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WISSENSCHAFTLICHKEIT IN ALOIS RIEGL'S STUDY OF LATE ANTIQUE TEXTILES FROM EGYPT

Willst du ins Unendliche schreiten
Geh nur im Endlichen nach allen Seiten.

J. W. Goethe[1]

One of the most renowned members of the Vienna School of Art History, Alois Riegl (1858–1905), is remembered among other things for having analysed lesser-known works of art (and so-called 'minor arts') in such a way as to extract from their formal features more information than anyone else had managed to do before, and in doing so, to provide the basis for the independence of the history of art from other academic disciplines. This is also true for the Late Antique textiles from Egypt in the collection of the Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry (k. k. Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie), which were the subject of Riegl's first major publication, a catalogue[2] compiled at the beginning of his career in the Museum's textile department.[3] The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how Riegl attempted to realise in his research on Late Antique textiles the demands of scientific rigour (*Wissenschaftlichkeit*) propounded by his teachers at the University of Vienna, and how, based on this research, he developed his original approach to works of art and the history of art.

To better comprehend Riegl's innovative approach and original contribution to the field of Late Antique textiles research, it must be added that from the time of the pioneering works of Joseph Karabacek (published in 1883)[4] to the publication in 1889 of Riegl's catalogue, quite a lot was written about these textiles, including catalogues of temporary exhibitions or permanent collections.[5] Most of

[1] J.W. Goethe, 'Gott, Gemüth und Welt', in idem, *Sprüche in Reimen. Sprüche in Prosa. Ethisches*, Stuttgart and Tübingen 1850, p. 4.

[2] A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde im K. K. Österreich Museum: Allgemeine Charakteristik und Katalog*, Wien 1889. Apart from the catalogue, Riegl wrote several articles wholly devoted to those textiles: 'Frühmittelalterliche Gewebe im Österr. Museum', *Mittheilungen des Österr. Museum*, 1, 1886, no. 11, pp. 213–218; *Textilkunst (II Capitel: Alterthum)*, in: *Geschichte der technischen Künste*, vol. 3, ed. B. Bucher, Stuttgart 1889, pp. 335–399; 'Spätantike Stickereien', *Kunstgewerbeblatt*, 2, 1891, pp. 127–131; 'Zur Frage des Nachlebens der altegyptischen Kunst in der späten Antike', *Eranos Vindobonensis* 1893, pp. 191–197.

[3] Riegl began as an apprentice in the textile department of the Museum in 1884; in 1885 he was promoted to the position of assistant curator, and in 1886 he became an adjunct curator – see R. Winkers, 'Foreword', in A. Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry (1901)*, transl. R. Winkers, Rome 1985, p. XIV.

[4] J. Karabacek, *Die Theodor Graf'schen Funde in Aegypten. (Der Papyrusfund von El-Faijûm, die textilen Gräberfunde)*, Wien 1883; idem, *Katalog der Theodor Grafschen Funde in Ägypten*, Wien 1883.

[5] G. Maspero, 'Rapport à l'institut Èggyptien sur les fouilles et travaux exécutés en Égypte pendant l'hiver de 1885–1886', *Bulletin de l'Institut Egyptien*, 2, 1886, no. 7, pp. 196–251; E. Gerspach, 'Les tapisseries coptes du Musée Des Gobelins', *Gazette des beaux-arts: la doyenne des revues d'art,* 36, 1887; F. Bock, *Kunstgeschichtliche Beiträge über die vielfarbigen Gobelin-Wirkereien und Purpurstickereien der spätrömischen und frühbyzantinischen Kunstepoche*, Hannover 1886; idem, *Katalog frühchristlicher Textilfunde des Jahres 1886*, Düsseldorf 1887; A.S. Cole, *A Descriptive Catalogue of a Collection of Tapestry-woven and Embroidered Egyptian Textiles in the South Kensington Museum*, London 1887; F. Hasselmann, 'Über altägyptische Textilfunde in Oberägypten', *Correspondenzblatt der deutschen Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, 19, 1888; J. Rée, 'Die altchristlichen Stoffe und Stickereien im Germanischen Nationalmuseum', *Bayerische Gewerbe-Zeitung*, 1, 1888, pp. 13–78, 97–103; C.O. Harz, 'Über ägyptische Textilstoffe des 4. bis 7. christlichen Jahrhunderts',

