

The increasing urbanization observed in the Middle Ages gave space to a growing specialization of labor. Therefore, activities that for millennia have been associated to domestic activities, such as spinning, weaving, or tailoring became tasks for experts. Also, the great raise on international trade that we observe at least from the 12th century was mostly nurtured by textiles. Fabric has been vital for human communities since the beginning of times, but it became central when fashion emerged as a social and esthetical phenomenon by the 13th-14th centuries.

In this presentation we will be addressing some technical and conceptual aspects of textile production on one of its key periods. We will be analyzing the different types of fibers and their circulation, as well as the main technical innovations in textile production introduced during the Middle Ages. Some punctual comparisons with the innovations from the Industrial Revolution will also be made. We will also approach the main natural dyeing substances used at the time, in an attempt to link it to the symbolic value of colors associated to dress. Finally, we will observe some evidence on the consumption patterns of textile and dress of medieval societies.