

Faith Pennick Morgan: *Dress and Personal Appearance in Late Antiquity. The Clothing of the Middle and Lower Classes*. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2018 (Late Antique Archaeology. Supplementary Series 1). XVII, 243 p., 149 colour fotos, 29 drawings and 9 charts. € 135.00/\$ 156.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-34395-5.

The present study is the result of a thesis at the University of Kent, going with the project 'Visualising the Late Antique City', supervised by Luke Lavan and Ellen Swift and supported by the Leverhulme Trust. The aim of this project was "[...] to reconstruct [...] everyday urban life in the Eastern Mediterranean during Late Antiquity" (1). The present book takes account of dress being an essential part of the reconstruction of Antiquity. Including the book in the series 'Late Antique Archaeology' is most welcome, because this affiliation helps to establish textiles as an archaeological genre.

In her introduction (1–13) Morgan presents her sources and methodology. Her investigations are based on written sources, mostly from literature and written documents, on art historical depictions and the crucial sources of the archaeological finds themselves.

Textile archaeology experienced an enormous boost in the past 30 years and Morgan (3–5) is very familiar with the results achieved by research on textile finds from recent excavations (for examples at sites in the Eastern and Western desert of Egypt), by projects and conferences (Dress ID, Purpleae Vestes) and by natural scientific analyses (radiocarbon analysis, dye analysis). Nearly all of the textile finds treated in the book were found in Egypt, a circumstance which is explained and considered too late in the book (70).

The key questions of Morgan are the following: "What did the clothes look like?", "What was the purpose of the embellishment on clothing?" and "How were the clothes made?". She pursues these topics by investigating 187 garments, which are catalogued at the end of the book (149–166).

The pages 11–13 include an overview of dress studies. Morgan points to the limitations of theories on dress of the middle and lower classes, because people might have been restricted in their choice of garments. Furthermore she admits, that modern people might not be aware of the codes connected to items of dress. However, Morgan believes in the strong apotropaic and

amuletic functions of clothing. Her approach to the objects consists of reading the ‘object biography’ by investigating the traces of use on the object itself.

Chapter 1 (14–28) presents “Current research on Roman dress”, subdivided into an overview of individual items of clothing and thematic studies. The use of the term ‘Roman’ instead of ‘Late Antique’ is irritating here, since the investigation covers the Late Antique period. The individual items of clothing introduced are toga, mantles and cloaks, tunics, trousers and undergarments, belts, brooches, bags, footwear, headgear, hair and body modifications. Two remarks: hooded tunics are not a definite children’s garment (17), but they were worn by adults as well<sup>1</sup>. Considering the fabrication of socks, the term ‘knitted’ should be replaced by ‘needle knitted’ or ‘sewn’ in order to avoid the wrong association with real knitting.

The thematic studies of the first chapter concern the relations between dress and textile production, regional variations, social status, religion, profession and colour. The author is well aware of the limitations given by the accidental survival of textiles and the intentional view of literary and art historical sources.

Chapter 2 (29–37) deals with the Late Antique society and the role of clothing in it. Morgan draws attention to new garments appearing in Late Antiquity like trousers, leggings and hooded cloaks, whereas the traditional Roman toga fell out of use. Many of these new items of clothing were found in Antinoupolis in Middle Egypt and were presented in one recent publication<sup>2</sup> unfortunately missed by Morgan.

Included in this chapter about Late Antique society is a – maybe too long – section about apotropaism and magic in Late Antiquity (32–37), dealing with curse tablets and spells, amulets and the evil eye. This section serves as an introduction to chapter 3 entitled “Cultural values in clothing: Apotropaic

1 P. Linscheid: Frühbyzantinische textile Kopfbedeckungen. Typologie, Verbreitung, Chronologie und soziologischer Kontext nach Originalfunden. Wiesbaden 2011 (Spätantike, frühes Christentum, Byzanz. Reihe B: Studien und Perspektiven 30), 135.

2 F. Calament/M. Durand (eds.): Antinoé à la vie, à la mode. Visions d’élégance dans les solitudes. Exposition, Musée des Tissus, Lyon, 1er octobre 2013–28 février 2014. Lyon 2013.

practices” (38–64) investigating the appearance of magical motifs on clothing. Morgan traces the apotropaic meaning of ogival motifs, knots and interlaces – in some cases too speculative. Most interesting though is Morgan’s idea of a possible apotropaic intention behind single motifs placed offset in clearly symmetrical patterns of decorative panels on tunics (41).