those studies represent the same approach, in which an historical and philological point of view prevails. To explain the archaeological context of the findings, changes in burial customs that occurred during the Late Roman Empire as well as the transformation of dress in this period were usually described in detail and laced with quotations from ancient authors. Many pages were devoted to reconciling the hitherto obscure Latin vocabulary referring to textiles and dress with suddenly available archaeological evidence, as well as to recognising the ornamental motifs and iconographic representations known from other fields of art. The history of dress and iconography were the focal points for most of the authors at that time.

Riegl himself is not interested in attire.[6] What interests him are the textiles themselves, the materials and techniques as well as the ornaments executed by means of these materials and techniques, and he does not stop at the general appreciation of their qualities, as many other scholars did.[7] Instead, he makes a great effort to understand the construction of textiles and the inner logic of the ornament and to do so, he performs a painstakingly scrupulous examination. On each page of this catalogue we can see neutral, empirical, and positivist methods he had learned from Rudolf Eitelberger, Moritz Thausing and his other teachers.[8] However, as we will see, he does not stop at this either. All the meticulous empirical analyses, using the tools borrowed from natural sciences, serve as a basis for building a universal theory of the larger problems of art history, concerning spirit rather than matter.

Let us start like Riegl, however, from the rudiments. It is worth noting that in order to correctly identify materials and techniques, Riegl consulted experts representing various branches of knowledge, including the natural sciences.[9] The fibres were analysed by Julius Wiesner (1838–1916), a professor of botany specializing in microscopic examination of the properties of plant-based materials.[10] Thanks to him Riegl avoided the mistakes made by Karabacek, who considered many of the textiles in the Viennese collection to be made of cotton, while in reality there were only two.[11] The dyes were detected by the chemists Ernst Ludwig (1842–1915), a specialist in biochemistry working at the University of Vienna, and his assistant, Wilhelm Suida (1853–1922), later the Rector of Technical High School (k. k. Technische Hochschule) in Vienna.[12] Wiesner, Ludwig, and Suida had already carried out expert analysis and conducted experiments with fibres and dyes for industrial purposes, so the relations between the natural sciences and industry were now employed for museum research and new interdisciplinary networks were created.

Having determined the raw materials, Riegl proceeded to the techniques. To accurately classify the weaving and non-weaving techniques, Riegl consulted Severin Schroeder (1857–1918), a lecturer and later director of the Vocational School for the Textile Industry (k. k. Fachschule für Textil-Industrie)[13] and Emilie Bach (1840-1890), the founder and headmistress of the Vocational School for Art Embroidery (k. k. Fachschule für Kunststickerei).[14] Such consultations were just beginning to be common practice in museums, but in art historical studies in general, in Riegl's time as well as at the present day, they were not standard procedure at all. I will quote the complaints made by British archaeologist Alan Wace much later, in 1948, to describe something that still happens today:

> Classical scholars [and we might add art historians too – A.G.] when faced with passages in ancient authors referring to technical or scientific matters such as medicine, botany, zoology, or chemistry often consult experts in those subjects to help them to arrive at a correct interpretation of the Greek or Latin text. In dealing with some technical matters, however, especially textiles, they seem to scorn such assistance and attempt to solve the

Botanisches Centralblatt, 34, 1888, pp. 185–186, 215–217; A. von Essenwein, 'Spätklassische Seidengewebe', *Mitteilungen aus dem Germanischen Nationalmuseum*, 2, 1887–1889, pp. 89–96; R. Forrer, *Versuch einer Klassifikation der antik-koptischen Textilfunde*, Strassburg 1889; idem, 'Über das Alter der antik-koptischen Textilfunde', *Antiquitäten-Zeitschrift*, 1889, sp. 339–340; idem, 'Antike Gobelins', ibidem, sp. 257–260; idem, 'Überraschungen', ibidem, sp. 263 ff.

