

## 28th CIETA Congress - Krefeld 2019

### Summaries of papers

*Mary W. Ballard, Marta Doroszcyk and Miriam Murphy*

#### **Identification of Inorganic Colorants and Mordants in the Patricia Smith Melton Quilts Collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum**

A collection donated to the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 1998 by Patricia Smith Melton consists of 45 quilts and fabrics originating from the period between 1790 and 1850. These objects are made of printed cotton fabrics, mainly English and French chintzes and calicoes. All the fabricated quilts are said to have been made in America. Because the fabrics pre-date the advent of synthetic dyes, most of the dyeings on the objects in the collection contain heavy metals originating from mineral dyes, pigments, auxiliaries, or mordants, including iron. Using a portable X-ray Fluorescent spectrometer, several inorganic mineral dyes were found and portable visible spectrophotometer distinguished Prussian blue and indigo dyeings. With these two pieces of non-destructive analytical equipment and a dated swatch book, like Crookes's *A Practical Handbook on Dyeing and Calico Printing*, curators and conservators gain pertinent information on the nature of their collections.

*Pilar Benito Garcia*

#### **Murs de soie et de couleurs. Les tentures des Maisons de Campagne de Charles IV et Marie Louise de Parme**

La finalisation du catalogue des tissus et des broderies des Maisons de Campagne des rois Charles IV d'Espagne et de son épouse Marie-Louise de Parme utilisés pour les sites royaux d'El Escorial et du Pardo, a offert une meilleure connaissance des goûts des monarques pour les couleurs à la mode dans le dernier quart du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. La sélection d'échantillons de toutes les tentures qui ornaient ces bâtiments a permis de connaître exactement la qualité et la typologie des matériaux de ces soieries. Les colorants et les mordants utilisés ont confirmé l'origine française et espagnole des différentes tentures qui habillaient ces petits palais modernes.

*Sylvain Besson*

#### **Hormis les échantillons, que reste-t-il du patrimoine de la teinture dans les collections du Musée d'Art et d'Industrie?**

Le musée d'Art et d'Industrie de Saint-Etienne conserve une collection textile de référence sur la rubanerie stéphanoise ainsi que de nombreux éléments relatifs au patrimoine rubanier dans les domaines technique, artistique ou ethnologique. Je propose de dresser un bref état des lieux des traces patrimoniales laissées par l'industrie de la teinture dans les collections en excluant du champ de la présentation les échantillons textiles.

La communication s'attachera à dresser un bref historique de la teinture à Saint-Etienne et du patrimoine que le musée conserve. Avec les carnets de nuances des teinturiers, les photographies d'ouvriers ou les cours de teinture, il s'agira plus particulièrement de présenter le contenu du laboratoire de teinture Hugo Soie collecté par le musée en 1996 comprenant le matériel et les produits utilisés.

*Monica Bethé*

### **Revealed, Concealed and Revived: The Story of Safflower Dyes in Japan**

In Japan safflower (benibana) dye held a special place in the cultural imagination from its introduction in ancient times through to the present, yet the imagery it inspired, its production process, aesthetic, and socio-economic ramifications changed over time. In poetry and proverbs, safflower served as a metaphor for ambiguity, hidden desire, erotic evanescence, the blush of spring, the vigour of youth, social status, secretive fashion, the envy of the rich, and a cure for all ailments. The presentation will trace the ups and downs of safflower dye as a textile colorant, pigment, cosmetic and medicine through key textiles from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century in the context of contemporary literary references and artistic representations. Particular focus will be on how safflower production and dye techniques survived the challenges of the introduction of cochineal and synthetic dyes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Dominique Cardon, Moïra Dato et Pascale Gorguet Ballesteros*

### **La mode de la couleur et des fils métalliques dans l'habillement entre 1740 et 1750 – enseignements d'un étude pluridisciplinaire**

À la faveur d'une acquisition par le Palais Galliera de deux gilets en pièces frappés de plombs de la douane de Lyon, nous réunissons un corpus de vêtements des années 1740-1750 dont le décor naturaliste se caractérise par l'usage de couleurs intenses et de fils métalliques. La présence de nombreux gilets bleu turquoise nous conduit à nous interroger sur la composition de ce bleu et sa dénomination. Par ailleurs à la faveur du succès commercial de ces gilets ou « vestes d'or et d'argent » et de leur exportation en Italie, nous nous interrogerons sur la possibilité d'une classification des couleurs des textiles exportés vers ce pays et tenterons de comprendre leur succès dans un contexte de commerce international. Nous nous appuyons pour cela sur le corpus de vêtements du Palais Galliera, sur les recherches colorimétriques de Dominique Cardon ainsi que sur celles de Moïra Dato relatives à l'exportation des soieries lyonnaises en Italie<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Ce travail a bénéficié de l'aide du Groupe de recherche sur les colorants constitué par l'INHA.