In the Christian sphere, pictures with biblical scenes on garments served for attracting divine protection. This topic had been treated quite often before, especially by American scholars<sup>3</sup>. It should be remarked, though, that most of the biblical scenes, which appear preferably on a red background, like for example the tapestries with the Joseph-cycle, date according to radiocarbon analyses into the seventh to tenth centuries and consequently they are later than the Late Antique period<sup>4</sup>. On pages 50–57, Morgan introduces the apotropaic use of the colour red, which she could trace especially on children’s clothing. A useful addition to that subject is a recent article of Tineke Rooijakkers on red threads, inwoven in tunics for apotropaic purpose<sup>5</sup>. On pages 58–63, Morgan investigates the magical meaning of script and pseudo-script on garments.

Chapter 4 of the book (65–97) deals with the “Life of clothes in Late Antiquity”, based on Morgan’s investigations of 187 tunics from 38 different collections, listed as a catalogue at the book’s end. Morgan successfully classifies the tunics into five types: Square tunics, which means sleeveless tunics (cat. 1–21), short sleeved tunics (cat. 22–42), wide sleeved tunics (cat. 43–55), tailored tunics (cat. 56–72) and narrow sleeved tunics (cat. 73–187). Morgan’s grouping of tunics is convincing, although not enough attention was

- 3 H. Maguire: *Garments Pleasing to God: The Significance of Domestic Textile Designs in the Early Byzantine Period*. In: *DOP* 44, 1990, 215–224.
- 4 C. Fluck: *Ein buntes Kleid für Josef. Biblische Geschichten auf ägyptischen Wirkereien aus dem Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin (Ausstellung im Bode-Museum, Berlin, 23. Mai 2008 bis 31. März 2009)*. Berlin 2008, 11.
- 5 T. Rooijakkers: *Tracing the Red Thread*. In: A. De Moor/C. Fluck/P. Linscheid (eds.): *Excavating, Analysing, Reconstructing. Textiles from the First Millennium AD from Egypt and Neighbouring Countries. Proceedings of the 9th conference of the research group “Textiles from the Nile Valley” Antwerp, 27–29 November 2015*. Tiel 2017, 242–251.

paid to the chronological order. On page 74 Morgan rejects the “linear development” of tunics as stated by Frances Pritchard<sup>6</sup>, because she takes the so-called ‘riding-coats’, radiocarbon dated in the fifth/sixth century, as evidence for an early appearance of cut to shape and tailored tunics (also on pages 68 and 74). The comparison of this riding coats with tunics is misleading, though, because the coats with their open front are a different type of garment. Although the coats were associated with cut to shape tunics in graves of Antinoupolis<sup>7</sup>, archaeological finds and radiocarbon dating suggest, that these tailored tunics do not appear earlier than the sixth century<sup>8</sup>, attributing the sixth century as probable dating for the riding coats, too. Tailored Tunics with gussets like cat. 72 were in use until the Abbasid period in the eleventh century<sup>9</sup>, while the dalmatic from the sixth century on served as a clerical garment only<sup>10</sup>. Considering this development, the linear development as suggested by Pritchard is quite plausible, while minimal overlapping is quite normal.

The garments: mantles, cloaks, trousers and accessories are introduced on pages 75–77. The next section is entitled “Sewing and making and the textile industry”, with an interesting focus on the questions of professional versus domestic production, textile markets and merchants.

The next chapter on “Mending, darning and patching” (80–85) is the highlight of this book and an innovative approach to the subject of Late Antique

- 6 F. Pritchard: *Clothing Culture. Dress in Egypt in the First Millennium AD. Clothing from Egypt in the Collection of the Whitworth Art Gallery, the University of Manchester* (20 May – 10 September 2006). Manchester 2006, 114–115.
- 7 C. Fluck: *Zwei Reitermäntel aus Antinoopolis im Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Berlin. Fundkontext und Beschreibung*. In: C. Fluck/G. Vogelsang-Eastwood (eds.): *Riding Costume in Egypt. Origin and Appearance*. Leiden/Boston 2004 (*Studies in Textile and Costume History* 3), 137–152 esp. 139–140.
- 8 P. Linscheid: *Spätantike und Byzanz. Bestandskatalog Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, Bd. 2: Textilien*. Mainz 2017, 21.
- 9 G. Cornu: *Deux témoins du vêtement égyptien dans les premiers siècles de l’Islam*. In: *Annales Islamologiques* 25, 1991, 89–102.
- 10 S. Schrenk: *Die Dalmatika zwischen funärer Selbstdarstellung und kirchlichem Ornat*. In: S. Schrenk/K. Vössing/M. Tellenbach (eds.): *Kleidung und Identität in religiösen Kontexten der römischen Kaiserzeit. Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolloquium in Verbindung mit der Arbeitsgruppe „Kleidung und Religion“*, Projekt DressID, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 30. und 31. Oktober 2009. Regensburg 2012, 196–218, esp. 212.