[6] He does not omit those issues completely, yet he limits himself to basic information, mentioning that the subject of dress has been elaborated on by other scholars – A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde*, p. VIII (as in note 2).

[7] E.g., Karabacek was fascinated with the technical qualities of the textiles 'welche die Concurrenz mit unseren im Zeitalter der Jacquard-Maschine gefertigten Stoffen gleicher Art wohl siegreich zu bestehen vermöchten' (*Die Theodor Graf'schen Funde*, p. 30, as in note 4), but he did not go beyond the judgements 'by the looks', which sometimes resulted in erroneous identifications of materials and techniques.

[8] On elaborating the methods appropriate for 'scientific' art historical studies see M. Rampley, 'The Idea of a Scientific Discipline: Rudolf von Eitelberger and the Emergence of Art History in Vienna, 1847–1873', *Art History*, 34, 2011, pp. 54–79; idem, *The Vienna School of Art History*, University Park 2013, pp. 8–51.

[9] A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde*, p. XXIV (as in note 2).

[10] G. Luxbacher, 'Die technologische Mobilisierung der Botanik. Konzept und Wirkung der Technischen Rohstofflehre und Warenkunde im 19. Jahrhundert', *Technikgeschichte*, 68, 2001, pp. 307–333.

[11] A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde,* p. IX (as in note 2).

[12] E. Oberhummer, 'Ludwig, Ernst (1842–1915), Chemiker', in *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*, vol. 5, Wien 1972, pp. 347–348; R.W. Soukup, 'Suida, Wilhelm (1853–1922), Chemiker', in: ibidem, vol. 14, Wien 2015, p. 40.

[13] *Bundeslehranstalt für Textilindustrie Wien. Festschrift zur 175-Jahr-Feier 1758–1933*, Wien 1933, p. 29.

[14] R. Houze, *Emilie Bach: Education Reformer, Critic, and Art Embroiderer in the Era of Franz Joseph I*, in *Design Dialogue: Jews, Culture and Viennese Modernism*, ed. E. Shapira, Vienna 2018, pp. 111–123.

> problems before them in the light of their own knowledge, usually all too limited, of the matter in hand. One of their greatest delusions is that practically the only means of decorating a textile is by embroidery.[15]

This was also the case with Karabacek, whose catalogue is full of *Stickereien,*[16] while Riegl identified only three examples (leaving aside stitches made for practical reasons and embroidered inscriptions) in the whole collection of about seven hundred fabrics.[17] This leads Riegl to the conclusion that 'embroidery must have played a minor role in classical antiquity'.[18] Looking from the perspective of today's state of the field we know he was right.[19] What is more, this had further implications for the development of his theories, a topic which I will revisit later.

Riegl was fully aware of the difference between weaving (interlacing two sets of yarns – warp and weft – so that they cross each other, typically at right angles) and non-weaving methods of constructing and/or decorating a fabric. He discussed plain weave, rep weave, loop pile weave, brocading, tapestry, and 'flying thread'; he also mentioned satin and compound weaves. Among the non-weaving constructional techniques, knitting and sprang are examined, and finally, non-weaving methods of decorating the textiles by embroidery, printing, and resist-dyeing are described. None of the earlier publications on Late Antique textiles presented such a comprehensive review of techniques. Some of these techniques were not even recognised in Riegl's time and as such did not have accepted names. All the more credit should be given to Riegl for his diligence in trying to choose the right words, as neutral as possible, in describing the textiles and explaining how they were made.