*Sjoukje Colenbrander*

### **'Made in China'. Imports of Chinese silk(s) and how it began**

It was not only spices that inspired Dutch merchants to follow the Portuguese in their voyages to Asia. From the first voyage onward, leaving Amsterdam in 1595, it was clear that China and Japan were important destinations. But how did they know firstly how to get there, and secondly what to expect regarding goods to buy or to sell?

In preparation of the first voyage by the *Compagnie van Verre* (the Company of Far Lands), organized by a group of nine Amsterdam merchants, information was gathered by sending one of them to Lisbon to spy, by studying travel books about Asia and by interviewing Dirk Gerritsz Pomp, also known as Dirk China, who had spent many years in Asia and who had visited China.

The paper is meant to explore what knowledge on China and Chinese products, especially silk and silk fabrics, was available in the years 1594-1602.

*Matthijs de Keijzer, Maarten R. van Bommel*

### **A Colourful Journey through the World of Synthetic Dyes**

Around 1850 textiles were mainly dyed with natural dyes. Their use changed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to the introduction of synthetic organic colourants. Before that time semi-synthetics, like Prussian blue, indigo carmine, picric acid, phtalocyanine and murexide, were already used for textile dyeing.

This presentation will concentrate on the most important synthetic organic dye classes and dyes discovered, such as the azo-dyes (ABC dyes, Orangés and Ponceaus), tri-aryl methanes, hydroxy-phthaleins, and synthetic alizarin and indigo. Their history is studied using primary historical sources, included the international patent literature. Further the chemical constitution and properties, like colour fading and bleeding, will be discussed.

In addition, the identification of these dyes on different sorts of textile objects, like samplers, folding screens, tapestries, dresses, umbrellas, parasols, bonnets, billiard cloths, curtains and hangings in interiors of houses and trains, will be presented including the historical context of the objects.

*Zvezdana Dode*

### **Colour in the Costume of the Nomads of the Mongolian Empire: Unison and Dissonance of Sources**

State ceremonies replicated the structure of Mongol society. All participants of kurultais and general imperial holidays were to be dressed in costume, prescribed by the ritual. The colour of clothes defined for each event was a distinctive feature of the Mongolian ceremonial costume. Travellers who at various times visited the headquarters of the Mongol khans described this peculiarity of Mongolian court etiquette. In miniatures, representatives of the Mongolian elite in the scenes of ceremonial celebrations of holidays and funeral processions are also depicted in clothes of different colours. In textile finds from funerary monuments, in some cases dyes are preserved, on the basis of which it is possible to get an idea of the colours of the funeral clothes of medieval nomads.

The colour of clothing associated with the meaning of the ritual must have been constant, however, the data of archaeological, written and graphic sources are not always in accordance, as they tend to convey partial information through different media. The solution to the question of the colour symbolism of the Mongol imperial costume depends on the correct synthesis of the available information and its adequate interpretation.

*Maria João Ferreira, Ana Claro*

### **The Impact of Dye Analysis in Chinese Textiles Production History**

Previous work has documented the presence of more than 200 textiles in Portuguese collections, principally embroideries. These objects are currently grouped under the heading "Sino-Portuguese", but it has become clear that not all of them were necessarily produced in China. Some objects appear to have been made by migrant Chinese craftsmen working elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, such as the west coast of India, while others seem to be Portuguese copies of Chinese objects. These observations raise important questions about cultural contacts and influences, which cannot be resolved exclusively on the basis of historical or art historical analysis, and the scientific analysis of colours provides a complementary tool.

In this presentation we will discuss how dye analysis can contribute to current art historical debates concerning questions of provenance, chronology, and trade, in order to understand the nature of cross-cultural influences in textiles production.