dress. Morgan stresses that textiles from recent excavations like Mons Claudianus and Kom el Ahmar show a high percentage of mending, providing a realistic view on the everyday wear of the middle and lower classes. Furthermore Morgan demonstrates, that children's clothing was very often constructed from re-used larger garments (84 and 96). The pages 85–87 deal with the cleaning of textiles, probably done in the *fullonicae*, an aspect little investigated so far.

Page 88 treats important aspects of the 're-use' of decorative panels on another garment but as well the secondary use of whole textiles as wrapping or padding materials or for piecing together new items of clothing. For the latter practice Morgan can present many 'patchwork' examples like tunics, trousers and hats. The commercial trade with rags and second hand clothing is a very interesting topic discussed briefly in several recent publications and in the present book Morgan is summarizing, updating and re-evaluating these discussions in an excellent way.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the "Experimental knowledge of the wear and wearing of garments" (98–142). In costume history, producing and wearing replica clothing is an approved research method and yielded important results concerning the way of wearing and draping garments. This way, depictions of dress in art can be recognized and understood.

Morgan investigates the wearing of different types of tunics and cloaks by describing and illustrating models wearing replica, and by confronting them with depictions in the arts. Some of her deductions have been known in research before, such as the forming of sleeves by belting a sleeveless tunic, the function of the tuck to keep the tunic in shape, the slipping of an arm through the opening of an armpit or the blousing of the wide upper sleeve. Other observations of Morgan are fresh and new, like the difficulties in wearing tunics with open sides and sleeves (119), the possibility of tying sleeves at the front (119), or the creating of a V-shaped fold on the breast of the wearer when the hood of a cloak is hanging down at the back (130). The V-shaped fold allows Morgan to identify cloaks with (invisible) hoods in mosaics and wall paintings.

In the conclusion (143–148) Morgan returns to her initial questions. Considering the appearance of the clothes of the middle and lower classes, she concludes that: "The clothing of various people might therefore be notable, but there was no direct correlation at this time between certain garments or

clothing ensembles and a particular status, profession, religious affiliation and/or specific ethnicity that can be universally applied” (145). However, Morgan stresses the importance of embellishment for the clothes of the lower classes, albeit it was of minor quality, and the function of the garment’s decoration for supernatural protection (145).

The following pages 149–166 comprise a catalogue of 187 tunics in museum and archaeological collections, organized according to the typology presented before. Each catalogue entry consists of a short description with the technical key data. Since there are no illustrations, cross references to pictures in the text would have been useful (e.g.: the tunic cat. 38 is illustrated on page 68, fig. 37). Morgan does not proclaim to present a catalogue of all the surviving tunics. But it is regrettable that the tunics from Halabiyeh in Syria<sup>11</sup> are missing, they are important not only because they are firmly dated by their archaeological context to 610 AD, but also because of their non-Egyptian context, serving as a comparison to the bulk of Egyptian textile finds.

The pages 167–169 present a useful glossary of clothing terms, followed by four pages of textile terms accompanied by illustrations. The bibliography (173–187) is subdivided into ancient text editions resp. inscriptions and modern sources.

There are five useful appendices at the book’s end (188–204): A. Evidence of mending, patching, darning and/or reusing on garments, B. Figured tapestry panels and their ground colour in the V&A museum, C. Apotropaic elements in children’s garments, D. Papyri references and E. Literary references to cloth and clothing. The book finishes with a general index.

To conclude, the book of Faith Pennick Morgan is a most useful and welcome introduction into the topic of Late Antique dress. It demonstrates the impact of textiles on Late Antique archaeology and it provides evidence for the fruitful symbiosis of different research methods such as object study, experimental archaeology and investigations of written sources and depictions. Scholars already familiar with the subject of Late Antique clothing will profit from the book’s focus on mending and re-use. Consequently, the

11 R. Pfister: *Textiles de Halabiyeh (Zenobia) découverts par le Service des antiquités de la Syrie dans la Nécropole de Halabiyeh sur l’Euphrate*. Paris 1951 (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 48).

book should not be missed in any library of Late Antique archaeology and history.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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