There is no space here to review Riegl's analyses of all types of textiles and their decoration, but I would like to illustrate the way that Riegl approaches the issue via the example of the tapestry. He insists on establishing proper terminology and on calling it by the neutral term *Wirkerei*, instead of *Gobelinweberei*, which while constantly used by Karabacek and others, was an anachronism because it was related to a very concrete group of tapestries deriving from a different historic context (the renowned Manufacture des Gobelins established in the 17th c. in Paris).[20] Riegl explains the binding system used in tapestry by comparing it to the rep weave, in which the thinner, linen warp yarns are completely covered by the thicker, wool weft yarns.[21] He also comments on the limitations and potential of this technique, depending on the way that the wefts of different colours are set aside.[22] He tries to recreate the weaving process and the tools used, considering the effects that can be achieved with different kinds of shuttles.[23] It seems that Riegl was the first to identify the technique that was often used in Late Antique tapestry which today is called 'flying shuttle' or 'flying thread', and which Riegl describes as executed by the means of a 'tapestry needle' (*Wirknadel*). He compares the drawing-like effects achieved by it to embroidery but, importantly, he realizes that it was created in the weaving process, not by sewing, while many of his contemporaries perceived it as embroidery.[24] Riegl probably owed these and other insightful remarks on the technical aspects of the textiles to Severin Schroeder and Emilie Bach, but it was he who was responsible for obtaining this kind of information and placing it in the catalogue, and he knew how to use it for his further, more theoretical purposes.

When Riegl examines the examples of actual embroidery, what attracts his attention is its convexness, which he contrasts with the flatness of woven structures. He says:

> It may be concluded that the textile art of classical antiquity generally used embroidery only when it was necessary to create a certain relief on the ground to be decorated. In all other cases, where the pattern was to appear flat, tapestry weave remained in exclusive use.[25]

And in another place, he dwells on the technical solutions that allow the tapestry technique 'not to disturb the uniformity of the surface'.[26] Such remarks show that Riegl understands textiles as structures, which means something constructed rather than merely applied on something else, and at the same time, he perceives them as flat surfaces (in contrast to embroidery). It seems justified to suppose that this kind of exercise in analysing textiles both as structures and surfaces, a task that demanded tactile and optical perception combined, led him to formulate one of the basic pairs of notions in his art theory: 'tactile/haptic' (taktisch/haptisch) and 'optic' (optisch),

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[15] A J.B. Wace, 'Weaving or Embroidery?', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 52, 1948, no. 1, pp. 51–55.

[16] J. Karabacek, *Katalog der Theodor Graf'schen*, passim (as in note 4).

[17] A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde,* pp. XIII–XV (as in note 2).

[18] Ibidem, p. XIII.

[19] See e.g. K. Droβ-Krüpe, A. Paetz gen. Schieck, *'Unravelling the Tangled Threads of Ancient Embroidery: a compilation of written sources and archaeologically preserved textiles',* in *Greek and Roman Textiles and Dress. An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, eds. M.-L. Nosch, M. Harlow, Oxbow 2014, pp. 207–235.

[20] A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde*, p. X (as in note 2).

[21] Ibidem.

[22] Ibidem, p. XII.

[23] E.g.: 'man nicht einmal mit Sicherheit die Unterscheidung treffen kann, dass die einfarbigen Wollripse mittels des mechanischen Webeschiffchens, die eingewirkten mehrfarbigen Verzierungen durch eine von der menschlichen Hand unmittelbar geführte Wirknadel gearbeitet sind' – ibidem, p. X.

[24] Ibidem, p. XII.

[25] A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde*, p. XIII (as in note 2) (die Textilkunst des classischen Alterthums die Stickerei im Allgemeinen nur dann heranzog, wenn es sich darum handelte, ein gewisses Relief auf dem zu verzierenden Grunde zu erzeugen. In allen anderen Fällen, wo das Muster flach erscheinen sollte, blieb die Wirkerei in ausschliesslicher Verwendung).

[26] Ibidem, p. XIV (um die Einheitlichkeit der Fläche nicht zu stören).

