades of collecting by excavations. I repeat, no one is known to have acquired either the flair or any authority of judgment. No technique seems to have been developed for the objective discovery of repairs other than the most obvious ones. At present I do not see that one can do more than remain conscious of the necessity of being suspicious, when it seems appropriate, and of being aware of the possibly insecure ground on which we are treading.

The tapestry roundel of the Textile Museum (No. 11.18, 335 x 315 mm, illustrated on the cover) was acquired without provenance in 1948. It shows both stylistic particularities and decorative details for which I have been unable to find matching parallels in the study material accessible to me. I am convinced that it is genuine, but I am not certain about the extent of restoration. It proclaims itself as Coptic by the inscription. Some believe it to be Greek, but such interpretation cannot be proved and raises insolvable difficulties: the first and the last sign in the upper line must then be interpreted as mere ornaments leaving the word without a final letter, because ***pi*** never replaced N in Greek. The first line was convincingly read by Professor Herbert Chayyim Youtie as "the MⲁKⲈTOV," the second line by Professor Clark Hopkins as ⲁⲘⲈKSCⲁNTⲈPOC," with English letters: MaKETOV aLEKSaNTEROS, Alexander of Macedon. That at present a C is visible instead of ⲉ in Maketov is probably the result of a repair. Professor Hopkins agreed with Youtie's opinion that "in

Coptic late *pi* and V are both written Π and that Π at the beginning means in Coptic 'the.'" Maketov instead of Makedon and TEPOC instead of DPOC are declared as easy shifts in Coptic. "Youtie says the large circled α is late—certainly not earlier than fifth century and the lambda with vertical bar is also late. He suggests Egypt . . . 6th century, and I think this correct . . ." The Director of the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo, Dr. Pahor Labib, agreed "that as far as we can see from the photograph . . . the inscription is Coptic . . . The forms of letters woven on textiles sometimes appear different from the usual forms. There are other cases where the KC replaces the Exi in Saidic dialect." I had directed Dr. Labib's attention to my having been unable to find any similar Coptic (or Greek) M. The nearest I found is the M with a small slope in the first upright stroke in the very late Coptic piece, Victoria and Albert Museum No. 162-1928. Though the weaver of the roundel was very skilled in forming round shapes, the sloped M's and a's must have been very stylish somewhere in Egypt at some rather late time that he chose them instead of the easier to weave forms with straight lines. The colors white and yellow alternate with each letter, with the exception that in the K's the alternation occurs in the verical bar and the angle. Full circles in the letters are filled with blue.

Alexander the Great was not often represented in the period between antiquity and the advanced mediaeval times. The impact his conquest had had upon the fate of Egypt is not mirrored in the number of existing actual or fictitious portraits of him. In the roundel he is shown as any glorified hero could be, identified only by the inscription. To be shown twice in symmetrically repeated representations also means less than a single picture. The conceptual value of its subject matter is lessened in the degree that the scene is molded into a scheme of decoration. Thus the intention was to make a textile design, not something competing with a naturalistic painted image.

Though Alexander the Great is shown hunting, any indication of a landscape is lacking. The background is uniformly red, and the weaver did not attempt a naturalistic rendering of light and shadows. He was not afraid of showing naturalistic details if they did not weaken the decorative character of the whole. He had respect for the naturalness of the forms in a plastic sense, but he gave prevalence to the exigencies of the style he was working in. This was determined by his wish to unite a symmetrical scheme of the design with a contrasting scheme of the coloration, however unnaturalistic. He must have trusted that his customers enjoyed a color contrast down to the smallest symmetrical details. Some examples may be cited. The left horse is yellow with black outlines, the right one is blue with some white outlines. The left one being relatively uniform yellow with the exception of the hoofs and the mane along the neck and under the ears which are blue and some blue on the upper left leg and in the eyes and of the few white hairs between the ears, a richer palette is used for the right horse. The blue body has a whitish-yellow head, mane, left ear and lower part of the left foreleg. The right ear, the tail and the lower parts of the other leg are white. The hoofs are alternately yellowish and blue. (Restoration of damages in this lower right segment are obvious.) The hilts of the swords are green at left, blue at right. The guards are white at left, yellow at right. The blades have dark blue outlines and are yellow and green at left, white and light blue at right. Most revealing of the weaver's schooling and tendencies is the depiction of the genii, because there pictorial "impressionistic" coloration is almost totally transformed into decorative patterns. A few naturalistic remnants of the former are preserved in the modelling of the faces of the three boys at left and of the wing of the third one. Other remnants appear as reduced and ornamentalized transformations, without illusionistic intentions, of once impressionistically colored parts, as shown by a distinctive coloring of the sexual parts and of the upright rectangles in the foreshortened trunks. The de-naturalization through coloring goes farthest in the two central boys; the body of the second is blue with yellow hair, wing and mentioned parts. The body of the third boy is rose with a green rectangle and white sexual parts.[26]