*Yuko Fukatsu*

### **Prussian Blue Applied in the Japanese Costume from Late Edo Period Japan (1800-1867)**

The campaign coat called 'jinbaori' is a unique costume for samurai warriors in Japan. In order to make a high quality jinbaori, imported textiles such as European woollen fabrics and printed fabrics, and Chinese brocades and damasks were used. In this paper, imported textiles used for selected Jinbaori from Edo Period (1603-1867) will be technically examined with the result of dye analysis (HPLC), which is a key to examine the history of textile importation between Japan and Holland.

*Anne Hedeager Krag*

### **Colour Analyses on Byzantine and Oriental Silks from Denmark**

Dyestuff analyses were recently requested on silks from a Royal reliquary shrine of King Canute the Saint, murdered in 1086 and canonized in 1100, today in the Cathedral of Odense. One of the silks is a yellow pillow with a motif of blue birds and crosses, and the pattern has been compared to a group of Sassanid Persian silks, that go back to the 700s-900s. Dyestuff analyses, in particular a red dyestuff, sappanwood/brazilwood (*Caesalpinia sappan*), and a yellow dye, which has been determined to be Persian Berries (*Ramnus* family) are interesting, as both the colours are known from the Silk Road. Another relic capsule with silk is from Sigersted Church near Ringsted. Colour analyses show that the Sigersted silk contained red colour, a combination of sappanwood/brazilwood and madder. This colour has also been identified on the Hungarian Coronation Mantle, called the Mantle of King Stephen, which was made of silk samite.

*Concha Herrero Carretero*

### **L'énigmatique tapisserie El Bosco de la collection royale espagnole. Étonnantes polychromies infernales et paradisiaques**

Patrimoine National conserve un groupe de superbes tapisseries liées aux fantastiques créations de Jheronimus van Aken ou Jérôme Bosch (1450-1516). Il s'agit de la tenture connue sous le nom de « Disparates » de Bosch ou Caprices de Brueghel, les seuls exemplaires qui subsistent aujourd'hui après la disparition de la série princesps de François Ier pendant la Révolution française.

Bosch, créateur de formes fantastiques et d'êtres infernaux, fut bientôt mis en évidence par différents humanistes. Sa tapisserie est l'une des tentures les plus célèbres, unique dans sa conception inspirée du travail de l'artiste, et la seule conservée aujourd'hui. Récemment, sa provenance de la collection du cardinal Granvelle (1517-1586) a été confirmée ainsi que le rôle qu'elle joua dans le cérémonial des Habsbourg.

La communication présente une première analyse chromatographique des trames, reflétant la variété des gammes et des colorants utilisés pour reconstituer d'étonnantes polychromies infernales et paradisiaques.

*Regina Hofmann-de Keijzer, Maarten R. van Bommel and Ineke Joosten*

### **Dyed Archaeological Textiles – Analyses and Interpretation**

The team studied dyeing techniques on archaeological finds, like woollen fragments from the Bronze and Iron Age salt mines of Hallstatt in Upper Austria, textiles from Late Antique Egypt and silk fabrics of the T'ang Dynasty from Famen temple near Xi'an in China.

Interdisciplinary research and various analytical methods were performed to gain knowledge on ancient dyeing processes. Ultra-high-performance liquid chromatography combined with photodiode array detection (UHPLC- PDA) was used for dye analyses. Optical microscopy and scanning electron microscopy with energy-dispersive X-ray analysis (SEM-EDX) were applied for investigating the fibres.

The presentation will discuss historical and botanical sources which help to conclude the dyeing material from the identified dyes. Facts that point to the use of a mordant and characteristic features indicating dyeing of fleece, yarn or fabric will be summarized. Finally, a procedure for estimating fibre contamination and degradation will be explained.

*Helena Loermans*

### **A Hidden Layer in Historic Paintings Comes to Life in a Handwoven Reconstruction**

When we look at a painting in a museum, our focus is most often on the image, few will consider the woven canvas that lies beneath the paint.

