

Case Study 3

Robert Forrer's notebook and the National Museum of Denmark collection

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PUZZLES IN A MUSEUM

Egyptian Fabrics from the 1st Millennium AD
at the National Museum of Denmark
(Online Exhibition)



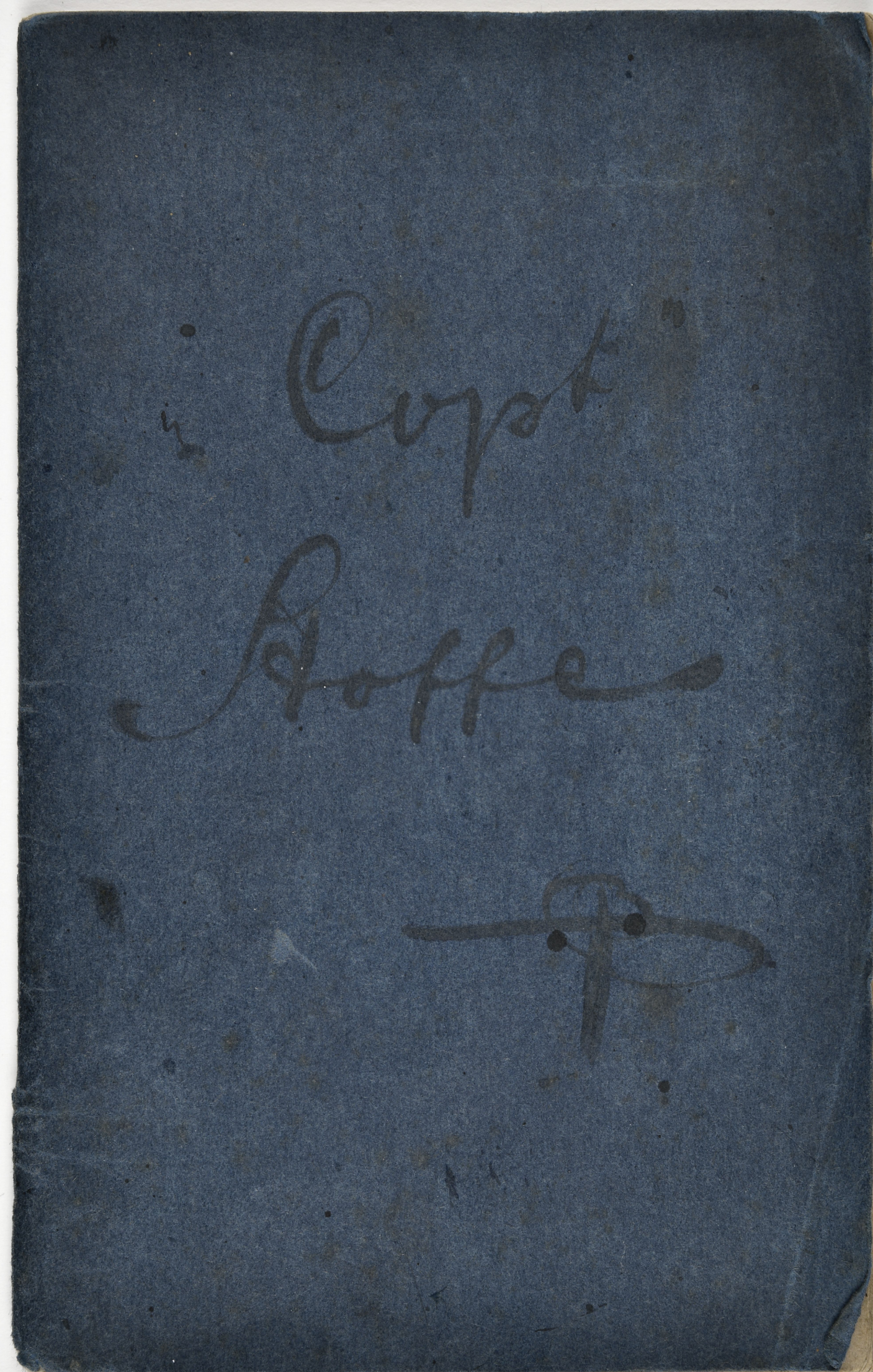
Case study 3 Robert Forrer's notebook and the National Museum of Denmark collection

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A priceless source of information on Forrer's activities as a collector and dealer of "Coptic" textiles is his notebook, preserved in the archives of the Archaeological Museum in Strasbourg. It is entitled *Verkaufs und Einkaufs und Notizbuch über Koptische Stoffe - Geschäft Achmim* and contains data on the transactions made by Forrer between 1889 and 1903.