Fig. 13

The coloration of the hunting animals attests most clearly both the weaver's predilection for many colors, however unnaturalistic, in small areas and his awareness of the manifold colors in antique impressionistic painting. The left animal has a whitish body frequently outlined in yellow or blue. The hairy pelt is indicated by blue slabs on the back and right hindleg, by red crescents on the trunk and right hindleg. The ribs are also indicated with red and black. The tail is yellow. A red dash is in the eye. The body of the right animal is yellowish with indications of the pelt in rose and by black crescents. The tail, the toes, a dash in the eye are blue. Dashes at the belly are blue and rose. So far as I know the latest antique development of coloration has not been investigated. It can be stated, however, with confidence that a restricted use of a few different colors for form modelling had become established tradition in pictorial crafts, as for instance blue shadowing of white or rose tints in the carnation, as it is to be seen on Alexander's faces, of which the left one is yellowish, the right one whitish, and on his whitish feet. Too little is known about the history of both painting and tapestry weaving in the period of the weaver's activity (whichever it may have been exactly) that I feel unable to discuss the coloration of this roundel other than as an isolated example.

Alexander wears a cuirass of leather, the lower part of which consists of three rows of slabs. The two parts are separated by a stripe with circular appliques at left, with oblong ones at right. Circular metal appliques are fastened to the upper part and probably rectangular ones to the slabs in the lower part. They are colored white, yellow, red, rose, light and dark blue and green. The most comparable cuirass I can find is worn by a standing warrior on one of the ivory reliefs on the pulpit of Aachen Cathedral, which are usually classified as sixth century Egyptian (Fig. 13 after Volbach, *op. cit.* No. 76). But there is a marked difference. The Aachen cuirass has four rows of slabs over a kilt, of which the roundel shows no indication. I believe Alexander was intended to be shown wearing trousers. The legs appear to be bare from over the knees down, but the saggy shape of the shanks makes it hard to believe that the weaver could have been satisfied with such poor execution at such a prominent place. Probably the restorer misunderstood the remnants of what had been trousers. We are not accustomed to thinking of ancient western rulers as wearing trousers over unshod feet. In my opinion in Beckwith's cover illustration Phokas is wearing trousers over naked feet, though the angular band indicates that he is supposed to wear sandals. The circular band at the ankles is a characteristic seam decoration of trousers. It is the simplest form of such decorations. Examples of them are easy to find. I mention here only Fig. 80 in O. von Falke's "Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei" vol. I (Berlin, 1913) dated by him "seventh century" on account of his dogmatic declaration that "here" the rule applies that a reproduction ("Nachbildung") is in general contemporaneous with the model

("Original," p. 66). It is not necessary for me to dwell upon the custom of wearing trousers, but merely to point out that Alexander is not shown in a costume distinguishing him as a ruler. A cape (chlamys) is wound around his shoulders, fastened by a ring. The fringed ends flutter in the wind as had been usual in representations of riders for at least a millennium. The Alexander figures raise swords of a type common during the first millennium of our era. A nearly identical one can be seen on the Byzantine ivory casket of the eleventh to twelfth century in Sens Cathedral.[27] Sheathed it is well shown in a floor mosaic in Kirbet el-Muhaiet (Jordan) which may belong to the second half of the seventh century, but can also be somewhat later.[28] A small round shield hangs on the other arm which has been passed through a bar or band fastened to its backside.[29] A similar shield is worn by the ivory rider on the Aachen pulpit (Volbach, *op. cit.* No. 77). The hand is raised in a gesture shown often since late Hellenistic times to indicate a hunter having thrown a javelin or some other hunting weapon. Riders were expected to direct their horses with their legs.