Lab O in Odemira Portugal, is a laboratory for the study and reconstruction of handwoven canvases of old master paintings. The presentation will guide the audience through a journey of handwoven reconstructions of the textile as seen by El Greco before starting to paint *The Burial of the Count of Orgaz*; what Titian had in front of him as he painted *The Vendramin Family*, and the canvas Diego Velázquez saw before he began painting *The Supper at Emmaus*.

The reconstructions are based on a publication in a CIETA Bulletin<sup>1</sup>, an x-radiographic image in a technical bulletin of The National Gallery, London<sup>2</sup> and an article in The Metropolitan Museum Journal<sup>3</sup>. Handwoven reconstructions will be shown.

<sup>1</sup>Mantilla de los Rios, Analisis del tejido de dos muestras procedentes de la tela y el forro del cuadro del greco "Entierro del Conde de Orgaz", conservado en la Iglesia de Santo Tome de Toledo. Analysis of the texture of two samples from the canvas and lining canvas of El Greco's picture "Burial of the Count of Orgaz", preserved in the Church of Santo Tome in Toledo, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>National Gallery Technical Bulletin 36, cat.-nos. 1-4, pp. 3, 7.

<sup>3</sup>Dating Velazquez's 'The Supper at Emmaus, in: The Metropolitan Museum Journal, 40, 2005.

*Nazanin Hedayat Munroe*

### **Haft-Rangī: Colour symbolism in Nizami's Haft Paykar (Seven Beauties) as Inspiration for Safavid Textiles**

The poetry of Nizamī Ganjavī (d. 1209) inspired a prolific response in the visual arts of the Early Modern period in Iran. Colour symbolism in textiles, particularly luxury wovens used for apparel, reflect the familiarity of artists and patrons with Nizamī's mystical colour interpretation in his eloquent treatise, Haft Paykar, a frame story in his quintet, the Khamsa. In Haft Paykar, Nizamī narrates the story of a Sasanian king who visits seven princesses in their respective pavilions identified by colour, material, and the astrological significance of the seven days of the week. As the princesses relate their own tales, the king learns the significance of each colour. The Khamsa was reproduced in several illustrated manuscripts during the Safavid period (1501-1722) and was well known among royal and elite patrons. This study explores the connection between Nizamī's colour symbolism, luxury textile production, and the underlying relationship of artists and patrons to his Şufī treatise.

*Katalin Nagy*

### **Change and Development in Using Colours in Some Late Pre-Columbian Cultures**

Investigation on pre-Columbian textiles of the South American continent is always a challenge. In the case of archaeological Peruvian textiles, the lack of written sources requires different methods of examination. We can assume the existence of oral history over thousands of years, but what these cultures really possessed was the iconography with a vast number of consecutive and subsequent pictures.

For this presentation I focus on the Ica culture, one of the late cultures before the Incas. The world of colours and the way these very decorative colors were played with, had a very important role in Ica design. The investigation is based on objects of two Peruvian collections of the Ethnological Museum Berlin, Germany. The study included not only textiles but also ceramic and wooden objects. The aim of this paper is to present some object-groups with particular emphasis on the analysis of their design and colour.

*Frances Pritchard*

### **The Presence of Armenian Cochineal (*Porphyrophora hamelii*, Brandt) on a Tunic Found in Egypt Dating to the 8th or 9th Century AD**

Armenian cochineal is not often detected on textiles dating to the early Islamic period that are recovered from sites in Egypt. However, the dyestuff was identified on an integral, tapestry-woven hemband of a wool tunic, which is patterned with an imitation silk design. In addition, the tunic clavi have an unusual design of snakes and millipedes within an animal scroll border. These features suggest that the tunic was woven in a specialist workshop in a different region of the Near East.

The hemband will be contrasted with more common separately woven examples imitating silk designs where Indian lac (*Kerria lacca*, Kerr) was used for the dark pink colouring. This dye-stuff was a traded commodity and, as it has already been demonstrated, was widely used in Egypt after the Arab conquest of AD 642.

*Maria-Anne Privat*

### **Vocabulaire des couleurs des livrées d'équipage, première approche à travers les collections du musée national de la Voiture, château de Compiègne (XVII<sup>e</sup> - XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)**

« Par l'éclat et la délicatesse des peintures, le luxe des livrées, la beauté des chevaux, la richesse des harnais, les équipages se disputaient les regards avec les élégantes toilettes des jolies femmes qu'ils portaient » lit-on dans le *Journal des Dames et des Modes* du 15 avril 1838.<sup>1</sup> Les livrées d'équipage ont habillé la domesticité attachée à une maison ou propre à un régime politique et participent au prestige de l'attelage et à la monstration sociale qui l'accompagne.