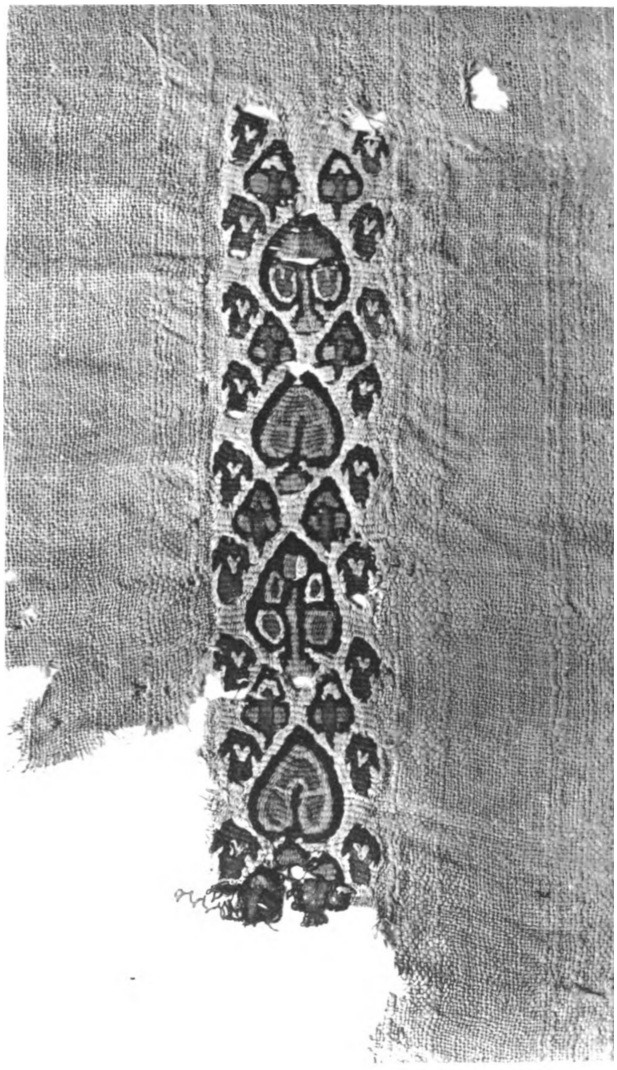

Fig. 1. Tapestry weave in polychrome wool on plain-weave ground of undyed linen. Phot. after: A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde* (as in note 2), Taf. II

categories that proved crucial in capturing stylistic changes determined by *Kunstwollen*.[27]

One can also anticipate Riegl's mature methodology in a passage of this catalogue in which he compares the properties of a regular plain weave and its rep variation in relation to the preferred materials used respectively for one and another binding:

> The majority of woollen fabrics are executed in a rep weave: it can be understood as a way to cover the cheaper linen warp completely with the woollen weft and produce a uniform woollen textile which, by its ribbed appearance alone, claimed priority over the linen textile, whose visible crossings rather distract the eye than attract it in a certain direction.[28]

In this one sentence, Riegl passes fluently from the basic technical facts to matters of perception and the psychological effect exerted by certain textures. Such remarks may have been a result of his listening to the lectures of Franz Brentano, Alexius Meinong, and Robert Zimmermann, who attempted to construct a perceptual psychology.[29] They may also echo his reading of Owen Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament*.[30] Interestingly, Riegl applies this kind of analysis not to the motifs but to the very construction of the textile, and he makes sure that what he is trying to explain can be fully apprehended by the reader with the help of the illustrations. The catalogue contains thirteen plates with photographs taken by professionals from the Imperial Royal Institute for Photography and Reproduction Processes (k. k. Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie und Reproductionsverfahren), who did their best to render 'not only the appearance […] but also the peculiarities of the weave' [Figs. 1–2].[31] Earlier publications of Late Antique textiles rarely included figures and if they did, these were usually drawings, which allowed to appreciate the design of a fabric but not its structure.

After investigating the techniques, Riegl passes on to the examination of ornaments. He analyses them in relation to materials and techniques, paying special attention to the way the latter factors condition the choice of ornaments and the way they are rendered.[32] This part is clearly influenced by Gottfried Semper's theory of ornament formulated in his monumental work *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten; oder praktische Aesthetik*.[33] This is not the place to present Semper's ideas in full and with all the nuances they deserve; suffice it to say

[27] Idem, *Die spätrömische Kunst-Industrie nach den Funden in Österreich-Ungarn*, Wien 1901, pp. 20–22 and passim.