The Alexanders wear very small caps upon their yellow hair. The most similar forms to the right one I know are to be found in the Coptic tapestries at Brooklyn Museum No. 15.740 and R. Pfister, "Tissus coptes du Musée du Louvre" (Paris, 1932) Pl. 26, and in the ivory reliefs of the Mayer van den Bergh collection in Anvers (Volbach, *op. cit.* No. 234) where apparently Oriental, other than Phrygian, caps were intended to be represented.[30] Possibly such "Oriental" headdress was chosen to indicate that Alexander was not Egyptian.

The horses have a ferocious expression but lack otherwise the characteristics of the stallion Bucephalus. Their most striking features are the knots in the tails. Preceded by a more complicated way of dressing the tail,[31] the knots seem to have become fashionable in the Byzantine empire around 600. The oldest representation I know are in the Phokas roundel and in the two woven silks, Falke *op. cit.* Fig. 73 (dated by him around 600) and A. C. Weibel, "Two Thousand Years of Textiles" (New York 1952) Fig. 49 (dated by her early seventh century). A later depiction is on one side of the Byzantine ivory casket in Troyes Cathedral which was carved after various older models about 950 (Goldschmidt-Weitzmann I No. 122, Pl. LXIX). The horses are scantily harnessed. No headgear holds the bit. The saddles are held by a single breast collar and a single crupper. The saddles are of a very specific type. They are bordered in front and rear by pads, the latter ornamented with dots at left, a zigzag pattern at right. This is not the type with unpadded curved outlines, with or without ornamentation, of which examples are often represented after around 500 A.D., evidently because in the Byzantine empire, it was the type replacing the oblong hides or saddle cloths. Stirrups are fastened to the frontside of the saddles. Stirrups were never used in antiquity by Greeks and Romans. The Goths[32] brought them to the West where they were hesitatingly accepted. They did not reach the East-Roman empire before 500. According to references quoted by me in "Kataloge des Bayerischen Nationalmuseum," IV, Abteilung (Augsburg, 1926) p. 6, which I cannot check at present, stirrups were at first fastened to the frontside arches. I doubt that this would apply to the Byzantines. To the best of my present knowledge, stirrups are fastened more or less near the middle of the saddle in all relevant representations before the seventh or eighth century, when they

Fig. 14

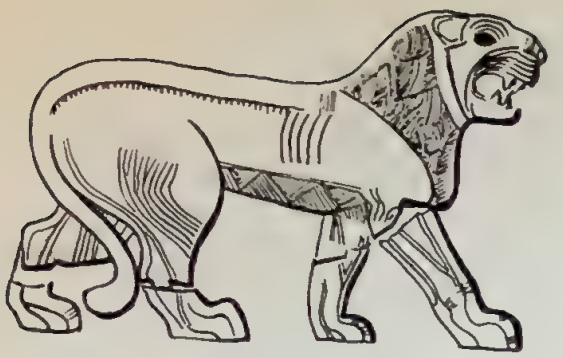

Fig. 15

began to move forward. The oldest Byzantine representation of their being fastened near the frontside of unpadded saddles may be that in the emperor silk from Mozac [33] in the Textile Museum in Lyons. I can cite a few late Byzantine representations which correspond to that in the roundel: on fol. 409 vo and 440 of cod. Par. gr. 510 (between 880 and 886; H. Omont, *op. cit.* Pl. LIV, LIX) on the oliphant from the Chartreuse de Portes [34] also in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Fig. 14), in the Nativity relief of the Kopfler-Truniger collection (see *Note 30*) and on an ivory comb of the Germanic Museum in Nuremberg.[35] Coptic representations corresponding to the roundel occur only in late tapestries, though similar padded saddles without stirrups are more frequent.[36] It is exceptional that the rider in Aachen has stirrups in front of a saddle cloth. The pads together with the way of fastening the stirrups suggest the eighth century as the earliest possible date for the roundel.