Si les premières livrées d'équipage apparaissent au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>2</sup>, les couleurs de ses différentes parties ne sont réglementées qu'à partir du règne de Louis XIV. Les couleurs, mais aussi les galons, les boutons, la forme des éléments les composant renseignent sur la hiérarchie, les fonctions et le niveau de luxe apporté à l'équipage.

Quels furent donc le vocabulaire et le langage des couleurs des livrées d'équipage au cours de la période moderne et du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle français, leur importance dans l'affirmation de la puissance à laquelle ces domestiques étaient attachés et les règles les régissant ?

<sup>1</sup> *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, n° 21, 15 avril 1838

<sup>2</sup> D'après Faveront de Kerbrech, *L'Art de conduire et d'atteler autrefois-aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1903, p.132

*Margareta Ridderstedt*

### **The Significance of Colours in Liturgical Vestments in the Church of Sweden around 1900**

After the Reformation the Lutheran church in Sweden kept the use of vestments. As the old textiles were worn out, the old tradition of liturgical colours was forgotten. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries one mostly alternated between red or black vestments made of velvet with golden or silver ornaments.

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Agnes Branting among others studied in Germany and started to produce new textiles for the church. Some Swedish clergymen were inspired by movements in the Anglican church and began to order from her firm. The revival of liturgical colours was an important part in this.

At first, most material was imported from abroad. My documentation contains silks from Lyon, Spitalfields, and Krefeld. More nuanced colours were used according to the taste of the period and some textiles were produced in Sweden. White textiles were always made in silk.

*Marie-Anne Sarda*

### **Etudier la transition entre les teintures naturelles et les colorants de synthèse : Aperçus sur le programme de recherche de l'INHA**

Les recherches françaises sur le textile et la mode des XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles ont depuis 30 ans accompagné l'organisation d'expositions. Si des expositions ont abordé les couleurs, très peu ont investi le champ des teintures. Réunissant chercheurs universitaires et personnels scientifiques des musées, l'INHA a lancé en 2017 un programme de recherche consacré aux colorants et à leur mutation durant la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, afin de lier les données scientifiques et industrielles à des pièces textiles des collections publiques.

Lors de la conférence, nous donnerons un aperçu sur différents aspects en cours et présenterons nos premiers résultats.

*Katja Schmitz-von Ledebur*

### **eyn albe von wissem samitte mit edelen steynen – a Garment and its Change in Meaning**

The white alba preserved in the treasury in Vienna belongs to the coronation robes of the kings and emperors of the Holy Roman Empire. The precious trimmings of this robe in red and violet date back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

They were dyed with different dyestuffs. The paper will give an overview of the dyes used for colouring these trimmings. In particular the importance of the colour in the context of the representative utilization of this garment will be examined.

Furthermore there is evidence that the original fabric of this garment was red. It must have been replaced by a white fabric before 1246. This raises the question of the reason for this procedure and the thus resulting modified meaning of the robe in the context in which it was used. The paper will consider both issues.

*Sophia Tsourinaki*

### **A Diachronic Insight on Dyeing and Weaving Technology in Hellenistic Helike (Hellas)**

Excavations in ancient Helike have brought to light a Hellenistic κναφεῖον/βαφεῖον, which consists of five carefully made cisterns connected by channels, heating places, clay vats and built-in basins. Associated finds, such as broken roof tiles preserving traces of blue and green dyeing material, plus a significant quantity of stored lime and ashes may indicate that the building was suitable for a number of textile activities. Especially for dyeing wool with immersion by the fermentation method, lime and ashes are needed, either as a detergent or as a fixative. These two materials were found in significant quantities in Helike and the process can be recognized on the analogy of ethnographic and modern dye works in Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. We suggest that the Helike establishment may have been associated with: a) the preparation and finishing activities of textiles (washing, scouring and fulling); b) the dyeing of wool with boiling and the fermentation method. Moreover, a significant number of textile tools, such as needles, pins and clay loom-weights attest that weaving-works were combined with dye-works. The diversity in shapes, types, sizes and weights are suggestive that a variety of different cloths may have been woven in the establishment, most likely by different weavers. The absence of spindle-whorls in the complex may indicate that the acquisition of fibres such as wool or linen may have taken place elsewhere; fibres would then have been spun by women in either domesticated contexts spinning for surplus income or in a central workshop. In conclusion, the Hellenistic Period, a time of experimentation in dyeing methods, the contemporary coastal workshops of Korinthos, Isthmia and Khostia in the Corinthian Gulf, plus their possible socio-economic ties, will be discussed.