[28] Idem, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde*, p. XIII (as in note 2) (die Wollstoffe der Mehrzahl nach die Ripsbindung aufweisen: verstand man doch aufs Beste die billigere Leinenkette vollständig mit dem Wollschuss zu decken und ein gleichmässiges Wollgewebe herzustellen, das durch sein geripptes Aussehen allein schon den Vorrang vor dem Leinengewebe behauptete, dessen zu Tage liegende Kreuzungen das Auge eher zerstreuen, als nach einer bestimmten Richtung fesseln").

[29] On the influence of those scholars on Riegl see e.g. M. Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art*, University Park 1992, pp. 5–6.

[30] O. Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, London 1856. On the elements of the psychology of perception in Jones see: J.K. Jespersen, 'Originality and Jones' "The Grammar of Ornament" of 1856', *Journal of Design History*, 21, 2008, issue 2, pp. 148–149.

[31] A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde*, p. XXV (as in note 2).

[32] E.g. 'Indem wir uns der Betrachtung dieser Textil-Ornamentik zuwenden, mögen zu Anfang diejenigen Ornamente Platz finden, die vorwiegend durch die Technik bedingt sind. Es sind dies hauptsächlich die gewebten Ornamente. Nach den zwei hierzu verwendeten Techniken lassen sie sich noch weiter eintheilen in lancirte und broschirte. Gemeinsam ist ihnen beiden die Neigung für geometrische Formen und eine weitgehende Stilisierung, sobald vegetabilische oder animalische Motive in Betracht kommen' – ibidem, p. XVII.

[33] First published in Frankfurt a. M. 1860 (vol. I) and München 1863 (vol. II).

that the general idea that Riegl adopts in his catalogue of Late Antique textiles is the conviction that art forms are determined (among other things) by material, technique and function, and that the reservoir of ornaments was crystalised around such fields of primaeval human artistic creativity as textiles, ceramics, metallurgy and woodworking, whereby geometric motifs and linear patterns originated from weaving. Some observations on the relations between textile techniques and ornaments that Riegl borrows from Semper are well-grounded, and Riegl would not give them up even when writing polemical *Stilfragen*[34] in which he was to criticise the simplified and exaggerated manner in which some of Semper's followers ('Semperians', as Riegl calls them) applied his theory.[35] There is a passage in *Stilfragen* that presents the most reasonable compromise between Semper's and Riegl's views, which can be summarised as follows: geometrical ornaments are indeed best suited for weaving because it is easier to execute them when operating two sets of yarns crossing each other at right angles, yet this does not mean those motifs were conceived in the weaving techniques, and the limitations of material factors can be overcome thanks to the creative will.[36] At the stage of writing the catalogue, however, Riegl was more inclined to highlight the dependence of form on material and technique, and yet – paradoxically – the observations made on this ground would be later used to argue for the primacy of *Kunstwollen*.[37] This is the case with the features noted by him when analysing the floral and figural motifs.

When it comes to the floral and figural motifs represented on textiles, Riegl notes, on the one hand, the persistence of the classical repertoire (vines, acanthus, erotes, bacchantes, centaurs, hunting scenes, warriors, etc.) and on the other hand the growing predilection for absolute symmetry.[38] Here again, Riegl sees the influence of the weaving techniques on art forms. In this case, these are compound weaves used predominantly for silk. These advanced binding systems, demanding a certain level of mechanisation of the loom, involve two (or more) warp sets plus two (or more) weft sets, which are manipulated to create repeated patterns based on what is called a 'rapport' (the smallest unit which is replicated continuously in the direction of the width as well as in the length of the fabric thanks to the appropriate setting of the loom's harnesses). Such patterns were so innate to the silk textiles made in compound weaves that Riegl sees their possible influence on tapestry-woven fabrics decorated with symmetrical compositions.[39] Symmetry