It is difficult to decide whether the weaver intended to represent dogs or cheetahs as accompanying Alexander. Certain it is that he did not depict cheetahs after an Eastern representation. Both animals have a kind of fillet which is a stylization of the hairs of the belly. Such bands, often decorated, belong to the oldest tradition of representation of animals, even in depictions otherwise intended as naturalistic. The lions from Tel Halaf demonstrate this (Fig. 15).[37] I do not know of any investigation of the history of this motif, and I must limit myself to a very few remarks. It seems to me that, in the period covered by the Coptic tapestries, it did belong to the firmly established modes of representation which did not presuppose a specific influence from the East where, for example, Sassanian art did not always make use of it. Apparently in late antique art it served to show a reflection of light on the belly in order to emphasize its voluminosity. It seems to me that something of this aspired pictorial effect is preserved in the roundel, whereas the blue stripe on the yellow lion—Wulff-Volbach No. 9165, dated by them fifth to sixth century but probably considerably later—gives more the impression of being an ornament. I see in the latter a stronger tendency toward "Coptization" than shown by the weaver of the roundel.

The dominant role given to the black outlines in the designing of the bodies of the genii is evident. Close inspection reveals however that this masterweaver, working in the best traditions of tapestry weaving, endeavored to reach some of the modeling effects of painted color shades through changes in the texture. Sometimes he pulled warps sidewise out of their vertical direction or he widened the intervals between them. Sometimes they are crossed by wefts in other than the horizontal direction. In such cases tapestry weaving transcended the limitations of ordinary weaving to a degree which brought it near to the threshold of a kind of relief weaving. Because it is possible that the weaver actually used relief weaving, I have postponed a discussion of Alexander's empty hands. Their thumbs are bent before the forefingers. This most unusual motif contrasts so strikingly with the extremely poor design of the hands below the fingers that the question arises how much of the present appearance may be due to a restorer's work. I do not dare to give an answer.

The dressing of the hair of the genii is not comparable to any early representation: strictly horizontally in front, curled in the neck. In the ivory reliefs of the Mayer van den Bergh collection in Anvers, Christ's parted hair [38] falls straight upon his shoulders, but is crossed by a curl under the ear, which evidently was intended as a distinctive mark of Him. The representation most similar to that in the roundel is in the third

relief, Bovini Fig. 146, because the parting is hardly visible and the curl appears as being the very end of the hair. In this and the next relief what looks like a tonsure is worn by some of the apostles. Some relation between the reliefs and the roundel is therefore probable. Unfortunately, the classification of the former is controversial. There seems now to be general agreement that they were carved later than the compositions suggest. Volbach thought of the ninth to tenth century, Bovini of the eleventh to twelfth, Edward Capps [39] of Carolingian or Ottonian copies of sixth century carvings. I believe the carver worked somewhere in the sphere of Byzantine art during one of the late centuries of the first millennium. One who is familiar with the literature on early Byzantine illuminated manuscripts cannot be surprised by my statement that there is no valid reason to assume that everywhere and in every field Byzantine artists stopped working in late antique traditions during the seventh century. Very little is known about the art of the floor mosaic craftsmen and about the Byzantine silversmith work for some time after the sixth century. But the lesson taught by Castelseprio should not be forgotten, nor how very little we know about Byzantine art from the seventh to the ninth century, or more generally, about the gradual transformation of late antique art into post-iconoclastic Byzantine art. Vast fields are unexplored. The representational schemes for the depiction of the anatomy is one of them. One of the links which Weitzmann-Fiedler missed (*op. cit.* p. 20 and Pl. 1) can be seen in the roundel because the weaver followed Western traditions of painting and drawing. Noses comparable to those of Alexander can be found on the north wall of S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (about 525-550), a comparable treatment of his mouths in the figure of St. Peter in the Hagia Sophia in Saloniki (probably ninth century). His eyes and brows correspond to the usual ones in mosaics of the period. The squinting of a left eye certainly was unintentional. For the outlining of the noses of the outside genii I have not found matching representations. The nose of the first boy is a variation of the scheme of straight oblong noses which end with a bulbous form to indicate the nostrils, as shown in the mosaic portrait of Eufrasius of about 550 [40] and, still somewhat nearer to nature, in one of the figures at the south wall of S. Apollinare Nuovo. The side view of the nose of the fourth boy is singular. Special attention is also due to the foreshortening of the eyes. The horizontal lines indicating the borders of the thorax and the vertical line in its middle are widely spread traits of Hellenistic design, which to my knowledge did not survive in the East. The trapezoids in the lower abdominal region seem to have been taken over from Coptic carvings.[41] They belong to a much later phase of the development than the thorax design. The shortening of the thighs and the lengthening of the shanks both being connected by a chipped joint, also probably belong to a rather late phase of designing in Hellenistic manner.

