

Coptic Tapestry-Woven Tunic Embellishment:

A Method for Re-enactor Costumers

Presented by Lady Margareta Gijsberts (called Greet), at Menhir, A.S. 43 (January 2009)

Resources used for this class:

Pritchard, Frances. Clothing Culture: Dress in Egypt in the First Millenium AD; Clothing from Egypt in the collection of The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester. 2006.

This book is a museum catalog of an exhibition in The Whitworth Art Gallery. Besides its recent publication date, it offers close and clear photographs of a well-balanced collection of textiles, ranging from full tunics to fragments, and including undertunics, overtunics, wraps, and other accessories. Pritchard, of the Museum of London series, has captioned these photos with textile construction details such as thread count per cm in warp/weft, fiber, twist direction, and probable dyes. She also gives context to the items by placing some in a timeline and on maps marked with historical placenames. Both of the "make-and-take" examples used in class come from this book.

Carroll, Diane Lee. Looms and Textiles of the Copts. Memoirs of the California Academy of Sciences, Number 11. University of Washington Press. 1986.

Fragments of ornamentation and actual cloth construction are the concentration of this book, with further explanations of what Egyptian looms looked like. The photography is also very good, though some images are black-and-white. This book also contains a very good explanation of who the Copts were.

Harvey, Nancy. Tapestry Weaving: A Comprehensive Study Guide. Interweave Press. 1991.

This is a modern instruction book on all sorts of tapestry weaving. I include it to guide the interested student further in basic tapestry weaving, and to include further refinements on construction, such as the slit vs. weft interlock techniques.

Materials used for this method:

- 100% linen* – NOT "cottonized" – you must be able to pull quite a long thread out of the storebought fabric for this technique to work.
- Wool thread – 2 ply, "superwash", thickness similar to 2x or 3x one of the linen ground threads. 10x is too thick.
- Embroidery hoop – Of a smallish size; >10", and tension starts to be difficult to control.
- Needles – Blunt nosed, with holes small enough to hold onto the working thread.
- Cheap plastic comb – the sort with two densities.

- Ink pen – Sharpie felt tip, for marking the design upon the warp threads.

*Wool tunics certainly existed, but their velcro-like tendencies don't tend to lend themselves to deconstruction.



Detail from pg. 79. T.1994.130. Linen originally white, with purple wool embellishment. Undated.



Detail from pg 91. T. 8361. Red wool tunic with plain white clavi. Undated.