Dancers

Coptic Textile Fragment (c. 13th Century)

According to the Haifa Museum, Coptic textiles are woven and decorated textiles that were produced approximately from the 4th to the 13th centuries AD, and were made by Coptic Christians, who were gifted artisans and weavers. An unusually large number of these textiles has survived, mostly in Egypt, especially in the dry desert areas, owing to the arid Egyptian climate as well as the Coptic tradition of burying them with their dead.

Coptic textiles were mostly made of linen or wool, and traditionally done in colors of blue, yellow, red, green, purple, black, and brown, with dyes from natural resources. Most of these textiles that have survived and are in the collections of museums around the world are fragments of woven and embroidered garments, more specifically tunics, in which Coptic Christians dressed their dead. While early on these textiles feature Egyptian and even classical motifs, later pieces evidence Byzantine and Islamic influences. Coptic textiles also greatly influenced the European textile industry, as persecuted Coptic Christians migrated to various countries in Europe during the Middle Ages.