The wreaths are blue outlined yellow (at left), white (at right). The little circles inside, indicating flowers or jewels, are white (at left), yellow with a red center (at right). One should expect the genii to be shown flying as they are meant to hold the wreaths over Alexander's head. But not the slightest illusionary hint is given to this effect. The wreaths being shown vertically, the boys appear as standing back in space as if on a higher plane. One foot of each of the inner ones is covered by an arm of Alexander, which easily could have been avoided. Of course, no such realistic interpretation was aimed at. The intention was to bestow visually glory upon the rider, who otherwise could be anybody. Naturalism, spacial illusion were readily renounced if they were conflicting with the decorative or expressive aims. This is especially striking, as in the neighborhood of the boys the depth dimension can appear as emphasized by the turning of the heads of the horses, by the visibility of the background beside them and the covering of Alexander's arms with the sword. A reproduction in black and white falsifies the essentially flat impression of the representation in the original. There the striving toward equiponderance of the motifs and their use for an evenly balanced design filling the whole roundel is evident. In order to counterbalance the outward

movement of the Alexander group, the weaver chose not only the louder coloration for the two inner boys and made the ends of the chlamys and the tails meet to form a decorative design, he also accentuated somewhat the middle line of the circle and used a motif at the bottom which like the inscription has the effect of holding the groups together.

The plant at the bottom with the long drawn out twigs from which a kind of fruit rises is not a conventional motif. It was designed for its purpose. It has a kind of gracefulness which appears to me as classicistic rather than early. The twigs, the outline of the fruit and the crowning leaves are yellow. The arrow-point leaves show symmetrically opposed coloring, blue and white and green and white. Each of the seeds has a different color. I am unable to quote a comparable design. In my opinion it represents a later phase in the evolution of the cup motif, which appears in an earlier phase in the Dumbarton Oaks hanging (Kitzinger Fig. 21). An intermediate phase is shown [42] in the Textile Museum's No. 71.35. A companion of the cup motif, a bowl (yellow and white) with a conventionalized round fruit (blue, green, red, white) serves as a quiet central motif. A small yellow plant between the backs of the genii helps to increase the weight of the center.

I know of no rinceau in other Coptic textiles like that in the roundel's frame. Shown against a background of undyed wool, it consists of a waved yellow stem and what in the reproduction looks like bunches of grapes but is in reality a transformation of them into five-lobbed leaves. Nothing like them exists in nature. The coloring of the five black outlined subdivisions shows either two shades of the same color or two different colors. Besides most of these leaves, and growing in the same direction as they, are hook-like remnants of what once were tendrils. I know of a single other example where the two motifs grow in the same direction in one hollow of a wave. It is in the Louvre and classified by Pfister as "Copto-byzantin" sixth to seventh century (*op. cit.* Pl. 43 center). In my opinion, the seventh century is the earliest possible date because a closely related piece on the same plate at right depicts a man wearing Arab trousers. In the roundel the four rinceaux are connected by plants growing from their meeting points. On top and at left a red bud is shown between two blue leaves. At the bottom it grows over two small red and two large blue and green leaves. The weaver used both the black outlines of the stem and the coloring as indications of plasticity, but without impairing the flat decorative character.