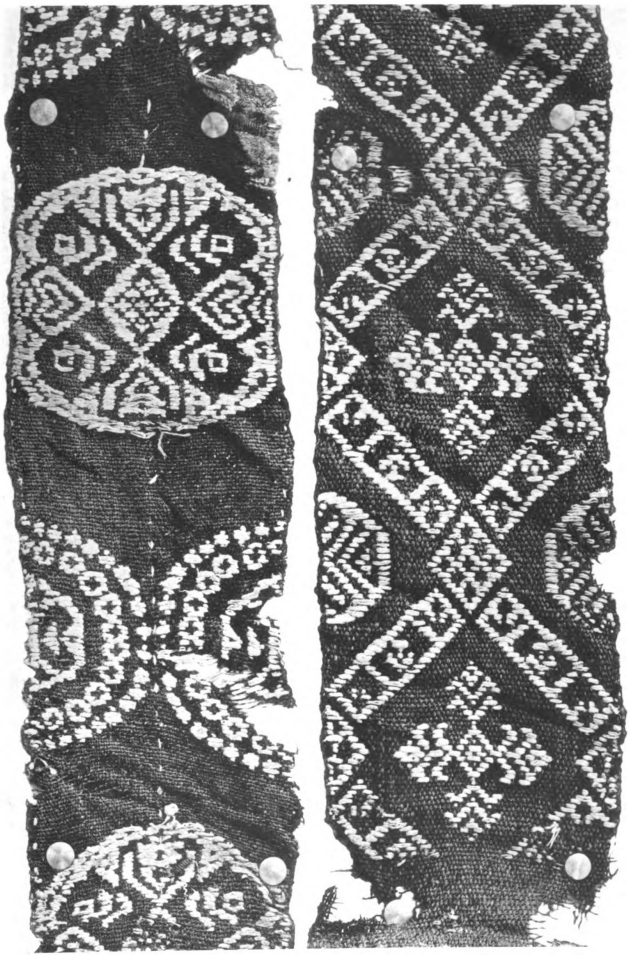

Fig. 2. Plain weave with supplementary brocading weft. Phot. after: A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde* (as in note 2), Taf. VI

and the repetitiveness of motifs in a rapport-like way, observed by analysing textiles, are the features that will be crucial for Riegl's theory of ornament and his definition of Late Antique *Kunstwollen*. A concept of 'infinite rapport' (*unendliche Rapport*), whose construction provokes viewers to extend the pattern in their minds endlessly and which goes hand in hand with the denaturalisation of motifs, already has an important place in *Stilfragen*[40] and will be developed further in *Die Spätrömische Kunst-Industrie*.[41] Especially noteworthy is that in the latter publication, Riegl uses a drawing depicting a Late Antique textile to illustrate his considerations on how the rule of 'an infinite rapport' manifests itself in architecture and architectural decoration [Fig. 3].[42]

In the end, it should be emphasised that Riegl does not call the textiles in question 'Coptic', which was quite common in his day. Today scholars prefer to avoid the designation 'Coptic' when speaking of Late Antique art in Egypt,

[34] A. Riegl, *Stilfragen. Grundlegungen Geschichte der Ornamentik*, Berlin 1893.

[35] Ibidem, p. VII.

[36] Ibidem, pp. 28–29.

[37] Idem, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde,* pp. XIII and XVIII (as in note 2).

[38] Ibidem, p. XXII.

[39] Ibidem.

[40] Idem, *Stilfragen*, pp. 308–309 (as in note 34).

[41] Idem, *Spätrömische Kunst-Industrie*, pp. 38–43, 143, 145, 152, 157, 164, 166, 192, 194, 198 (as in note 27).

[42] Ibidem, fig. 6.