Forrer divided the textiles he acquired and sold into several lots. In the *Einkäufe* part of the notebook, there are eight lots. The information noted by Forrer includes the dates of acquisition, sometimes the name of the dealer from whom the textiles were bought, in some cases also the kind of textile, and the price paid for them. The first lot was bought by Forrer in 1889 from "Kallenberg": Carl Kallenberg (1825-1900), antiquities collector and dealer from Lindau; and "Tano": Marius Panayiotis Tano (?-1906), owner of a prosperous antiquities shop in Cairo. The second lot derived entirely from Tano and was bought in 1890. There is no information on the source of

1. Cover of Robert Forrer's notebook containing information on his dealings in Egyptian textiles. Archives of the Archaeological Museum of Strasbourg. Photo: M. Bertola © Musées de la ville de Strasbourg



acquisition of the third lot in April 1891, nor on most of the textiles from the fourth lot, bought in May the same year. Only some of the textiles in this lot are annotated as coming from Tano and "Merkens": Franz Merkens (1823-1905), an antiquarian from Cologne. The fifth (December 1891) and sixth (March 1892) lots lack information on the dealer. The seventh lot (during 1892) came mostly from Tano and in several cases from "Baron": Stanislas Baron (?-1910), an art dealer based in Paris. Finally, the eighth lot was acquired entirely from Tano in 1893.

The *Verkäufe* part of the notebook is organised according to the same eight lots, but besides them, there are two additional ones - the ninth and the tenth lot. The dates of sales usually correspond to the dates of acquisitions, so it seems that Forrer sold on the textiles he had bought the very same year or the following one. However, one cannot be sure if the given (e.g. second) lot in the sales list contained precisely the same pieces as the corresponding lot in the purchases list. It is not clear where the ninth and tenth lots came from, as they are not included in the purchases list. The tenth lot, recorded under a remark "Verkäufe bis zu meiner Aegyptenreise" summing up all the previous sales, might have contained the textiles attained by Forrer not by purchase but in the course of excavations conducted personally by him in Akhmim in 1894, although this cannot be stated with absolute certainty. On Forrer's excavations see his letters (Forrer 1895) as well as the work of Bernadette Schnitzler (Schnitzler 1999, p. 51-53).

In addition to the date of transaction and the sum of the money earned, the list of the sales contains the name of the buyer, the number of textiles sold,

and sometimes an indication of the type of the textiles ("Seide", "Wolle", or abbreviations "S", "W"). Among the purchasers, there are the names of individuals and institutions, written in abbreviations (e.g. "Mus. Breslau", "Gew. Mus. Danzig", "Kgw. Mus. Berlin") and shortcuts (e.g. "Breslau", "Krakow").

Sales to Copenhagen are recorded three times, all of them belonging to the second lot and bearing the same date: January 1891. The first Copenhagen "entry" reads "K. Mus. Kopenhagen I" with the number of textiles sold by Forrer, 34, and the sum earned by him, 200 marks; in the "Kopenhagen II" transaction there are ten textiles sold for 100 marks; in the "Kopenhagen III", four textiles for 25 marks. Altogether Forrer records 48 textiles sold to the Copenhagen Museum for 325 marks.