The inner stripe of the frame shows hearts in the usual colors on a blue ground. Again there are four sections, strictly symmetrical to each other and connected by red disks with a white center. The outer stripe is filled with what mostly looks like oblongs formed by two angles. In my opinion they are in reality a simplifying transformation of two hearts which are still recognizable in several places. May I reiterate that it was much easier to weave angular than round forms and that therefore a weaver would not transform straight lines into curved ones without a compelling reason, whereas no more than weariness or carelessness was needed for a transformation of curved lines into straight ones. It is evident that the intention was to direct the attention to the color effect, not to the individual motifs.

Quite singular is the triangular support of the roundel. The possibility can be excluded with confidence that a designer working in the sphere of Coptic art could have spontaneously invented the motif of balancing a circle on the apex of a triangle. Human creative forces are not so great in inventing new forms of ornamentation. In my opinion the design, under the influence of the fashionable circle pattern, is a phase of a metamorphosis of the naturalistic leaf pattern as represented by the Textile Museum's No. 71.63 (Pagan . . . Egypt No. 256, usually dated sixth century). Another, earlier phase is represented by No. 41.807 of the Brooklyn Museum, dated there seventh century. It has the shape of a roundel which is open at the bottom and changes there without a separating framing into a narrower trapezoid. Still earlier in the evolutionary process is Kendrick No. 643, dated by him sixth to seventh century. Three

carefully intertwined twigs are in the triangle. In the black frame are disks, each in two of the usual colors. The disproportioned smallness of the triangle suggests that the roundel was a part of a vestment's decoration rather than a hanging's.

Summing up the results of a close scrutiny of the roundel, from an art historian's point of view, the outstanding ones seem contradictory for our present state of knowledge. In my opinion the experts have ascertained that the inscription is Coptic. I do not believe that it could have been woven outside Egypt since the weaver was fully familiar with Coptic writing. On the other hand, two results of the analysis of style and motifs are most impressive: the design is intimately connected with late Hellenistic, late antique and especially Byzantine art traditions. Motifs could be matched only from typically Byzantine works of art, often of post-iconoclastic origin, whereas no detail pointed to a recent reception of a typically Oriental motif and only a few details belong to the development, usually in a derogatory sense, called Coptization. Due to the distinctive form of the saddle and stirrups no date before 700 can be considered without arbitrariness. Too little is known about Byzantine painting of the period from the seventh to the ninth century to allow for the attribution to a definite influence of the decorative coloring as shown in the roundel. However, whereas I see no reason to assume a Byzantine influence, even hypothetically, it seems to me as yet impossible to choose between the two other possibilities. Do we have to assume an Oriental influence or do we observe an autogenous development of Coptic textile art? I would contradict my own warning against too early generalizations if I tried to hypothesize a cultural reason for the Byzantine character of the roundel. Too little is known. What Pfister called "Copto-byzantin" (see page 20) is an unstudied development. And, to my knowledge, the enduring relations with Byzance of those Egyptian Christians who, contrary to the "Copts," accepted the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon of 451 (the Melchites), are not clarified in a study accessible to me.

NOTES

[1] "Harvard Case Histories in Experimental Science," cases 1 and 2. Cambridge, Mass. (1950) p. 4, and "On Understanding Science." New Haven, Conn. (1947) p. 95

[2] "General Education." Edited by I. Bernard Cohen and Fletcher G. Watson. Cambridge, Mass. (1952) pp. 89, 101, 88

[3] Even Carl H. Becker omitted the fact in the biographical sketch included in his "Islamstudien." Leipzig Vol. II (1932) pp. 491 ff.