*Olga Vassilieva-Codognot*

### **La symbolique chromatique des livrées princières dans la France de la fin du Moyen Âge**

À la fin du Moyen Âge, les progrès des techniques de teinture et de tissage permettent le développement de la robe de livrée comme marqueur de statut et/ou de fonction au sein des cours princières. Cette même époque voit également la naissance du système para-héraldique de la devise. D'un point de vue abstrait, il s'agit d'un système sémiotique hétérogène comprenant figure, mot, lettres et couleurs dont le principal support est le textile. D'une manière plus concrète, la figure, le mot et les lettres sont souvent tissés ou brodés, tandis que les couleurs sont celles des livrées et des tentures de la cour du prince ainsi emblématisés. Basée sur un corpus d'une centaine d'items, notre étude analyse les couleurs des livrées princières dans la France de la fin du Moyen Âge (plus précisément : entre 1360 et 1520). Cette enquête vise à déterminer les fréquences des différentes couleurs de livrées, les relations que ces couleurs de livrées entretiennent avec les couleurs héraldiques, et la signification des choix chromatiques de tel ou tel prince.

*Magdalena Wozniak*

### **Identification of Dyes in Textiles from Late Antique and Medieval Sudan (4<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c. CE)**

The environmental conditions of the Sudan allow a good conservation of organic material. Numerous textiles, with well-preserved colours, were discovered during excavations. Blue and red colours are the most frequent ones. I will present the results of dye analysis conducted on three groups of textiles from different sites and periods and discuss their importance for our knowledge of medieval Sudan's textile craft.



*Bruno Ythier*

### **La couleur dans la tapisserie d'Aubusson au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle – Entre révolutions et Rénovation**

L'histoire de la tapisserie au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (notamment les mutations techniques) est occultée par l'impressionnante bibliographie liée à Jean Lurçat, souvent romancée.

A partir d'œuvres de 1880 à 1910, nous verrons comment la couleur est utilisée par milliers de nuances dans la « peinture tissée ».

La Rénovation de la tapisserie française au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle est menée par l'Ecole Nationale d'Art Décoratif d'Aubusson sous la direction de l'artiste Antoine-Marius Martin. Les échantillons de cette école montrent les couleurs employées passer de plusieurs centaines à quelques dizaines seulement. Jean Lurçat apprend à Aubusson cette nouvelle méthode dès 1937.

Ses premières tapisseries permettent de repenser la couleur avec les teinturiers.

Dès 1947, les recherches de l'enseignant aubussonnais Pierre Baudouin, pour de nouvelles « tapisseries d'artiste », engendrent une autre relation à la couleur : lors du tissage des tapisseries de Le Corbusier, on appelle des ingénieurs chimistes de CIBA afin d'apporter une nouvelle stratégie : teindre la laine selon la palette de l'artiste.

*Elsa Yvanez*

### **Blue Threads: The Indigo Textiles of Ancient Sudan (c. 100-350 CE)**

Seemingly far from the contemporary textile traditions of the Mediterranean basin and the Egyptian Nile valley, the Meroitic populations living in Nubia and Central Sudan during the first four centuries of the Common Era developed a unique textile style. Immediately recognizable, the textiles are most famous for their extensive use of cotton fibre and blue decorations in tapestry and embroidery, displaying a unique blend of patterns from pharaonic, Kushite and Hellenistic heritage.

This presentation will be based on new dye analyses performed on well preserved funerary textiles from Karanog using high performance liquid chromatography. It will then explore the symbolism of the colour blue, which was particularly favoured by the administrative and religious elite of the Meroitic society for their official costumes and therefore assumed an important role in sartorial display.