It is worth mentioning that among the institutions that acquired the textiles from the same lot, there are museums in Oslo, Mainz, Nürnberg, Stuttgart,

2. Page no 1 of Forrer's notebook with information on the acquisition of fabrics recorded as belonging to Lot II, from "Tano" (Marius Panayiotis Tano, ?-1906). Archives of the Archaeological Museum of Strasbourg.
Photo: M. Bertola © Musées de la ville de Strasbourg

3. Page no 10 of Forrer's notebook with information on three shipments of fabric to the Copenhagen museum. Archives of the Archaeological Museum of Strasbourg.
Photo: M. Bertola © Musées de la ville de Strasbourg

Einkäufe

	M.	M.	Mk.
<u>Erstes Lot</u>			
von Kallenberg I	100.		
" " II	100.		
" " III	20.	220.	
von Tano (Heltan)			
I	120.		
II	320.		
III	50.		
Spesen	23.	523.	
von Tano nachher:			
4 Rob. etc.	270.	270.	1013.
1 Tsch.			
<u>Zweites Lot</u>			
Tano:			
I Seiden f. 250 I	200.		
II (Hollen) f. 250 II	600.		
Hollportrait etc. III	480.		
Hola etc. IV	800.	2800.	2100.
Spesen - 20			
Total			3113.

— Neu: (Lot)	Dat.	Zahl	Verk.	Total-Verk.
over		696.	1 Lot	3764.
München. S. H.	1891. beide	2	80.	
Stuttgart	1891.	4	80.	
K. Mus. Kopenhagen	1.91.	34	200.	
Coblenz. I	5.91.	34	200.	
Kopenhagen II	7.91.	10.	100.	
" " III	7.91.	4	25.	
Breslau.	8.91.	3.	33.	
Mus. Mainz	14.91.	20.	160.	
Christiana	8.91.	20.	226.	
Frankfurt.	"	11	108.	
Mainz.	15.91.	10.	50.	
S. Müller.	3.	10	50.	
" " "	"	25	160.	
S. Soose.	16.91.	9	120.	
over		897.	1592.	5764.

Frankfurt and Wrocław (then Breslau). It seems no coincidence that numerous parallels for Copenhagen pieces can be found in those collections, suggesting that Forrer either got the duplicates from his suppliers or “created” the duplicates himself by cutting the textiles. At this stage of research it is impossible to state if the parallel fabrics belonged to the same garment/furnishing textile or to another piece from the same workshop, although in some cases profound technical analysis can confirm this. (See the section **“Duplicated fabrics” and multiple production of textiles** in the **Introduction** as well as **Case studies 4 and 5**).

Apart from museums, individuals are also recorded in the notebook as buyers of the textiles from this lot. They are: August Schricker (1838-1912), director of the Städtisches Kunstgewerbemuseum in Strasbourg; Christian Mehlis (1850-1933), a historian from Neustadt in Rhineland-Palatinate; Hippolyte-Jean Gosse (1834-1901), an archaeologist and director of the Musée archéologique and the Musée épigraphique in Geneva; David Reiling (1833-1889), an antiquarian based in Mainz; and a “Dr Müller”, whose identity is difficult to establish since Forrer knew several Dr Müllers, including Gustav Müller (1866-1928), co-editor (with Forrer) of the *Antiquitäten-Zeitschrift*; Albert Müller (1846-1912), director of the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Zürich; and finally Ludvig Müller (1809-1891). Ludvig Müller was director of the Numismatic Collections from 1865, and then, from 1866 until his death, also of the Collection of Antiquities at the national collections in Copenhagen (the name “Nationalmuseet”, National Museum of Denmark, was not officially in use

before 1892). It would be tempting to identify “Dr Müller” with the latter, especially since he was responsible for obtaining “Forrer’s” textiles for the museum. Nevertheless, there are no documents testifying that he acquired any fabrics for his private collection, as the research conducted by Anne Haslund Hansen proves (see also **Case study 2**).

Forrer would also sell to his textile customers copies of his own publications on the textiles they were buying: *Die Gräber- und Textilfunde von Achmim-Panopolis* (Forrer 1891b) and *Die römischen und byzantinischen Seidentextilien aus dem Gräberfelde von Achmim-Panopolis* (Forrer 1891a). He recorded the sales of these books in a separate notebook, in which, under a date 10.V.1891, we can find “L. Müller, Kopenhagen”, this time leaving no doubt of which Müller we are dealing with. Like many other of Forrer’s customers, the Copenhagen Museum stocked up on “Forrer’s” textiles together with his publications. Both of Forrer’s books are in the library of the Collection of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities [Antiksamlingen], but they are not signed by Forrer. Thus, we have no direct evidence that they are from him, but it cannot be excluded.

Acknowledgement

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