[4] J. Karabacek, "Die Theodor Graf'schen Funde in Aegypten." Wien (1883) p. 30

[5] J. Karabacek, "Katalog der Theodor Graf'schen Funde in Aegypten." Wien (1883) E.g. No. 400 ff.

[6] E.g. Georges Duthuit, "La sculpture copte." Paris (1931) p. 40. Josepha Weitzmann-Fiedler, "Die Aktdarstellung in der Malerei," etc. Strassburg (1934) pp. 13 ff.

[7] "Archaeologia." Vol. 87 (1938) p. 192

[8] "Cahiers de Byrsa." Vol. 3 (1953) pp. 167 ff. "bulletin du Laboratoire du Musée du Louvre, supplément à la Revue des arts." (Octobre 1957) pp. 57 ff.

[9] "Cahiers de la tapisserie." (Juin 1960) No. 1

[10] "Essays in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology" by Samuel K. Lothrop and others. Cambridge, Mass. (1961) pp. 269 ff.

[11] W. F. Volbach, "Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spaetantike," etc. Mainz (1952) No. 70, "fifth to sixth century." Giuseppe Bovini, "Catalogo della mostra degli avori," etc. 2nd ed. Ravenna (1956) No. 46, "around 500."

[12] H. Omont, "Les miniatures des plus anciens manuscripts grecs," etc. Paris (1929) Pl. V

[13] Fig. 5 after an illustration in D. G. Kelekian's catalogue, "Additional Documents of Coptic Art." New York (1941). Fig. 6 after M. Mat'e and K. Liapunova, "Artistic Textiles of Coptic Egypt" (in Russian). Moscow (1951) Pl. XXIV, 2

[14] I should like to record in this context that Oskar Wulff was not antagonized by the objections I raised in my review of the Berlin catalogue of 1926 O. Wulff and W. F. Volbach, "Spaetantike und Koptische Stoffe . . . in den Staatlichen Museen" in *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* (1927) Col. 2108 ff. I voiced there the conviction that traditions of Coptic weaving survived long into Islamic times, and I named the eleventh century but not as a strict limit (Col. 2109).

[15] "Pittura delle Origini Christiane." Novara (1942)

[16] "Byzantine Painting." Geneva (1953)

[17] "Sibrium." Vol. III (1956) pp. 95 ff.; published in Russian in 1953.

[18] "Beitraege zur Kunstgeschichte und Archaeologie des Fruehmittelalters." Edited by Hermann Fillitz. Graz-Köln. (1961) p. 73 ff.

[19] After Paul Engelmeier, "Westfaelische Hungertuecher," Muenster (1961) Figs. 22 and 33 (detail)

[20] "Cahiers archéologiques" VIII (1956) p. 27 ff.

[21] "American Journal of Archaeology," Vol. 63 (1959) p. 320 in a review of the catalogue "Le stoffe copte del Museo archeologico di Firenze," Roma (1957). This "tesi di laurea" of Milan University is by far the best catalogue as yet published of Coptic textiles. Regrettably, Volbach did not mention it among the "good catalogues" he listed in the Moenchen-Gladbach catalogue.

[22] By Ernst Kühnel and Louisa Bellinger, Washington, D. C. (1952) p. 107, No. 73.661

[23] Sirarpie Der Nersessian, "Armenia and the Byzantine Empire." Cambridge, Mass. (1945) p. 113

[24] *CIBA REVIEW*, Vol. 12, No. 133. *Les Cahiers CIBA*, Vol. VII, No. 83. *CIBA Rundschau*, Vol. 13, No. 145 (August 1959) p. 4

[25] Richard Delbrueck, "Die Consulardiptychen." Berlin (1929) p. 273. Beckwith gives no hint of what he thought about the remnants of the inscription.