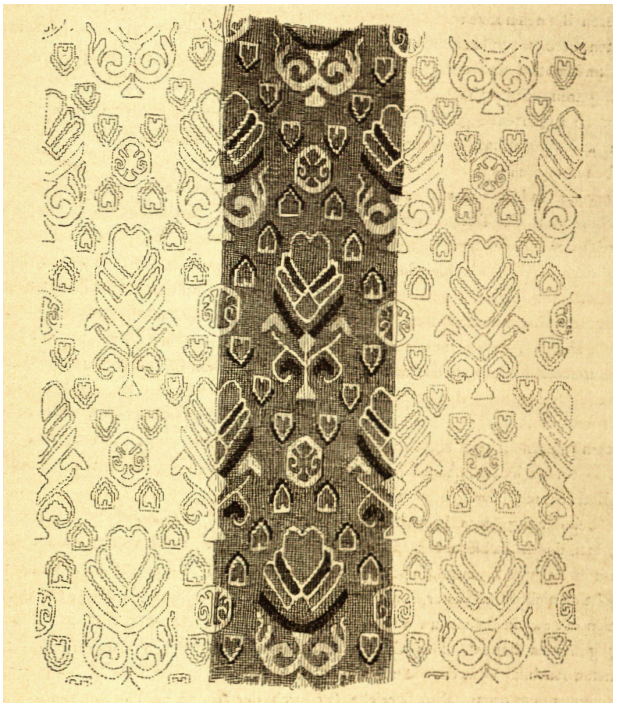

Fig. 3. A drawing illustrating the principle of 'infinite rapport'. Phot. after: A. Riegl, *Die Spätrömische Kunst-Industrie*, Vienna 1901, Fig. 6

especially textiles, since the ethnic and religious connotations of the word, referring to native Egyptian Christians, are too narrow to describe the complex and multicultural reality of this period.[43] Remarkably, Riegl does not employ arguments from the field of historical knowledge (ethnic and religious factors) but draws his conclusions mostly from formal analysis.[44] Late Antique textiles from Egypt allowed Riegl to define 'Coptic art' as Late Antique art in Egypt,[45] and, through their role in his formulation of concepts such as 'infinite rapport', they also helped him to define Late Antique art as a whole and as a consequence to emancipate it as a separate period in the history of art.[46]

To sum up, Alois Riegl's catalogue of the Late Antique textiles in the Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna is an interesting example of shaping the criteria of art historical 'science'. It was the first attempt to comprehensively survey a group of fabrics that comprised a completely new field of studies. Standards for researching textiles were only beginning to emerge and Riegl (with his interdisciplinary research team) was undoubtedly at the forefront. Additionally, this catalogue may be seen as a footprint of the 'young' Riegl taking the first steps on the way that led from empirical scrutiny of the material aspects of concrete artifacts to a more speculative approach and a universal art-historical system that went beyond the limits of strict sensory verification.

[43] L. Török, *Transfigurations of Hellenism: Aspects of Late Antique Art in Egypt*, Leiden 2005, esp. pp. XXV–XXVII. On the inadequacy of the word 'Coptic' in relation to textiles see e.g.: J. Trilling, *Roman Heritage: Textiles from Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean 300 to 600 A.D.*, Washington 1982, p. 11.

[44] Interestingly, based on formal analysis alone, Riegl was able to draw pertinent conclusions on socio-economic circumstances under which the fabrics were created and reject the idea of them being examples of the 'house industry' – A. Riegl, *Die Ägyptischen Textilfunde*, p. IX (as in note 2).

[45] A. Riegl, 'Koptische Kunst', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 2, 1893, pp. 112–121.

[46] On Riegl as a 'father' of Late Antique art studies see e.g. J. Elsner, 'Alois Riegl: Art History and the Beginning of Late Antique Studies as a Discipline', in *The New Late Antiquity: A Gallery of Intellectual Portraits*, eds. C. Ando, M. Formisano, Heidelberg 2021, pp. 167–182.

Summary

Anna Głowa
WISSENSCHAFTLICHKEIT IN ALOIS RIEGL'S STUDY OF LATE ANTIQUE TEXTILES FROM EGYPT

This paper discusses how Alois Riegl attempted to apply the postulates of the scientific approach formulated by his teachers at the University of Vienna in his studies of a very specific type of artefacts, i.e. Late Antique textiles from Egypt. In addition, I would like to demonstrate what role the analyses of these textiles played in formulating Riegl's theories of ornament, style, *Kunstwollen*, perception, and his vision of Late Antique art in general.