[26] The body of the first at left is white with yellow in the two mentioned parts, in the wing and hair. The nose and a line at the brows are rose. The fourth boy is the most restored of the four. His body and hair are yellow with white in the two mentioned parts, in the eyes and in the wing, which has an upper blue outline. The nose and the brows of the second boy between which is a dash of rose, are white, as are parts of the eyes. The hair and the lower part of the wings of the third boy are yellow, the upper being green with a blue outline. His nose is designed exclusively in white without any black outlines. Some more white is in the eyes and on the brows.

[27] A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, "Byzantinische Elfenbeinskulpturen," Berlin Vol. I (1934) No. 124, Pl. 73 g

[28] B. Bagatti in "Rivista di archeologia cristiana," 13 (1936) Fig. 25

[29] Small shields just suited to protect the face and the neck are attested for mounted archers by Procopius, *Bellum Parthicum I*, 1, 13; see Robert Grosse, "Roemische Militaergeschichte von Gallienus," etc. Berlin (1920) p. 329

[30] I do not know of any discussion of these Oriental caps. The oldest representations I know of are worn by a man in a fresco dated after 150 A.D. by M. J. Rostovtsev, "Ant. Decor. Art in South Russia" (in Russian) St. Petersburg (1914) Pl. 55, p. 188, and by Zenobios in the larger Mithras relief in Dura of 170-171 A.D. ("The Excavations at Dura-Europos . . . Seventh and Eighth Seasons" . . . New Haven (1930) pp. 84-97. According to Pl. XXX it is considerably bigger than a mere skull cap.) For the skull cap, as e.g. worn by the horsemen in the Dumbarton Oaks hanging (Kitzinger, "Dumbarton Oaks Papers" Fig. 2), the floating fillets are characteristic. These were later often dissected and transformed into some ornamental motif, but in the roundel any trace of them is lacking. Very small caps are worn by the Magi in the Byzantine ivory relief of the Nativity in the Kopfler-Truniger collection in Luzern, which was dated by Bovini eleventh century (*op. cit.* No. 110, Fig. 164) and by David Talbot Rice twelfth to thirteenth century ("Masterpieces of Byzantine Art," Edinburgh International Festival, 2nd edition (1958) No. 134). The shepherds wear quite small cylindrical caps of the same type as worn by the Magi in the Nativity relief in the Museum in Ravenna (Goldschmidt-Weitzmann, *op. cit.*, II, No. 203, dated eleventh century. Bovini, *op. cit.* No. 125 dated first half of the twelfth century).

[31] See e.g. R. P. Hinks, "Catalogue of the Greek and Roman Paintings . . . in the British Museum," London (1933) No. 57a, "around 500").

[32] R. E. Oakeshott, "The Archaeology of Weapons," New York (1960) p. 85 f.

[33] Dated by von Falke middle of the eighth century (II, Fig. 219, p. 4 f.) and by H. Peirce and R. Tyler seventh to eighth century (*"The Burlington Magazine*, 68 (1936) p. 214). The *terminus ante quem* as accepted by all three is not absolutely compelling.

[34] Probably eleventh century; von Falke in *Pantheon* (January 1930) p. 41; Charles Cahier, "Nouveaux melanges d'archéologie" II, p. 56 ff.

[35] F. Winter, "Die Kaemme aller Zeiten," Leipzig (1906) Pl. 33, No. 100, dated there eighth to ninth century, which now seems to me about three centuries too early.

[36] Compare e.g. Jean Clédat, "Le monastère . . . de Baouît. Mémoires . . . de l'Institut Français d'archéologie orientale," Vol. XII. Le Caire (1904) Pl. 54 ff. Eighth (?) century.

[37] Baron Max von Oppenheim, "Tel Halaf," London and New York, Pl. IXa, twelfth century B.C.

[38] Volbach, "Elfenbeinarbeiten" No. 234, Pl. 64: Bovini, *op. cit.* No. 91 ff., Fig. 144 ff.

[39] "The Art Bulletin," 31 (1949) p. 236

[40] Bruno Molajoli, "La Basillica Eufrasiana di Parenzo," 2nd edition, Padova (1943) p. 40

[41] "Pagan and Christian Egypt" . . . Exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum (1941) No. 95

[42] *op. cit.* No. 214